

## EQUITY THEORY: IMPLICATION ON NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explore the Equity Theory and its implication on Nigerian schools. The study compared The United States of America, Canada and Nigeria based on Equity as it is recognized all over the world. American Government uses the-Affirmative Action to express equity, and the Canadian Government has equity expressed in-Employment Equity while the Nigerian Government applies equity in – Federal Character Principle. On a general note, the paper highlighted how there should be a balance of the outcomes/inputs relationship for one person in comparison with that of another person through the use of equity theory. This refers to an individual's subjective judgment about the fairness of the reward he or she gets, relative to the inputs (which include many factors such as effort, experience, and education), in comparison with the rewards of others. Thus its application and implication form the basis for this paper.*

Equity theory developed by Adams J.S. (1963 and 1965) (Ogunbameru, 2004:166) points that we prefer situations of balance or otherwise called equity, which exists when we work on the ratio of our outcomes/inputs to be equal to the ratio of outcomes/inputs of others for the purpose of comparison in organizations. The inputs include educational background, skills, experience, hours worked and performance results, while the outcomes include pay bonuses, praise, office space, furniture and work assignments. (Ogunbameru, 2004).

The theory enables managers to maintain two-way communication with subordinates such that they can have some idea of subordinates' equity perceptions. It is important also to let subordinates know the "rules" that govern the allocation of outcomes relative to inputs. This is to avoid a pattern of inequities over a period of time which can build into major difficulties if not checked. Equity theory plays motivational role in an organization, which enables individuals to compare their jobs inputs and outcomes with those of others and then respond so as to eliminate any inequities (Robbins, 1998).

It is a problem when people sometimes overestimate their own contributions and the rewards others receive. There are certain inequities that can be tolerated for sometimes, by employees, as prolonged feelings of inequity may result in strong reactions to an apparently minor occurrence. (Heinz, Mark and Harold, 2008). For example an employee who was reprimanded for being a few minutes late to the office may get angry and quit the job, not necessarily because of the reprimand but because of long standing feelings that the rewards for his or her contributions are inequitable in comparison with others' rewards. Likewise a person may be very satisfied with a monthly salary of N200,000 until he or she finds out that another person doing similar work gets N20,000 more.

### **Nigerian Schools**

The present day Nigeria was made possible through the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914. Then, missionary movements were at a high point and most schools were established by them. The colonial government created two divisions whose aims were to control educational expansion, to maintain standard and to determine reasons for grants-in-aid. These divisions were administrative, inspectorate and decision making processes. At this time, everything about education was highly centralized.

During the era of self-determination, that was between 1951-1970 a lot of educational plans, policies and programmes were made. Among them was the 1951 Macpherson's constitution which made room for democratic election into the Regional House which empowered the regions to pass laws on education, health, agriculture and local government. This propelled the Western Region to conduct election that brought about Chief Obafemi Awolowo Action Group to power. In 1952 Chief S.O. Awokoya, western region's Minister of Education presented a proposal for the introduction of a free Universal Primary Education (UPE) for the Western Region and that started in 1955.

In the East the NCNC controlled government through the Minister of Education Mr. R.I. Uzoma who outlined policies for its own Universal Primary Education in 1953. However, some crisis erupted in the Eastern Region and led to the resignation of some ministers. This crisis delayed the implementation of the UPE programme till February, 1957.

In the Northern Region, so many factors delayed the implementation of the UPE. Apart from the link of Islamic religion with education (not Western Education) finance was another problem. In 1961 the regional government invited Mr. H. Oldman who was a Chief Education Officer in Yorkshire to look into various problems working against free UPE in the Northern Region. His report was presented in 1962 and so the education law for the Northern Region was passed the same year. Thereafter, Nigeria imbibed the Western Education as being superior to its traditional education but yet discovered after independence that Nigerian education was not complete because it had a lot of ills.

Hence, at the eve of independence, a commission was set up to find out what educational needs Nigeria had. The Ashby Commission made a plan for 1960-1980. That Ashby plan brought about the first National Development plan 1962-68 which proposed to permit rapid educational growth at all levels and all types of education. That was followed by the National Policy of Education, which came into being in 1977 and was reviewed in 1981, 1989, 1998, 2004 and recently in 2013.

The National Policy hoped at achieving the followings:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A great and dynamic economy
4. A united strong and self reliant nation
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

The 1969 National Curriculum conference discussed and provided a seven point agenda, which are:

1. National philosophy of education
2. Goals of primary education
3. Objectives of secondary education
4. The role of teacher education
5. Functions of women education
6. Control of public education

Some of the recommendations included the following:

- a. That the age of six is considered suitable for admission into the primary school. Younger children between 3-5 years old may be controlled in nursery and kindergarten classes.
- b. A six-year primary school course was recommended.
- c. Primary education should not be geared towards any particular occupational goal.

- d. The Nigerian primary school child should be well-grounded in his or her mother-tongue apart from learning English.

Furthermore, the Nigerian university should be:

1. Teaching-impacting knowledge
2. Research-discovering knowledge
3. Dissemination-contribution to national and international dialogue and criticism.
4. Service Orientation-through community service and professional training for the development of the nations high-level and intermediate manpower needs.

### **Primary School**

Primary education in Nigeria is the first stage of compulsory education. Although it is preceded by pre-school or nursery education then followed by secondary education. This is the type of education given to children within the ages of 6 and 11 years. The duration shall be six years (National Policy on Education, 2004). The one at the helm of affairs is called head-teacher. He motivates the staff to work through the provision of incentives like chalk, textbooks and teaching aids. The head-teacher recommends staff for promotion. If a staff feels that the management is indifferent to this aspiration, he will be less dedicated to achieving the goals of the school.

### **Secondary School**

Secondary education normally comes immediately after primary education and before tertiary education. Secondary education shall last for six years. It is broken into two part-three years: Junior Secondary School (J.S.S.) and another three years of Senior Secondary School (S.S.S). The head of the secondary school in Nigeria is called the principal. He or she is seen as the educational leader, the school disciplinarian, the organizer of the schedule, the supervisor of the instructional programme, the director and evaluator of teaching efforts, the manager of school facilities and generally a professional leader.

The principal performs the recruitment function through the ministry of education by sending his request on the number and also the type of staff needed in his school. He/she has the responsibility to induct new staff and assign duties to such persons. He/she can delegate this function to Heads of Department. There is decentralization of authority in secondary schools; for example teachers are assigned to handle cases like late coming, see to the cleaning of the school compound, take charge of morning devotion, pass information to staff members, draw time-table for the school, arrange venue for staff meetings and others.

### **College of Education**

The head of this institution is known as the provost. The College of Education is divided into departments and units to facilitate the management function of the person in charge at the helm of affairs, such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. The college principal officers include: Provost, Deputy-Provost, Registrar, Bursar, College Librarian. The College of Education whether state or federal is divided into schools which are headed by Deans. The departments are headed by Head of Department. The Dean presides over schools' board meetings. The Head of Department (HOD) assigns duties to other lecturers. Such duties include: allocation of course to be taught by lecturers, computation of results, invigilation and supervision of examination.

### **The Polytechnic**

This institution is directed towards the technical needs of Nigeria. The head of the Polytechnics is called Rector. They provide full time and part-time courses of instruction and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management for the purpose of production of trained manpower. The principal officers are: Rector, Deputy Rector, Registrar, Bursar

and Chief Librarian. There are Deans and Head of Departments. The registry staff implements the day to day administrative policies.

### **The University**

The University institution is headed by the Vice Chancellor (V.C). At the apex of the management structure. Within each university is the council which is headed by Pro-chancellor as the chairman. The council is in charge of mainly administrative functions in such areas as goal setting, policy formulation, staff development, general discipline, budget approval and liaising with government.

It is the senate that regulates the internal academic activities of each university. The senate is headed by the Vice Chancellor. There are other members such as Deans of faculties, Head of Academic Department, Professors. The Registrar, who is the secretary of senate, Chief Librarian, Bursar, Director Health Services, Director of Works. The Dean presides over Faculty Board Meetings. HOD assigns duties to members of staff and presides over departmental meetings.

The board deliberates on academic issues, examination and result and staff welfare. The board also deliberates on the areas of faculty needs, financial, academic and material. Sometimes, the political class such as the visitor could dictate policies to the disinterest of staff. This could cause internal conflict in the University community.

### **Equity Theory**

This refers to an individual's subjective judgement about the fairness of the reward he or she gets, relative to the inputs (which include many factors, such as effort, experience and education), in comparison with the rewards of others (Heinz, Mark, Harold. 2008). Equity advocates that the use of established rules and regulations should be tempered by a sense of fairness, kindness and justice. is one of the universal principles of school Administration.

Henri Fayol, a French Geologist and an industrial executive who is considered as the "father of the Administration process", formulated a list of fourteen (14) good management principles as a guide to administrative thinking and ations. The 14 administrative management principles are often referred to as Universal or classical or fundamental principles of School Administration which included equity among others. One of the importance of human resource management is to ensure basically that justice, fair play and equity are held above all other things when dealing with educational resources and staff. However, because equity is recognized all over the world and for the purpose of this study, we shall compare some countries like Canada, United States of America and Nigeria to buttress our point.

**Canada; Employment Equity:** The Canadian Government in 1986 introduced the Employment Equity Act to ensure equal job opportunities for minority groups, including aboriginal people and visible minorities. This was done to ensure justice, equality, impartiality, fair-mindedness, objectivity and even-handedness. What this means is that employment practices are designed to eliminate and prevent disadvantages in employment for designated groups through such, mechanisms as special measures which helps to redress these disadvantages and to provide equitable opportunities in employment in their country.

**The United States of America; Affirmative Action:** The American Government is committed to a policy of affirmative action. It is a system based approach to the identification and elimination of discrimination in employment. Affirmative action benefits not only blacks, women, indigenous people and handicapped persons, but other minority groups as well by breaking down barriers to equality of opportunity and eliminating traditional stereotypes. It also eliminates variables such as race, religion, social class and state of origin.

**Nigeria; Federal Character Principle:** Nigerian is one of the countries with an official policy of fashioning a representative bureaucracy under the principle of “Federal Character” which results from the social cleavages in the society. The fact remains that there are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo) and over two hundred minority ethnic groups in the country. However, the natural resources of the nation is highly concentrated in areas where the minority ethnic groups are located, while the majority ethnic groups control both economic and political powers (Center for Public Administration & Policy Studies, 1998).

Actually, the Federal Character is defined as “the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation as expressed in section 14 (3) and (4) of the 1979 constitution”.

The policy however, compromises with the principle of merit in favour of some ascriptive criteria. The rationale being that many states or regions, especially those designated by Federal Government as “educationally disadvantaged” will not be (adequately) represented in the public service if recruitment into the bureaucracy is based solely on “technical supremacy” or the “merit” principle.

Nevertheless, these are not the only areas equity play a role, it trickles down to organizations and educational institutions like primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Hence, this paper is primarily concerned with how equity theory as we know it can be applied in the administration of educational institutions in Nigeria. If the understanding of equity is to make a balance of the outcomes/inputs relationship for one person in comparison with that of another, how is it practiced in our schools? Equity also stresses the point that if people feel they are inequitably rewarded they may be dissatisfied, they may reduce that quantity or quality of output, or they may even leave the organization or the institution. But if people perceive the reward as equitable, they probably will continue at the same level of output. Also if people think the rewards are greater than what is considered equitable, they may work harder. It is also possible that some may discount the rewards. The question is what are the implications of all of these on Nigerian schools administrative

### **Equity Theory in Nigerian Schools**

In every formal organization, such as school, there are established rules and regulations designed to govern the conduct of its members. According to Aghenta (1985) in Idu (2004), these rules and regulations form the basis for acceptable standard in the organization and provide a framework for what is popularly referred to as law.

Laws are made for the limiting of individuals’ rights and for justice. Taiwo (1985) in Idu (2004) opines that rules and regulations, order and authority by children is in the school. As they grow through the primary school they learn to leave with one another and with people outside the school. Primary school curriculum has civics, morals and religious studies which by foundation for the awareness and in respect of law in the children. In junior secondary school, Social Studies are taught for the purpose of social responsibilities. While in secondary school, History, Government, Economics and others are taught to the children to a level of understanding of various arms and levels of government and their operations regarding education and law. The teacher should have an idea of the law to an extent especially the education laws as they affect employment, the students and their daily work. Basically, school law consists of two main strands namely the common law and the customary law. For example the principal’s functions and responsibilities under Education laws have been listed below; Asiedu (1985)

1. Opening of new schools
2. Admission of students
3. Recruitment of staff

4. Collection of revenue
5. Management of schools
6. Inspection of schools
7. Disciplinary control of students
8. Discipline of teachers.

The principal therefore should discharge his functions and responsibilities equitably so also should all school administrators.

### **Implication of Equity Theory on Nigerian Schools**

However, the implication of Equity theory which was discussed earlier comes to play having in mind that schools in Nigeria and infact all over the world are established under some kind of law. Hence, school administrators should apply equity theory in their daily business of running the school. This will help them not to go against the law already in place. Fairness can be judged in so many ways and in so many areas of our lives including the school system. Since school Administrators know that schools are established based on Education laws and regulations which rest on common law and statutory law, which are based on equity (justice and fairness), he or she should be in position to protect his activities with such knowledge of fairness.

Administrators of schools have been vested with important responsibilities such as human resource planning, recruitment and selection, induction and orientation, performance appraisal, development programmes, promotion, demotion, transfer, discipline, termination, dismissal and retirement. Each of these responsibilities was established based on Nigerian law. Equity theory will help the one at the helm of affairs to handle each with care and fairness because they all border on human relationship. The knowledge of equity theory will guide Administrators of schools to treat teachers, staff, students and even parents including members of the immediate community in fairness. An Administrator who ignores the equity theory will often run into trouble because he too responsible to his employers. He may loose his job if he does not display equity in running the school.

He may loose his integrity before his teachers and students as well. Administrators' wrong actions can result to strike actions by the teachers, attract Government attention as punishment, sanctions to the school and delay in producing results. Examination may also stop and students demonstration may ensue; crisis may arise, bringing confusion and uncontrollable situation in the school. Mistrust may become the order of the day. Principals and teachers can loose their respect from students who feel they are unfairly treated. All of these will bring disrepute to the Administrator of any school. Mass media will help in spreading any action of the members of schools which will give room for public criticism and comments. This will bring the image of the school down and both Administrators and staff members will carry their heads in shame. If a teacher does not receive his/her salary at the end of the month, he is unjustly treated as equity is lacking in such action. Of course a work man deserves his wages.

Equity (fairness) should be expressed by Administrators to both the teachers and students including members of the immediate community for peace and progress to reign in the school. A principal or head master who does not understand the equity theory may find it difficult in his day to day dealings with people in the school. The implication therefore will be commotion, strife, meanness, indiscipline, confusion, conflict etc in the school. Nigerian Government and the school authorities should enforce equity theory in running Nigerian schools. Teachers and students should be positively motivated. This will encourage them to put more effect in the teaching and learning activities that go on in the schools. There are so many ways to reward a hardworking person in business organizations, social service providers, educational institutions etc. Doing these require also the knowledge of some basic principles that guide human relationship. There is what is known as institutionalizing ethics. This ethical theory also embraces utilitarian theory-where plans and actions

### ***Equity Theory: Implication on Nigerian Schools***

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should be evaluated by their consequences. Another is theory based on rights; every one has basic rights. And then the theory of justice, decision makers must be guided by fairness and equity as well as impartiality. Lastly the code; a statement of policies, principles, or rules that guide behaviour. All of these theories are important to School Administrators for academic excellence. Nigerian school Administrators should make a code of ethics public and enshrine it in the school handbook for students and teachers. Although the publication of a code of ethics is not enough, school Administrators in Nigeria should require employees to sign the code, and include ethics criteria in performance appraisal and connect rewards to ethical behaviour. Principals should also use a opportunity to encourage and publicize ethical behaviour and report unethical practices.

These will intune Nigerian school into the practice of fair play and equity within and outside the school environment. A teacher who rewards a child with a bottle of coke for answering a question correctly is encouraging that student to make more attempts in future. If a teacher punishes a student for not answering a question rightly; that may discourage such student not to try again.

There are many ways to reward learners who are doing well in school, this should be expressed with regards to equity. Otherwise the mere fact that he/she is not fairly rewarded accordingly lowers the moral of such person and the implication of this in our schools will be non-compliance, laziness, truancy, absenteeism etc leading to low standard. Schools should be known for their high academic achievement and good morals. Many parents will wish to send their children and wards to such schools known for excellence, devoid of examination malpractice, cancellation of examination and results.

Quality education is achievable through equity theory. Equity theory, if put into practice by school operators will raise schools to enviable high standard. This implies that the general objective, aims and goals of Nigerian education will be met. Infact, this is the prayer of every person in Nigeria who loves education.

### **Conclusion**

Equity theory and its implication on Nigerian schools respond to the challenges facing the system as discussed. The call on government and educational operators to imbibe equity in all its ramifications will go a long way in reducing geographic spread principle, political and religious inclinations as a major consideration during recruitment exercise, to reintroduce merit into the school system. The society cannot grow if people in the Educational industry are unqualified and unproductive, therefore, the desire to transform the environment could no longer distinguish between illusion and reality. Indeed, it is unarguably fundamental that education contributes greatly to National Development, that is, character moulding of Nigeria's future leaders.

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