

CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION POLICY IN NIGERIA: THE NECESSITY FOR REGULAR FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

Education is a vital instrument for change and an impetus for nation building. It is through it that a nation progresses economically, socially, politically, and technologically. This paper, therefore, delved into the necessity for regular funding and implementation of Nigeria's contemporary education policy as recommended by the National Policy on Education (1998). The paper added that there is a sincere need for all stakeholders in the educational sector to improve funding and implement the necessary facilities, equipment, tools, and machines at all levels of Nigerian educational system. It is also the view of the paper that when there is partial or total absence of regular funding and implementation in the educational system, problems like half-baked graduates, growth of societal wrong living values, soaring unemployment, poverty and decay of educational facilities, tools, etc., would become obvious in our national life. Recommendations such as: Federal Government's funding of higher education in the country, States' governments leaving the establishment of higher institutions to Federal Government, Local Governments to be in charge of primary schools, among others, were made to ameliorate the identified problems.

Introduction

Education, since the period of industrialization in the 19th century has been an instrument for changes and an impetus for nation building. This is the reason why Ogunboyede (2002:18) stressed that education should be a serious matter for consideration for any society so as to achieve the goals and objectives, as a way of increasing the productivity and potentials of individuals. To crown the lofty ideals of Nigeria's education policy, the National Policy on Education (1998:15), amongst others, opined that:

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine individual's direction In education.

Durosaro (2002:34) added that education is a "process of cognitive, affective and psychomotive development with a view to moulding a total contribution to the development of the community and promotion of cultural heritage." With this view, Nigerians started to take some conscious steps to reform the educational system and its curriculum to ensure social relevance. Hornby (2001) defined policy as "a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business, etc", and saw implementation as "making something that has been officially decided start to happen or be used." Hornby (2001) also added that funding is "an amount of money that has been saved or made available for a particular purpose" that will be beneficial to a majority of the people.

From the foregoing, therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria, according to Obi (1995:211), has continued to be "the greatest investor in education." With this increasing government function, the depreciating value of the naira and the high rate of inflation, fears are being entertained that the financial positions of the various tiers of our educational system will continue to worsen.

The Necessity for Regular Funding of Education

Nigeria's educational system needs adequate and regular funding for it to succeed in the scheme of things and in order to keep abreast of developmental efforts of other countries in the world. Unfortunately, Durosaro (2002:35) opined that inadequate funding of education in Nigeria has been the major problem

confronting the successful implementation of all educational programmes. With this trend, it is now at variance with the provisions of the National Policy on Education (1998:15), which states that:

Education and training facilities shall continue to be expanded in response to societal needs and made progressively accessible to afford the individual a far more diversified and flexible choice.

Egonmwan (2002:25) noted that although education has always received a higher priority than health in the national plans, real achievements in it has not matched investment. There has always been a short-fall in funding. This practice has created educational imbalances in the sector. Supporting this, Durusaro (2002:36), using the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) Annual Abstract of Statistics (Federal Office of Statistics) between 1994 and 1998 stressed that there is a shortfall in funding education as against the recommended 28% of the United Nation's prescription for developing countries.

Table 1: Education Expenditure as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure on all Sectors in Nigeria (1994-1998)

Year	Total Federal Revenue (N Million)	Total Expenditure on All Sectors (N Million)	Total Expenditure on Education (N Million)	Percentage (%) of Education on Total Expenditure
1994	192,769.4	91,229.4	6,331.5	6.94
1995	201,910.8	160,893.2	9,434.7	5.86,
1996	459,987.3	248,768.1	12,172.8	4.8*
1997	288,094.6	288,094.6	14,882.7	5.12
1998	356,262.3	356,262.3	16,791.3	4.71

Table 1 shows that the government actually spent between 4.71% and 6.94% of their total expenditure on education (Durusaro, 2002:36). This is accountable for the present day low funding/provision of facilities/equipment to aid teaching and learning in various educational levels in Nigeria. Therefore, there should be a concerted effort and political will for Nigeria's leaders to raise the level of educational funding in the institutions.

Ingredients for Achieving Education Policy Implementation

Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, she has evolved several plans to develop all sectors of education but have failed to achieve the set goals at the implementation stage. When actual

money has been budgeted and to be spent, a miraculous disappearance of the voted budget would begin to take place.

As a result of this, all stakeholders in the educational system should evolve a financial discipline in order to see to it that the facilities, equipment, tools or machinery required to cope with the teaching and learning of youths be effected. The present economic realities in Nigeria call for adjustments in order to enable us realize our objectives.

Education, according to Anietie (1994:40) is an expensive business which should not be left for the government alone to shoulder. Obi (1995:215) added that every Nigerian should contribute his/her quota to supplement government effort and ensure that our schools become enviable structures where our children get groomed for useful life and citizenship.

In this vein, when money has actually been disbursed for implementation purposes, the intended goals should not be killed through corrupt practices and abandonment of projects. Therefore, ingredients such as: monitoring and accountability, competence, hard work, sincerity and good leadership should be nurtured at the background of any education policy implementation as follows:

(a) Monitoring: Monitoring of projects being executed in any educational institution is very vital for successful implementation. Eraikhuemen (2000:218) defined monitoring as "watching and recording or keeping track of events in an implementation process in order to ensure that a programme is being implemented to specification." In addition to this, monitoring should be supported by the process of accountability. Accountability, according to Hornby (2001) is the state of being responsible for one's decisions or actions. In this vein, the person accounting for his responsibility is expected to explain them when asked to do so. This is where many projects or programmes fail in Nigeria, as corruption and self-aggrandizement are the backbone of Nigeria's backwardness. It is certainly affecting all levels of the educational system in Nigeria.

(b) Hard Work, Dignity of Labour and Productivity: When there is a good combination of hard work and dignity of labour, they would result in abundant production of goods and services in the country. This display of hard work, dignity of labour and productivity by anyone entrusted with the funding, supervision or implementation of an educational programme is very necessary. When there is hard work, dignity of labour and productivity according to Adedoyin (2001:6), the end-products achieved would be of good quality and longevity, thereby, enhancing self-reliance of both the individual and the nation.

(c) Leadership By Example: This value is very important to be nurtured at the background of any educational programme implementation. It is almost absent in all aspects of leadership in the Nigerian economy where the provision of equipment, finance and physical structures are involved. In this situation, leaders think of what they would gain from such a venture rather than using their positive creativity to increase productivity to make sure that the programme succeeds as it is done in advanced countries.

(d) Sincerity: Sincerity of commitment is very important for any programme to succeed. In this vein, recent goings-on in Nigeria's political scene reveal that politicians in power are just interested in how much money or material gains they are able to make out of their positions rather than seeing to it that the actual execution of the programmes are carried out in accordance to specifications. Adedoyin (2001:7) maintained that any development that is not well oriented towards the citizenry leads to enslavement.

Recommendations

The Nigerian educational system has experienced a tremendous growth and expansion over the years. Having considered the issues raised, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The Federal Government should from time to time, review the educational policy and make it to move with the time as a result of globalization as it affects the society at large. It should therefore confine its funding to higher institutions.
2. All state governments should be made to fund and manage all forms of secondary school education in the country. The Federal Ministry of Education should provide Inspectorate Services for the maintenance of educational standards and uniformity' of curriculum in the secondary schools. Also, the state governments should hands-off the establishment of higher education in the country.
3. Local governments should be in charge of primary school funding and implementation of programmes in the country while the inspectorate division of State Ministries should take over the supervision of teaching, learning and the provision of facilities in the various local government areas.
4. Sufficient and regular provision of funds by all the tiers of government to the respective schools including other stake-holders should be disbursed as and when due in order to avoid the failure of Nigeria's educational system.
5. Teachers involved in any educational programme should be paid their salaries and allowances regularly. Irregular salary payments in the past have jeopardized educational programmes at

all levels of educational system in the country.

Conclusion

This paper has looked into the justification for regular funding and implementation of education programmes. Recommendations were also made on how education funds could be raised including the regular payment of salaries and allowances. Above, the paper is of the view that when there is a sincere monitoring, supervision and evaluation of educational programmes at all levels of education in Nigeria, good quality and competent graduates' skills acquisition would continued to be maintained.

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