

SOME ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NIGERIAN LOCOMOTION OF THE 9-3-4 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

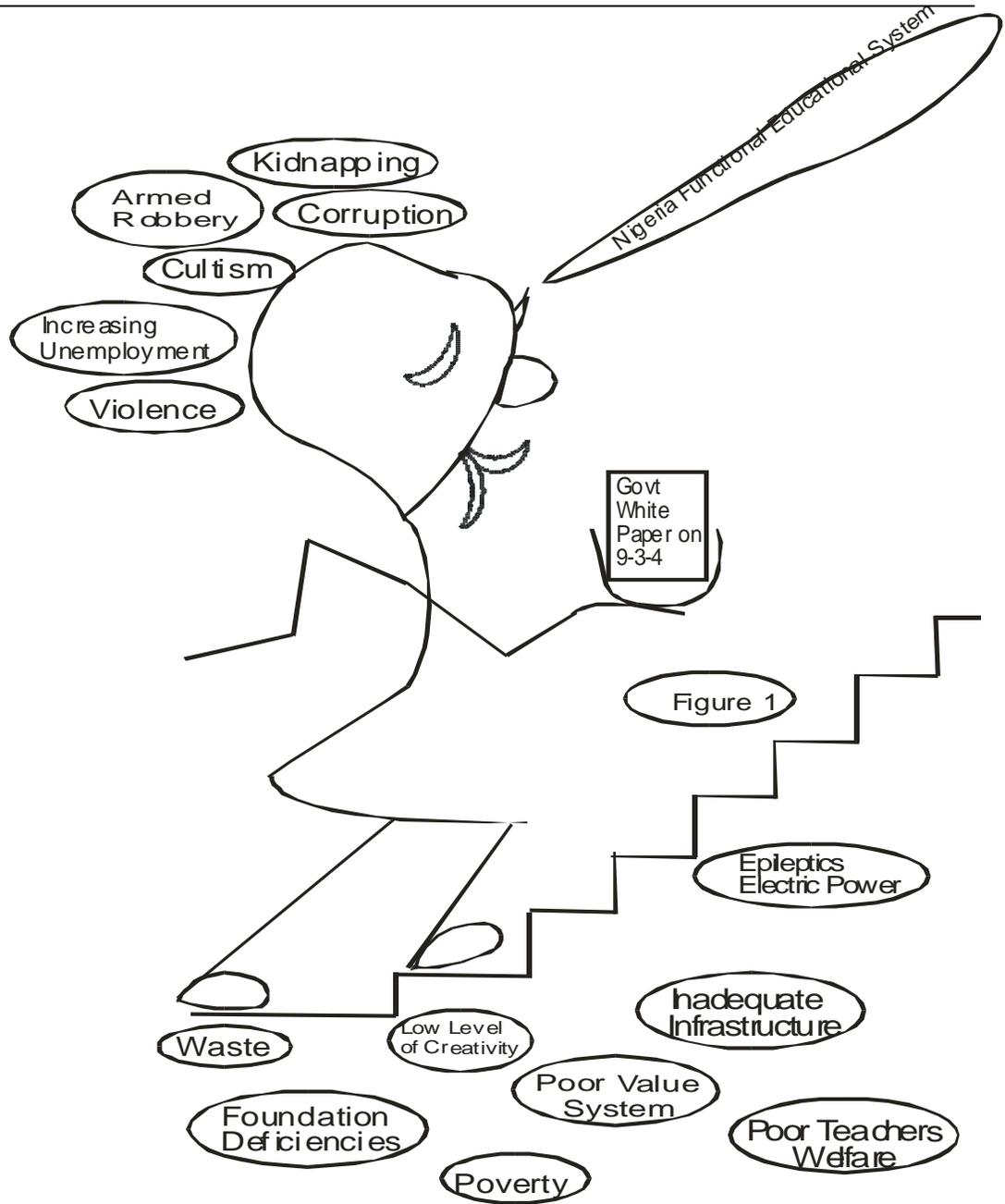
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Abstract

A locomotive depicts the movement of a slow train. The Nigerian Educational System have been experiencing lingering problems and their multiplier effects, chronic emerging problems and the challenge of using new technologies. Although the 9-3-4 is a current effort to solve the problems, lingering and emerging educational/social problems, seem to be growing faster than our commitment to effective implementations of educational reforms, consequently Nigeria's 9-3-4 is not functional now and is in danger of being obsolete by full transition of its annual sequential class additions unless drastic measures are taken to solve the problems. Using Edo State as main base of observations, the paper highlights issues and challenges for the Nigerian Locomotion of the 9-3-4 and made some recommendations for enduring functional education in Nigeria.

Issues and Challenges for the Nigerian Locomotion of the 9-3-4

Figure 1 depicts the Nigerian Educational System standing on many wrong foundations, surrounded by many problems and vices, with eyes on functional Nigeria Educational System but left hand "wrong hand" on 9-3-4 in its epileptic locomotion.



Introduction

Hornby (2005) defines issues as an important topic that people are discussion or arguing about and also defines challenge as a new and difficult task that test somebody's ability and skill. Hornby (2005) define locomotion as movement or ability to move. To appraise the 9-3-4, we should look at the implementation and the expectations of the Nigerian 9-3-4 system of education, in relation to societal problems arising. That is the Nigerian movement of the 9-3-4 (implementation) and the Nigerian ability to move the 9-3-4 considering the societal problems arising (Expectations of the 9-3-4) which together makes its locomotion. Obioma (2008) has a description of the expectations of the 9-3-4) system of Education. In assessing the functionality of the 9-3-4, It should be noted that the impact is not yet total which implies we are restricted to the extent of implementation and the problems arising. In the rural areas, the 9-3-4 is undergoing epileptic locomotion. Whatever be the true position of its general locomotion in Nigeria, there are some issues and challenges before it which this paper will like to focus on.

Definition of Terms

In the context of this paper we define the following terms:

Long-throat-buyers approach is an enthusiastic desire for Educational reforms but poor attitude to implementation, Dosomah et al (2010).

Dysenteries of an Educational System are lingering problems and their multiplier effects and poor commitment to implementation, Dosomah et al (2010).

Patient Jumps refers to the gradual implementation of a new curriculum by phasing out an old curriculum as the students/pupils, progress annually from one class to another. Sequential class additions are the annual addition of new classes to the implementation process.

Issues and challenges for Nigeria's 9 – 3 – 4 Educational System

1. Some Practices of Nigerian Educational System and an Analogy of a Landlord's Advice to a Distressed Tenant.

A landlord had a tenant in Benin City. The tenant was working as a nurse and owed many months in rent of the landlords flat, where she stayed alone with her two grandsons. The landlord came to her one day and burst into laughter-ha-ha-ha he said, my daughter stop deceiving yourself. You have no money. Do not bite more than you can swallow! Go and rent one room. The landlord's advice to the tenant is very relevant to our implementation of our Educational system. We are biting more than we can swallow and vomiting poor quality products. She wants to make every subject examinable from primary school and will not take care of her foundations: reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, fine art. Yet, she is rushing to teach surface treatment of secondary school topics in primary school. Guardian (2010: July 15) stated that the administrator, Redeemers International Secondary School, Maryland, speaking on best practices in curriculum and instruction at a recent private stakeholders forum in Lagos, said "subjects offered in Nigeria are too many compared to other countries. Subject that really matter like History are not being taught....pupils offer about 15 subjects in a day". Nigeria's idea of computer education is a paper one that will be teaching analogue computer, digital computer and parts of a computer without seeing a computer. Is it not better to go back and make computer studies effective in secondary schools where Nigeria failed previously, before thinking of extending it to primary schools? Several years of attempt to teach French in secondary schools in Nigeria, failed woefully. Nigeria has not been able to solve that problem, but

she moved in her “long-throat buyers” approach to 9-3-4 which is talking of French, in primary 4. Probably it is thought more effective to learn a language when you start early. It might interest you to know that, despite the many years of primary and secondary Education, no less than 60% of students in our higher institutions of learning cannot find the LCM and HCF of numbers nor factorize quadratic trinomials. They want to be pressing calculators and whatever the calculator shows, they write it down whether right or wrong. What kind of education is that? Yet they say we are progressing. When they are given $\frac{3}{8} + \frac{5}{6}$ to simplify without calculator, they are incapacitated and will do everything to smuggle in a calculator and what you will see is $0.375 + 0.083333333333333 = 1.208333333333333$.

Dosomah et al (2010) stated the approach of the Nigerian Educational System transition to 9-3-4 is of patient jumps of a long throat buyer suffering from multiple chronic dysentery who dissatisfied with his body performance decides to change its name from John to Johnson without sufficient effective actions on body problems so as to take away the dysentery. Dosomah et al (2010) also says Nigeria’s implementations are impatient uncoordinated jumps in danger of more detrimental dysenteries.

2. Corruption in Teaching Employment Process

Information from oral interviews of some Government teachers in Edo State (2009) indicate that the difficulty in getting Government teaching jobs was being cashed in by some unscrupulous Ministry Officials in demanding ₦100,000 to ₦150,000 from some prospective applicants to ensure a place as part of a long throat buyers approach to obtain appointments not on merit but on cash and carry basis. Some attempts are being made by the current state government to tackle the problems

3. Poor Performance in English Language

• Using In-appropriate Methods for Teaching Reading.

The way English is taught in most of our schools nowadays makes it difficult for pupils to attempt the pronunciation of any strange word--reading is taught by cramming given passages. Consequently many of the students cannot read and they are also poor at spelling. In 2002, some students gained admission in Edo State Institute of Technology and Management, Usen, and were denied admission because they could not write “original copy received by me” when they came to collect their admission. Upon checking of their school certificate results, it was discovered that some had credit and A in English.

• Should Pidgin English be Permitted in School?

Despite several years of English Studies many Nigerians speak grammatical errors with confidence of correctness--- “I could or I could may not do” it to express the probability of doing a certain thing. A teacher said “I was wenting home when he called me to return back”. Furthermore the frequent use of “may” in a corrupted pidgin English spoken by many Nigeria pupils nowadays is worrisome. For example, that boy may – i-de-my school for that boy that is in my school. Here (i) is pronounced (e) and (de) is pronounced day. Some have said I cover every body may –i-de-this house with the blood of Jesus for I cover every body in this house with the blood of Jesus. The question of wether to forbid students from speaking Pidgin English depends on the environment. Children living in flats have better chances of speaking correct English if their parents or guardian encourage it. Many students who are living in face-me-i-face you”, where

pidgin English is the community language will find it difficult to speak correct English only. Consequently parents living with their children in pidgin English community environment not wanting their children to speak pidgin English may have a hard struggle implementing it. They may become involved in too frequent interruptions of their children speeches that may make the children afraid to express themselves. Although pidgin English does have its value in some situations it should not be permitted in schools so as to give pupils opportunity to at least practice correct English during school periods.

4. The Chronic Poor General Performance of Pupils in Mathematics

Mathematics is badly taught consequently, it is a burden to many pupils. Pupils struggle with the subject from long division, decimals through increasingly difficult fractions until simultaneous equations in Junior Secondary 3. By Senior Secondary 1 they are lost completely.

Okafor's (2009) studies of West Africa Examination Council annual report for Senior Secondary School Certificate May/June Examination in Mathematics, from 1997 – 2004 observed that the percentage of acceptable grades (credit and above) were 7.6 in 1977; 11.15 in 1988; 18.2 in 1999; 32.81 in 2000; 36.55 in 2001; 34.06 in 2002; 36.91 in 2003; and 34.52 in 2004. No year made up to 40% credit pass. Furthermore, it noted it is a surprise that since mathematics became a core subject and upon all the emphasis laid on it, general performance in the subject have been consistently low.

5. Increasing Proportion of Life Threatening Social Problems

One of the purposes of Educational reform is to meet the challenges of social problems. Nigerian Newspapers in recent times are filled with a high frequency of gruesome reports of violence, kidnapping, fraud, murder, armed robbery, unemployment, etc. For instance, Observer (2010' July 16) stated that a Pediatric Surgeon of

the University of Uyo teaching hospital was kidnapped on his way home from duty.

6. Corruption in Tertiary Institutions

From primary school some Nigerian children are taught coded malpractice: the first finger is A, the second is B, the third is C, the fourth is D and the 5th is E that is if conditions do not permit the teachers to write answers on the board or dictate the answers openly.

The problem of academic corruption in tertiary institution is a worrisome one. Despite introduction of a post-University matriculation examination test to screen successful candidates of the University Matriculation Examination (UME) a contributor opined Guardian (2010: July 6). Since the Post UME was introduced and admissions were apparently based on it, have the academic standing of those admitted improved? For me, there is nothing to show that anything has changed. There is nothing to show that "sorting", which is academic corruption whereby students pay for marks to lecturers in cash or kind has stopped.

7. The Challenge of Improving quality Education Delivery

Guardian (2010: July 15) stated that the deputy Governor of Lagos state said "getting quality teachers these days is National challenge. The last time we employed teachers 12,000 applied, to get 1000 was not an easy thing." Furthermore, the educational administrator of Corona Schools speaking on reform in the Nigerian context: Corona as a case study noted: Corona which is 75 years with 7 schools today still face challenges with new teachers. "We had teachers no longer recognizing what hard-work was all about, there was the challenge of lack of experienced teachers because they had paper qualification that did not match their

experience and we also had to battle with the issue of low self esteem.”

8. Confused Attempts at Implementation

On the implementation of the new 9-year basic education curriculum, Obioma (2008) stated that the new 9 – year basic curriculum took effect from September 2007 and started concurrently in primary one and Junior Secondary one as pupils progressed to the upper classes the old curriculum will be gradually and systematically phased out. It also stated that the old primary school and Junior secondary curriculum will have been phased out by June 2010 and 2013 respectively in Edo State. Information from teachers in the process of writing this paper (2010) reveal that some schools started the implementation and stopped, some have not started and said they do not know when the implementation is to start.

9. Challenges for the Rural Teacher

Information from interviews of some teachers in the rural areas in Edo State (2009), revealed the following challenges:

- Government does not pay much interest in primary Education. Although they talk a lot, it is all about paper work but nothing on ground.
- Many schools have not got the new termly scheme of work. They use the old scheme but Ministries of Education set questions from the new scheme consequently, pupils lose confidence in their teachers and the teachers look stupid because they are surprised to see many things not in the diary coming out in Examinations.
- Uneven distribution of teachers: Some schools are lacking while others have more than enough.
- Teachers are not motivated
- Most seminars do not address the practical needs of teachers.
- In some villages some pupils start primary school at 18years and because of their age they start from primary 3 as their first

experience of formal education. They can neither read nor write.

- Some parents buy only one note book for their children for a whole term. Most of the pupils do not have books.
- Dirtiness: Some pupils come to school with dirty uniforms they may not bath or brush their teeth for one week. Teachers stay far during assemblies because of offensive odour from gathering of pupils at assemblies.
- In a class of 50 about 2 or 3 are trying to read. Many cannot read nor write
- Teachers touched by the pathetic situation of pupils decides to start extra moral lessons at ₦200 per term parents complain and teachers abandon the idea.
- Frequent deductions in salaries without notice for example headmaster transport, purchase of payment voucher and miscellaneous expenses.
- Delay in payment of salaries.
- Inadequate teaching materials/equipments.
- Some National Certificate of Education (NCE) teachers trained for secondary schools, that were posted to primary schools are not competent to teach in primary schools.
- Oppressive activities of some influential head teachers

The secret society fraternity influence is used by head teacher members of the fraternity as a license for evil. Some of the teachers get headship position by influence ahead of their seniors. When they oppress a teacher and the teacher complain, it is not treated rather they punish the teacher the more. For example, an incident occurred in Edo State in the early 1990s in which some teachers of a secondary school petitioned their principal for corruption and immorality.

He was alleged to have had a bed in his office. The teachers on getting to the post primary Education Board to submit the petition were driven back on grounds of improper dressing and were told to await a formal invitation for hearing. The “powerful” principal monitored the invitation letter and hijacked it unknown to the petitioners who were still awaiting invitation. The principal arranged and detailed a group of impersonators to represent the petitioners on the schedule day of hearing. They got there and when asked are you the petitioners? They said yes sir. Are you sure of what you have written about your principal? They all lay down and said in unison, “we are sorry sir! Na devil work”. They were warned to desist from false allegations. Consequently, the petitioners were scattered by the board in a punitive transfer without being heard. Three years later, as fate would have it, the principal died in a car crash.

General Observations

Although every system has its scholars for instance despite the appalling state of the Nigeria Educational System Nigerian Observer (2010) has a report that six JSS Students from Bauchi State emerged winners of young scientist competition in Spain. Functionality of an educational system is assessed by the performance of majority of the graduates from different cadres of the educational system and not that of few. Furthermore, despite recent improvement in provision of infrastructures in some schools by some committed governments, the issues and challenges goes beyond provision of infrastructure and funding.

10. Emerging Issues

- Kidnapping
- Learning and using students for manual labour in very high temperature conditions.
- 419 activities and our computer whiz kids _____ a major attraction of youths.

11. The Challenge of Solving Lingered Problems

Many lingering problems identified since 1970s have defied previous transitions and are tending towards life threatening or worrisome proportions for example, the Nigeria Observer April 17, 2010 stated over 400,000 examination results are canceled annually at a loss of about 21 billion naira to the country and said this was an indication of worsening cases of malpractice in the conduct of public examination.

Conclusion

Lingered as well as emerging Educational/social problems in Nigeria seems to be growing faster than Nigeria’s commitment to effective implementation of educational reforms. Consequently the Nigerian 9-3-4 is non-functional now and is in danger of being obsolete by full transition time.

Recommendations

One of the first lessons we have to inculcate in our pupils is the love for learning not only for examination purposes but for life and creativity. Our citizenship education should emphasize by relevant heart rending case studies the following:

- a. The impact of negative actions of an individual on self and society in particular the dangers of shedding innocent blood, violence, false accusation, stealing, smoking, carelessness, greed and selfishness.
- b. The need for unity and collective vigilance of our countries recourses including valuing human lives more than money.
- c. Principles of good success health and creativity and not political science or enumeration of governmental systems.

We need to emphasize sound foundations of a minimal set of basis school subjects that will enable us to learn other subjects, develop our reading culture, introduce functionality test to encourage creativity. Dosomah and Edosomwan (2008) and have a functional radio/television update facilities.

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