

DICHOTOMY IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND BENEFITS

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Abstract

This paper discusses the dichotomy of secondary schools in junior secondary and senior secondary school; the problems benefits and. The paper crystallizes the rationale for the segmentation as a convenient framework for the pursuance of vocationalisation policies as provided by the National Policy on Education. Equal to this, the JSS/SSS dichotomy has the characteristics of perpetrating socio-economic differentiation, a phenomenon that runs counter to parental aspirations for their children towards obtaining secondary education. Consequently, it was concluded that, if the problems identified in this paper are reduced then the aim of dividing secondary school into JSS and SSS will be fully achieved.

Introduction

Dichotomy of secondary schools into junior and senior categories was one of the major reforms in Nigerian Educational System. The segmentation of secondary education into JSS/SSS emerged following the adoption of the 6-3-3-4 structure; that is, six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, followed by three years of senior secondary education and termination with a minimum of four years of a first degree in a university or other tertiary institutions.

The 3-3 system of secondary education indicates six years duration with varying curriculum provision. According to FRN (2004), the junior secondary school curriculum is structured into core subjects and pre-vocational subjects. The core subjects are mathematics English language, Nigerian language science, social studies, Arts and music and practical agriculture. The pre-Vocational subjects are woodwork, metal work, electronics, mechanics, local craft, Home economics, and business studies. The non- vocational electives are Arabic and French. However, with the pervading influence of technology in our society, introductory technology subject was included in the curriculum.

At the senior secondary school level, the curriculum is made up of core and elective subjects. The core subjects include English Language, one Nigerian language, Biology, Agricultural Science, one of literature in English, History and Geography. The electives consists of Additional mathematics, Commerce, Economics and Book-keeping others are writing, short hand and government etc. Consequently, the reason for secondary school dichotomy is quite obvious as it provided for vocationalisation framework geared towards meeting the needs and aspirations of the populace. Essentially, this paper focused on discussing the reason for the dichotomy in secondary education, the problems and benefits. Recommendations were also made on how to reduce the problems associated to secondary education dichotomy.

Rationale for Dichotomy of Nigerian Secondary Education

The reason for the adoption of JSS/SSS dichotomy in Nigerian Secondary education is vocationally motivated. It should be recalled that functional and qualitative education is a sure route for national development. Unfortunately, the 6-5-4 system of education has not satisfactorily realized this desired goal of education. The most pressing situation is that the growing rate of unemployment in Nigeria has caused parents a good deal of disillusionment to the extent that they do not seem to see the need to enroll their children in schools. Thus, the rampage of street trading by school age children in Nigeria is a testimony to this phenomenon. In his contribution Nduka (2006), contends the following reasons for the dichotomy in secondary education. They include:

1. Self reliant education is unduly favoured. Subject matter was purely academic. Emphasis on pre-vocational subjects were less and negligible. This is largely responsible for the rampage of unemployment among youths in our country.
2. Great emphasis and significance were placed on single examination either for internal end-of-year/session promotion examination or external certification examination (West' African Examination Council Examination). This does not give a comprehensive picture of the child's overall performances.

3. The methodology approach is essentially that of rote-learning. Students are not fully exposed to practical work. Situation like this does not encourage reflective thinking rather students simply perm" and cram answers to questions and regurgitate them to pass examination. Often times examination malpractices of unimaginable dimensions are rife.
4. Assessment of learning experience was optional to teachers. Hence, teachers decide whether to give test, assignment and homework to students. The concern is that few teachers give thought to continuous assessment of students' academic achievement. This practice is contrary to the recommendation of the National Policy on Education which recognized assessment as an integral part of the teachers' process. To correct this anomaly, the adoption of the JSS/SSS structure came on board to practically implement the policy on continuous assessment of students' learning experience.
5. Teachers' professional outputs were not satisfactory. Evidently, teachers believe that their teaching revolves around the preparation of students for West African Examination Council examination. This notion has undermined the aim of the system in terms of realizing optimum educational objectives centered on skill, competency and self-reliance. Consequently, it was in the bid to improve teachers' productivity towards the realization of the goals and objectives of education, that the JSS/SSS segmentation emerged. Thus, the two-stage secondary school system depicts two sets of external examination to be taken in junior secondary three and senior secondary three. In effect, teachers are faced with the challenge of thorough teaching in order to ensure satisfactory attainment of the intended objective of the above discourse.
6. There was an increased rate of drop-out in secondary education. Often time students from lower socio-economic family and illiterate homes are not disposed to complete the five years duration of secondary education. This is simply because parents in this category may not be buoyant to afford such long period of schooling. More so when they are not sure and convinced that their ward will be gainfully employed after graduation. Nduka (2006), remarks that one of the global educational objectives is to produce self-reliant individuals. On the premise of this wholistic view, secondary education therefore, calls for a change involving the re-structuring of the system.

Problems of Dichotomy in Secondary Education

There are a number of problems associated with the segmentation of secondary schools into JSS/SSS. They include: overpopulation, heavy workload on teachers, multiplicity of teaching subjects, insufficient infrastructure, increase demand for teachers in service programme, change in societal value, management conflict, shortage of fund, discrimination among teachers and corruption.

1. Overpopulation

There is outrageous increase in the number of students' enrolment into secondary schools. Since JSS certificate can fetch a job in the society, parents of all socio-economic background enroll their children into secondary schools. Ihebereme (2006), observed that the large enrolment of students into secondary education has incurred unrealistic student: teacher ratio in the classrooms. No matter any opinion expressed, only very few educators if not, non would agree that a teacher can effectively teach overcrowded classes.

2. Heavy Workload on Teachers

Functional and quality education is the bedrock on which the Nigerian education is laid. Following the dichotomy of secondary schools additional pre-vocational elective subjects and non-vocational elective subjects are introduced into the school curriculum. This of course posed heavy workload on teachers. Consequently, teachers are enjoined to use instructional aids to illustrate their lesson in order to make their teaching more practical than theoretical. Besides, different methodologies are also required in teaching the prescribed subjects. In his contribution Olisa (1993) argued that the apex of heavy workload on teachers is centred on the use of different evaluation techniques in the assessment of students' learning performance.

3. Multiplicity of Teaching Subjects

The segmentation of secondary school into JSS/SSS compelled curriculum planners to adjust the curriculum provision by identifying and introducing more teaching subjects into the system. This is for the pursuance of vocationalisation policies and the urgent need to make education relevant to life and work. Evidently, teachers are stressed up because the pre-vocational subjects are more of practical activities. Ogbonna (2007), observed that most of the teachers became tired after their lessons. Explaining

further, Ogbonna, stated that often times the teachers organize extra lessons outside the school period in order to complete their subject content before examination.

4. Insufficient Infrastructure

Virtually dichotomy of secondary schools into JSS/SSS have cause the problem of insufficient infrastructure and this brings about a very uncondusive atmosphere for proper learning. Classrooms are not sufficient in number and the same applies to seats and spaces to accommodate the growing population of students being admitted. In most cases, teachers are left with the option of teaching their lessons under trees and this could constitute threat to lives of teachers and students. To buttress this, Atunrase (1999: 10), observed that "the teaching condition of the teacher is the learning condition of the child". This problem of insufficient infrastructure does not spur effort towards goal achievement.

5. Increase Demand for Teachers' In-service Programme

In-service programme is a process for continuous updating of teachers knowledge, skills and interest in their chosen field. The dichotomy of secondary education imposed an inevitable demand for teachers' to embrace other new areas of knowledge currently in operation. This is in agreement with the statement made by FRN (2004), which opined that teacher education will continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the needed areas of the curriculum. No wonder Fafunwa (1974), observed that, the quality of education in any country cannot rise above the quality of its teachers. In effect, teachers are therefore, compelled to be involved in continuous learning through in-service programme in order to meet the tempo of the JSS/SSS. system. By implication, Obanya (2002), stated that teachers with their meager salary schedule may be reluctant to enroll personally for in-service programme. Situation like this, tend to put teachers in worry state.

6. Change in Societal Value for Education

Societal value connotes ideas, beliefs, attitudes and temperament accepted and cherished by the society. A lot of changes have actually occurred in our societal value for education following the trend of secondary education division into JSS/SSS. Prominent among others is the attitude of parents to categories their-children into those whom they deem fit for JSS or for SSS. More so, poor background families took advantage of the dichotomy to persuade their children to use their JSS certificate to look for job bearing in mind that it is the easiest way to relief their financial burden off their shoulders. On this premise, Ibe (2005), laments that in the near future our country may be eroded with mediocre.

7. Management Conflict

There is management conflict in the system. This is as a result of two principalship position in the * same secondary school (JSS and SSS). Abinitio, it is held that two captains cannot operate under the same roof. This saying still holds content as crisis, violence and misunderstanding are often noticed among the two principals in secondary education. That notwithstanding other atrocities also revolves around such frictions. The fact remains as Pandey (2005), maintains that conflict among managers hinder productivity.

8. Shortage of Fund

Money is comprised as the engine house for successful pioneering of educational programmes. Secondary education is currently bedeviled by shortage of fund. This is because the available fund was riot enough to accommodate the elaborate demands of the dichotomy. For instance, money is required for the procurement of equipment and learning materials. To Ihebereme (2006: 80), "operating the secondary schools without adequate finance is one of the major constraints to the effective administration".

9. Discrimination among Teachers

In the face of the dichotomy between junior secondary and senior secondary schools, teachers are place either in JSS or SSS depending on their areas of specialization. The notion behind this placement pattern is to elicit expertise knowledge in various subjects. Surprisingly, some teachers do not view it as pre-disposed: They upheld that those teachers placed in the SSS are superior to those in the JSS. All these rivalry nurtures discrimination among teachers.

10. Corruption

Corruption has manifested itself in the form of embezzlement, fraud and similar offences on the part of the two principals existing in secondary school, that is, principal for JSS and principal for SSS. The seriousness of this problem was brought to limelight by Ezeocha (1985), when he alleged that the

money the government votes for running the school, most of it, does not get to the school. The little that gets to the school is not judiciously utilized rather diverted into personal pockets.

Benefits of Dichotomy in Secondary Education

Some of the benefits of dichotomy in secondary education include:

1. Reduction of examination Malpractice

Students in secondary schools (JSS/SS) have adopted the habit of studying. By implication these students have now known that their promotion and ability to pass external examination no longer based on rote learning or cramming. The students are also subjected to continuous assessment of academic achievements. So, in effect, it is an experience that deepens their interest to study independently. Although examination malpractice has been a global educational problem which instead of abating has like a malignant tumour continued to fester, yet this paper argued that at present there is reduction of students' involvement in examination malpractice.

2. Promote Teachers' Need for Specialization

Considering the numerous vocational subjects and some core subjects that are practical oriented, teachers are required to specialize in their subject areas. By so doing, it will improve the teachers' competency and skill in their methodology of teaching. Baguada (1980: 70), points out that "teachers are the main determinants of the quality of education given to the learners". The quality of a teacher is professionally identified with his status quo as a specialist in his/her discipline, then the curiosity for excellence in translation of learned principles into realities take precedence.

3. Teachers Commitment to Duty

Dichotomy of JSS/SSS in the educational system posed a challenging situation that triggered teachers into action (hard work). The challenges involve apprehending the new policy provision for JSS/SSS and working out strategies of its implementation. Oyenuga (2002), adds, days have gone when teachers are seen sitting idle in their classes or staffroom. This signifies optimum commitment to duty.

4. Sufficient Exposure to Information Technology.

Dichotomy of JSS/SSS in education has salvaged the stagnancy of technology in secondary education. As clearly stated by the National Policy on Education that technical and vocational education be issued as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the technological educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004). Of a truth the world is in an era of global technology revolution driven by information and communication technology (ICT). So the 3-3 structure of secondary education was channeled towards rendering the entire educational objectives, which is based on the national goals of the country, particular based on science, technology and vocational education. This predisposes students to consolidate the current global trend in the area of technology.

5. Qualitative Secondary Education Programme

Of immediate concern to our nation is the quality and functionality of the content of education being given to pupils/students. The 3-3 structure of secondary education is a beneficiary to the educational objectives embodied in the National Policy on Education. Evidently, the curriculum provision for secondary education was adjusted to bring about the desired national development and self-reliance.

Recommendations

Having highlighted the problems of dichotomy in secondary schools, the paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Government should adequately fund both JSS and SSS programme.
2. Government should develop a serious follow-up programme to ensure that the funds provided are properly managed.
3. Teachers should cultivate the habit of hard work in order to carry out successfully the enormous task (work load) of the JSS/SSS structure.
4. Secondary school teachers should- be given on the job training through organized workshop, seminars, conferences and symposia where they would be exposed to all the methodologies involved in teaching subjects.

5. Government should erect new classroom blocks in secondary schools. This would accommodate the influx of students into the system.
6. Government should provide adequate infrastructures in secondary schools for effective instruction and learning.
7. Government should institute a policy guiding the placement of secondary school teachers' either - for JSS or SSS. By doing so, teachers would be acquainted with the modalities of teachers' placement pattern. Hence, discrimination among teachers and inferiority complex would be eradicated.
8. Government should re-orientate parents/guardians on the disadvantages of discouraging their wards to continue secondary schooling up to SSS. This will help the entire country to move forward.
9. Ministry of Education in collaboration with the State schools Board should provide the principals, in JSS and SSS with a handbook specifying their role assignments. This will go a long way in reducing management conflict among the occupants of the two principalship positions.
10. Government should sponsor secondary school teachers for in-service training. This would reduce tension and stress on the teachers in terms of financial involvement.

Conclusion

Dichotomy in Nigerian secondary education has come to stay. Although there are problems associated to the system yet, eloquent testimonies attesting to its benefits abound. Going by this account therefore, the thematic discourse in this paper contends that the position of the government towards dichotomy of secondary education has bearing on vocationalisation for a sustainable national development.

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