

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING NATIONAL UNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Knowing fully the invaluable rules and contributions which education makes to meaningful individual, societal and national unity, every reasonable and right thinking person would be interested in its proper management and administration. This paper looks at the concepts of education, management and administration in relation to national unity. The paper also highlights some problems that are likely to militate against education in Nigeria as well as challenges ahead with a view to restoring the fast losing confidence in our nation's educational system.

Introduction

It is a known fact that education has no substitute regarding any concrete and meaningful development of a nation. Education is believed to be a powerful instrument for mobility of social status. Abokede (2005) noted that, formal education constitute the primary mechanism for economic, social and political advancement in the society. Education has also been seen as a tool for upliftment of underprivileged, the marginalized, the migrants and other special group within the society. It is believed to be the architect of any meaningful cohesion and unity of a nation because it serves as an impetus for , multi-various communities in realizing the need to come together. The coming together -brings about common goals that springs up national development.

The invaluable roles and contribution of education in the development of an individual and societies of a nation as a whole cannot be over emphasized. Many countries (Nigeria inclusive) have been taking education as instrument for the promotion of national unity and development as well as , effecting desirable changes (NPE 2005),. This might be responsible for the continuous growing concern of all the stakeholders in education industry about the changes which may likely affect it as well as the implications. Amusan, (2005).

The Concepts of Management and Administration

To understand what the topic is all about there is the need to explain in brief what these concepts are: Management can mean different things to different people at different times. The word -is derived from the verb "to manage" and can mean any of the following; to handle, to control, to organize, to carry out for a purpose, to alter by manipulation or to make and keep people submissive. All these suggest that there are different management styles and it depends on individuals to identify how or which of the meanings most closely matches the way they manage their schools. The term, according to American Institute of management, is used to designate either a group of functions or the personnel who carry them out, to describe either an organization's official hierarchy or the activities of men who compose it and to provide antonym to either labour or ownership. Resser in Amusan (2005), described management as the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts, and it is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, directing and controlling. Although Resser, was writing about general and industrial management, it has been observed and agreed that his suggestions are of equal importance and relevant to educational management. Some specific activities of educational management include; educational planning and policy making, provision of maintenance of funds and facilities, appointment and development of personnel, improvement of instructional materials, students personnel service and maintenance of interpersonal relationship with the community and external agencies.

Administration on the other hand, has been defined by many authorities in the field, some of which include Musaaazi's (1982), view that administration is a social process concerned with identifying, maintaining, motivating controlling and unifying formally and informally organized, human and material resources within an integrated system designed specifically to achieve pre- •' determined objectives.

Administration can as well, be viewed as getting things done with the accomplishment of the defined objectives Peremode (1991), views administration as concerned with the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of policies decisions to fulfil a purpose, and the controlling of the day to day running of an organization. It is also the careful and systematic arrangement and use of resources (both human and material) situation and opportunities for the achievement of the specific objectives of a given organization, (Nwankwo 1987).

The science of administration is thus the system of knowledge whereby man may understand relationship, predict result and influence outcomes hi any situation where men are organized at work together for a common purpose.

Management and administration are performed at different levels to different personnel and to different degrees. At the school level, they are applied by principals, vice principals, head masters and even subject teachers. At the ministry level of institutionized agencies such as Nigeria" Educational research and Development Council, National Primary Education Commission, national Commission for Colleges of Educations, National University Commission etc.

Management and Administration of Education in National Unity and Development

Human beings requires proper management for proper functioning. Any type of organization be it government establishment, business enterprises, educational institutions, hospitals etc require good management to function effectively. Managing is one of the most important human activities that permeate all organizations. For unity and development therefore, people should work together for (he attainment ofa predetermined objectives. There is a need for management that is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the aims and objectives of the organizations are realized.

According to Amusan (2005), it is the manager's responsibility to ensure that every member of the group contribute his' best. To get people to put in their best effort, the manager has- to understand his workers, their emotion, physical intellectual capacities and need aspiration. He, has to appreciate that each member of the group has his own personal needs, visions and that these are influenced by such factors as the ethic, socio-political, economic and technical environment of which he "is apart.

From the foregoing, it is clear that educational management and indeed the educational manager is involved with the totality of education enterprise. As educationists, why are we interested in the management of education for national unity? Some answers relating to this question may be relevant when we look at Nwankwo's (1987), view on factors which have influenced the development of educational management in Nigeria today, as in the developed countries of the world. Some of- these are:

The growing complexity of the education enterprise; The rising cost of educational service; The increase politicization of education;

The modern technological development especially information technology which seems to haven over and number of social changes that have occurred.

Having seen the specific activities of educational management in uniting and development of a nation, the paper also examines what constitutes the major functions of the educational manager in achieving a united nation, as these can be seen or found in the statement of Resser (1973), who suggested that managers are people who:

Set objectives for using available resources Formulate plans for achieving these objectives Identify the activities to be performed Organize the activities into group (department) Define the task to be done Staff the jobs with people Initiate work activities Supply incentive to stimulate productivity Set up control to measure achievement of objectives and Take remedial actions if the objectives are not being met.

Carrying out the above functions by managers effectively, this writer is convinced that the, role of management and administration of education in enhancing and harnessing national unity are quite enomous and cannot be estimated.

Nigeria and Her Educational Problems (An Agent of National Unity)

The management and administration of Nigerian education system have been changing between the civilians and the military in the following order: 1960-1966 (Civilians); 1966-1979 (Military); 1979-1983 (civilians); 1983-1999 (military) and 1999 to date (Civilians). Since the management and administration of education industry remains unstable politically, it has suffered a lot of setback especially, in the hands of the military. Consequently, this explains the causes of unstable educational policies which has greatly influenced educational imbalance that serve as a plague to national unity.

Apart from political instability, the plurality nature of Nigeria does not help the situation. This is because managing education in a pluralistic society like ours is a tedious task since there are many diverse interests to satisfy.

Financially,- the entire educational sector is under-funded. Corroborating this view, Obanya (1999;39), asserts that "Funding has become a vexed issue in discussions on education in Africa. In Nigeria, the problem of inadequate funding reflects in poor teachers' remuneration, shortage of (even-out-dated) infrastructural facilities as well as misappropriation of the scarcely available funds to education.

Socially, Nigeria education is being plagued with a number of social problems to the extent-that educational stake-holders usually doubts the quality, relevance and standard of our education or the certificate obtains in various institutions of learning. Some of the other social problems include incessant strikes and closures of schools, students' cultism, examination malpractices, sexual abuse, total breakdown of the societal norms and orders, corruption in admissions, abandonment of academic standards to mention a few.

Some of the technical problems negatively influencing our educational system include dearth of reliable educational data to carry out meaningful researches, poor policy implementation, poor management information system among others. Succinctly put, Obanya (1999), observes that "out strategic thinking on the future of education in Nigeria should in fact dwell seriously on informatics, not just as a tool of management but also as a teaching, a research and of a course a routine tool". The knowledge of computer has become imperative for administrators to cope with the global explosion of information technology.

Finally, the uncontrolled educational expansion in Nigeria, is another impediment in the management and administration of education to promote national unity.

The Challenges Ahead

Educational managers, administrators and other stakeholders should be prepared for the new challenges ahead in ameliorating some of the problem facing our education industry in Nigeria especially when it comes to enhancement of national unity and development. Highlight of the challenges as contained in Oladejo and Ige (2004) include:

Relevance: By all standards and from all indications, Nigeria education is no longer relevant to her citizenry's need and aspirations these days. Bebarinde and Elaturoti (2004), quoting Udoh, Akpa and Gang (1990), submit that "after independence, many educators expressed concern about the lack of relevance of the Nigerian educational system in meeting the pressing economic, social and cultural needs of the nation". Education relevance, according to Longe (1999:14), means "the extent to which education can be used by the society to realize its dreams as well as contribute to recipients' aspirations in life". An x-ray of the nation's education reflects the irrelevance. The colonial heritage and mentality in form of having education that produces individuals with "Nigeria colour but British blood" still exists. Apart from losing our cultural values and heritage, the era of white-cola job education is fast fading away. Thus, it has become a challenge for us in educational management and administration to ensure that our education is managed and administered in such a way as to be more relevant to our cultural needs and aspirations. By this national unity and development can be ensured.

Students Enrolment: There is no gain saying that there is a continues increased in the students overall enrollment in our schools. In essence, educational demand is far greater than supply. The Longe Commission (1991), in Oladejo and Ige (2004), quoting Obanya (1999), reported that between 1984/1985 and 1989/1990 academic sessions, enrolment in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education rose from 126,000 to over 180,000; 60,500 to 72,810 and 55,900 to 60,500 respectively. The present situation is in ten folds of these figures with dwindling facilities. And since education 'i = taking to be a basic natural and fundamental human right to all, it has become a challenging area for the management and administration of education because students should not be denied their right to education in the face of unforeseen circumstances using rationalization and all the like.

Quality and Standard: Oladejo and Ige (2004), quoting Akinkugbe (1994), lamented that "today we witness the glaring inadequacies in our educational industry; primary, secondary, special, technical, tertiary, in which there is abundant evidence of Gripping inertia, neglect and pervasive decay in values and standards'. In all ramifications, Nigerian education at present is of low quality and standard. It is as if no teaching - learning activities take place in our schools. It has become a challenge for the managers and administrators of the education industry to lay more emphasis on how to really maintain quality and standard in our education so as to ensure national unity and development.

Discipline: Moral laxities have become the order of the day in all Nigeria institutions of learning. There is gross indiscipline on the parts of virtually all educational stakeholders. It is not a shocking news. For example, male teachers abuse female students sexually; students engage in secret cult activities, examination malpractices and prostitution; teachers exploiting their students; embezzlement of educational funds by school administrators; parents encourage examination malpractices and so on.

Human Resources Development: Since other factors of production (i.e. money and materials) can be substituted or replaced and any risks involved can be insured against, but a team of dedicated, hardworking and loyal staff cannot be easily replaced, has made it a new challenge for educational managers and the like to properly develop all the human resources in education. In facilitating" national unity and development, human resources are needed to harness other resources towards the realization of national goals.

Result-Oriented Leaders: One of the factors responsible for the failure of the educational policies and programmes which eventually impede national unity and development is leadership that lack managerial and administrative skills required to succeed. Thus, in the management and administration of our education, it has become a challenge for us to really source for educational managers and administrators that are competent to deliver the much-needed results in achieving national goals unity and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper reveals that there is no doubt that our nation's educational system is confronted with multifarious problems such as social, political, finance and technical. The challenges ahead of addressing these problems are highlighted. However, all hands must be on deck in order to ensure our nation's overall educational aims and objectives in achieving national unity and development as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004). Total overhauling of education industry through adequate funding, proper management and administration by professionals and experts will go a long way in using education to harness national unity and development.

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