

DECENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATION PLANNING AS A WAY TO RE-POSITION EDUCATION PLANNING IN NIGERIA

Obi-Uchendu, E.C. (Mrs)

Abstract

Education planning in independent Nigeria is about forty-five years old. Throughout these years, the aim of this project had always been to provide the needed human resources for the total emancipation of Nigeria. After all these years there is the need to find out how this project has fared in terms of the achievement of its goal orientation. Indications are that this sector of our national development is not well positioned to impact autochthonously towards the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. In this paper we discovered that the fundamental reason for this state of affairs is the centralization of academic planning in the hands of the federal government that had already too much in its legislative list to carter for. It is, therefore, our recommendation that the powers to plan for education in this country should be handed over to the states, local governments and the private sector.

Introduction

The *raison d'etre* for the planning of education in any country is to achieve national development. In Nigeria, the effort towards education planning commenced in 1959, when the historic Ashby Commission was set up to determine the secondary and higher levels manpower requirements for a period of twenty years (1960-1980), for the growing economy. The question then is: How far has Nigeria fared in achieving the goals of its education planning agenda? Nwadiani (2003), reveals that what obtains is a far cry from the goal orientation; that what obtains is a situation where the universities produce graduates whose skills do not aid economic growth, where education planning does neither recognize the autochthonous effort of the people to innovate nor the entrepreneurial skills of the people to develop; where the school system produces certificate holders instead of professionals in their area of specialization. It is the view of this paper that the reason for this dysfunction is the centralized mode of educational planning in Nigeria. We shall in this paper explore this theme, **with** the aim of suggesting that education planning in Nigeria be decentralized. We shall first attempt definition of key concepts. This will be followed by a brief literature review of this problem. We shall next detail the rationale for the decentralization of education planning. Finally, we would make our recommendations and then conclude.

Conceptual Definitions

Decentralization

Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, defines decentralization as moving from one big place to several smaller places. When executed as an action, decentralization is for the purpose of divesting the center of its powers and empowering the periphery (Uchendu, 2004).

National Education Planning

Education planning, according to Beeby (1968) is the exercising of foresight in determining the policy, the priorities and cost of an educational system, having due regards to economic and political realities for the systems potential for growth and for the needs of the country and of the pupils served by the system.

This definition shows that educational planning is both comprehensive and continuous such that it would be able to meet the dynamic needs of any society. That was why Coombs (1960), defined educational planning as " the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective in responding to the needs of its students and society." Aghenta (1993) sees planning "as a sort if systems analysis to the problems of education with the aim of resolving the educational problems so as to make the system effective and efficient. The analysis normally involves the country's financial means, economic and political realities,

employment problems, student interest and needs of the society.¹¹ According to Nwadiani (1993), educational planning "is the holistic and organic process of analyzing the educational system to ensure appropriately designed steps for action in the future for the realization of the assessed needs of the clientele of such education for societal harmony and change in the context of emerging realities." In other words, education planning that fails to address the need of the student and the society, should have its esse and essence questioned.

Short Literature Review

A lot had been written urging continuous assessment in view of constantly re-positioning education planning for increased productivity. Such works as B.S. Okeke (1989), Nwadiani (2003), are quite emphatic on the need to renovate Nigerian education planning. B.S. Okeke (1989:62), stated that the aims and objectives of educational planning are:

- (i) The inculcation of natural consciousness and national unity.
- (ii) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- (iii) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- (iv) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. Instead of achieving these objectives, Nwadiani (2003:4), stated that, the reality on the ground reveals the existence of the following outcomes: -

- (i) Over expansion of the educational system without development.
- (ii) The volume of unsatisfied demand by students for higher education has continued to mount.
- (iii) There is an acute shortage of educational resources
- (iv) Increased brain drain.
- (v) The cost of education has risen more than ever before,
- (vi) Existence of numerous educated unemployed citizens,
- (vii) Politicization of education in Nigeria.

In order to redress these anomalies, Nwadiani(2003:16-21), talked of resolving first, the interrelated but persistent obstacles to educational planning which include:-

- (i) The cart before the Horse syndrome:- Putting an end to the issue of process disorder where the political leadership without due regard to the already existing educational planning, issue new guidelines for education in order to score political points.
- (ii) Poor functional differentiation: - Achieving a clear definition of the objectives of educational planning in Nigeria and non-involvement by the central government of the states and local governments, in planning and implementation of planned goals.
- (iii) Weak data Base: Acquiring accurate data concerning education in Nigeria in order to aid planning,
- (iv) (iv) Population explosion: Planning should be done in such a way as to reflect increasing rate of population,
- (v) (v) Inadequate resources: Resources (human, physical, fiscal, time) are in short supply and
- (vi) should be improved upon
- (vii) (vi) Depressing economy: Micro and Macro-economic measures should be taken to stabilize
- (viii) the economy,
- (ix) (vii) Unprogressive administrative tradition: Relaxing the administrative control in order to be
- (x) responsive to the numerous changes bombarding the education sector,
- (xi) (viii) Politics: Controlling the disruptive influences of politics in educational planning,
- (xii) (ix) Lack of public support: Avoiding the situation whereby, education planning is public
- (xiii) imposed.
- (xiv) The question still remains as to whether the centralized approach to education planning is the

best approach to achieving these goals enumerated above. This paper makes a contrary submission. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the bane of growth-oriented education planning in Nigeria is the centralized mode of planning. If the process becomes decentralized; if education is made the-responsibility of state governments, local governments and the private sectors, there exists abundance ' evidence to show that education planning would be result oriented.

(xv) **The Rationale for Decentralization**

(xvi) We had enumerated above the classical problems of education planning in Nigeria. However,; the problems; generated by centralization of education planning had never been highlighted. The problems generated by this mode of planning include:

(xvii) (i) **Encouragement of Mediocrity for the Sake of Federal Character**

(xviii) The fundamental goal of centralized education planning in Nigeria is to bridge the gap between the high literacy level in Southern Nigeria and the low literacy level in Northern Nigeria. It is with this in mind that B.S. Okeke(1989:16), described education planning as a leveler. In other words, it has the potentiality to level out imbalances in education nationwide. One of the consequences of this policy is the denial of tertiary education to numerous qualified students from the south that makes the cut off mark in Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination. Writing recently on the need to abolish JAMB and empower the states local governments and the private sector to be in charge of education planning, Achime Attama (2005:15), stated that:-

(xix) !n 1998, about 3000 students from Southern Nigeria, who sat for JAMB and passed were denied admission into the University while a similar number from Northern Nigeria, even with lower score than the candidates from the south got admission into the University.

(xx) If states, local governments and private sectors were made to be in charge of education and education planning, it does not seem that denying education to willing candidates would be the order of the day. Instead, deliberate effort would be employed in an environment characterized by healthy competition, to improve on the educational system in order to absorb more students.

(xxi) **Planning to Suit Developmental Needs**

Nigeria as a country is an agglomeration of disparate ethnic groups with their differences. This situation of heterogeneity has over the years hampered the achievement of the goal of natural integration (Ake, 1997). For instance, while people of South Eastern Nigeria are oriented towards commerce and technological innovations while those from Northern Nigeria are mainly oriented towards excellence in agriculture. The south easterners, for instance, proved their mettle during the civil war (1969-1970), when they were able to survive the war for three years due to the numerous scientific inventions they made in the area of sustainable agriculture and weapon manufacturing. With the end of the war, these innovations were neither improved upon nor were they incorporated into the educational curriculum of Nigeria because they were products of "a defeated people"(Ekwereazu, B.N. 1996:12), Ndigbo, remained undaunted as they continued on this "modus vivendi" with the numerous technological inventions made and marketed at commercial cities of Nnewi in Anambra State and Aba in Abia State. Despite these, the federal government do not orientate its educational planning to reflect these achievements. It is the view of this paper, that, if states were in charge of education and educational planning, education would be oriented towards serving the developmental needs of the people. This would also put an end to the situation whereby, students aspire towards education in order to acquire certificates instead of education.

Increasing Corruption Among Implementers of Education Planning

Increasing corruption among the implementers of education planning is another factor, which impede realization of the goals of national education planning in Nigeria. Writing recently on this subject matter, Achunike K..C. (20004:5), stated that, the corruption range from national examination bodies such as JAMB to the corrupt practices attending university education as well as state education bodies. He goes on to argue that some of the personnels in State Education Boards manifest their corrupt tendencies because they have godfathers at the federal level. He illustrated this point by detailing the case of one young primary six boy from Umunze, who was one of the brightest in

national quiz competition on science. It is because of this performance that the boy was slated to attend an international competition at Chile in South America, with his project adviser. Some officials at the State Primary Education Board (SPEB) replaced the project Adviser with their names. The state government discovered their plan and directed that the boy should attend with the project adviser. The officers felt injured and delayed the processing of the boys papers eventually, denying him of the opportunity to travel to the international competition. Today, these officials have not been prosecuted because of their so-called 'godfather' at the Federal Ministry of Education. There are numerous cases like this, our argument therefore, is that these corrupt tendencies manifest because the federal government is simply too big and lacks the mechanism to monitor implementation of its programmes. It is therefore, because of this inefficiency that education planning should be given to the states, local governments and the private sectors to manage.

Recommendations

We have so far copiously x-rayed some of the symptoms manifesting the inability of the federal government to continue having domineering control over education planning in Nigeria. Laski (1982:668), stated that decentralization confers responsibility on the federating states; makes authority creative; avoid danger of bureaucracy essential for the exercise of rights of people and makes experiment in governance possible. He equally stated that decentralization like privatization engenders efficiency and cuts waste from the system. It is, therefore, the view of this paper in line with this 'Laskian' gnoseology , education planning should be taken away from the federal government , while the state governments, local governments and the private sectors should directly carter for education. In line with this thinking, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) **Constitutional Review:** Second Schedule Part II section 27-30 of 200, constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be changed to indicate that powers to legislate over education belongs to the states, local government and the private sectors.
- (ii) **Empowerment of the States:** The resources due to the federal government because of its control of education sector should be given to the states and local governments in order to empower their activities in this sector.
- (iii) The state governments working in tandem with its local governments should then evolve school curriculum which would empower its people towards auto centric development taking into consideration the culture, background and technological advancements of their society.
- (iv) The federal ministry of education can only act, after these changes, as an independent umpire and counselor advising states on how to achieve their objectives if they are invited to assist.

Conclusion

Decentralization of education planning in Nigeria is **not a new idea**. However, the call to make this change is ever becoming strident. It is our hope that implementation of above recommendations would fundamentally reposition education planning in Nigeria for the achievement of sustainable development.

References

- Achunike K.C.. (2004) Corruption in Our Educational Sector. *Daily Champion* July 12, Vol.10, No. 136 Lagos: Champion Newspapers Limited.
- Aghenta, J.A., (2001) Educational Planning: A Turning Point in Education and Development. *Inaugural Lecture Series* 58 Benin City: University of Benin.
- AttamaA. (2005), JAMB And Promotion of Mediocrity. *Vanguard*, Vol. 21, April 27. Apapa: Vanguard Media Limited, p. 33. Ake C. (1991) *Why Humanitarian Emergencies Occur*. Helsinki: United Nations University for Development Research.

- Beeby, C.E., (1968). *Quantitative Aspects of Educational Planning*. Paris:Unesco, HEP
- Coombs, P. H., (1970) What is Educational planning ? *fundamentals of Educational Planning Series*^
No. I, Paris: Unesco./HEP
- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999*, Abuja: National Orientation Agency
- EkwereazuB.N.,(2004). Integration of Ndigbo into Nigeria, *Vanguard*. Vol. 18, August 12, Apapa:
Vanguard Media Ltd.
- LaskiH.J-, (1982). *A Grammar of Politics*. London: George Allen
&Unwin.
- Nwadiani, M. (1993). *The Concept of Educational Planning*. Monograph, University of Benin.
- Nwadiani, M, (2003) *Educational Planning and National Development. Mufti- disciplinary Journal of
Research Development*.Vol. I , No. 1 March, 2003. Markurdi: NARD.
- Okeke, B.S. (f 989} .*Educationalplanning in Nigeria-A Social Process Approach*. Lagos Joja Press .
Ltd.
- Uchendu, O,J.,(2004). Democracy and National Development: Need For Constitutional Reform in
Nigeria. *Multidiscipttnary Journal of Research Development.*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Mars MakurdirNational
Association for Research Development