EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The concept of educational technology is crucial to the advancement of teaching and learning.

If the concept of educational technology is to be useful, then it must be prescriptive as well as descriptive, and should be capable of reconciling the different views dealing with development and innovation in education since educators have grown used to thinking in dualistic terms such as teacher – dominated versus child – centered, hardware versus software and teacher – teaching versus learner – learning. The impact of ICT was less manifest until the emergence of cybercafé in higher institutions of learning and the subsequent upsurge in the interest of computer literacy among students and other users. The emergence of ICT evolution in Nigeria has affected the development of educational technology in our institutions of learning. Problems militating against education system in Nigeria include among others: Poor Preparation and Malpractices, Poverty and fall in Standard, Exploitation and Educational Standard.

In the recent past, there has been an emergence of ICT revolution in Nigeria which has equally affected the development of Educational Technology in our institutions of learning. Evidently, there has also been relative awareness of the vital role of information in nation building. Thus, ICT does not only provide access to this information but is an indispensable tool for both national and international interpretation of data in advancing Global society. The global Community is now being determined by the ease and speed with which people have access to data and how they can effectively use them to technologically improve their global outlook (Tribune, 2003). Also, World Bank Report (2000) has exemplified that ICT could be used to enhance computer skills for young people seeking employment. As for University graduates and undergraduates, computer skill is necessary to effectively appreciate the benefits of programme learning and computer assisted instruction. These are the core theoretical aspects of educational technology where learners can manipulate ICT hard and software gadgets to support their personalized instruction or merely surfing in the net for general information and data gathering purposes. There is therefore, an urgent need on the part of academic institutions for partnering with private services providing agencies to acquire ICT skills necessary for learners to use in enhancing their capacity in research and development in every field of study.

Meanwhile, with the proliferation of educational institutions in Nigeria, and with the concept of ICT becoming popular in most of them, quite a huge sum of money will be expended annually on the importation of computer hardware's and other IT accessories including educational technology equipment for training and capacity building consequently, (Komoski, 1975) argued that most of these hard and software ICT materials are "inappropriate and ineffective" for use in our rural environment due to absence of electricity. Another problem which he also identified was that hard and software prototypes

are hardly subjected to formative evaluation so as to determine their usefulness before such equipment can be mass produced for the use of the general learning public in our educational institutions. By implication, this also means that such software materials will equally be "inappropriate and ineffective" for the educational programmes of an importing country like Nigeria since these materials were not specifically made with Nigeria in mind. Studies have shown that one's culture influences one's perception and learning. Most ICT software materials produced overseas are end product of research findings geared to solve specific problems in their country of origin. Thus a major criticism leveled against these software materials is the unrelated of the educational materials sold to the Nigerian environment. The bone of contention is that in most cases examples and illustrations used have no relevance to the experience of the Nigerian children (Gana, 1982). As regards ICT software materials, Gana (1982) also provided reasons why they are considered unsuitable for Nigeria. Some of the reasons he gave were the sophistication in construction and operation of most of the equipment, the absence of adequately trained staff for maintenance and repair and the non – availability of spare parts for the different types of ICT equipments. Other problems equally identified by Dike (1994) include the problems of compatibility and standardization of equipment sold by different manufacturers. Finally, the reliance on electricity as the major source of power for most of the ICT equipments with little regard to the fact that these equipments may be mostly needed in rural parts of Nigeria where there is no electricity.

Problems of Education in Nigeria
Poor Preparation and Malpractices

Experts in the education sector have been able to identify examination malpractices with poor preparation of students for an examination, and lack of self confidence as some of the problems. In view of the rising costs of education (school fees, enrolment fees, cost of books and other materials) students and even their parents will not ordinarily want to be held back by any form of deficit or failure in any of the required subjects hence will go to any length to ensure success. In some cases, some teachers at the secondary school level are involved by way of encouraging students to contribute money (cooperation fees) in order to secure the needed assistance during such examinations because they "the teachers" are left with no other alternative considering the fact that they are aware of the inadequate preparation of their students as well as the lack of facilities to get them properly prepared before examination.

Exploitation and Educational Standard

A close assessment of activities in schools have revealed that, students are made to suffer undue amount of exploitation by school heads at both private and public schools in the name of enrolment fees and assurance of success in their examination and this they do in collaboration with the ministry officials who are supposed to inspect and monitor activities in schools to ensure standard compliance. Despite the fact that most of the schools lack basic learning facilities and a complete set of teachers, in some cases, a school with the services of an English Language teacher will lack that of a Mathematics teacher. This is the more reason why one may not have the gut to quarry the mass promotion syndrome being practiced in schools because the system itself is not balanced. In like manner, students are being surcharged in a number of ways in tertiary institutions either in the name of dues that are not accounted for, force purchase of reading and other learning materials at exorbitant rates or on services of which staff are being paid for as assigned responsibility and official provision made by the

respective institution. All these lead to lowering of the academic ability of students.

Orientation and Educational Standard
In view of the prevalence of examination malpractices and other related irregularities in schools at all levels this day, the interest and habit of reading, procurement of books and other skills development materials have drastically dwindled among a number of students.

Poor Parenting /Guidance
Parenting entails caring, protection, guidance, provision of basic needs for a child up keep in order for him or her to be properly equipped to meet with the challenges of life, in accordance with the laws of the land. In desperation, many parents have decided to bring in additional innovations by way of not only involving in encouraging, but also financing activities in and around examination venues to effect malpractices in order to brighten the chances of their children or wards in qualifying examination to higher institutions and some even progress on this act through the tertiary level of education.

Poverty and Fall in Standard
Acquisition of Educational knowledge is supposed to help us fight against-poverty, ignorance and disease. The process of acquiring this well desired knowledge has gradually turned into money spinning venture for many of those in dire need of the knowledge and skill. It is now a source of exploitation from the service seekers with little or no consideration for quality of service rendered and facilities on ground, and made an offer for the highest bidder. A trend which has cut across all levels of education from nursery school to tertiary institutions.

The concept, "poverty", refers to a situation and process of serious deprivation or lack of resources and materials necessary for living within a minimum standard conducive for human dignity and well being (Aina and Salau, 1992). Admission and being in school today is merely an ability to pay what is demanded in monetary terms by school operators and not on what could be offered academically. And this in essence widens the scope of poverty prevalence as well as the gap between the rich and the poor which education is designed to bridge. Little wonder why graduates from many of the institutions exhibit ignorance towards societal realities and lack of creativity, due to the inadequacies associated with the learning and training processes which are also observed to be partly because many of those that offer this service do so with greed.

The Prospects of ICT in Nigerian Classrooms
There are several benefits which the ICT in conjunction with the new paradigm in educational technology is capable of affording students especially post primary and undergraduate candidates the opportunity in lifelong learning. This is because the central element in ICT and educational technology is capacity building which is meant to strengthen the capabilities of students and other group of adult learners. Another supposed benefit which is accruable from the impact of ICT is learning while working. ICT offers the unique opportunity of enabling working class learners the comfort of studying in their private offices or at home which in turn stands as the bedrock of open and distance learning education. According to Kanungo (1999), acquiring the capacity for ICT skills is necessary for cost – effective business transactions which he stated include managerial, technical, organizational, personnel as well as infrastructure. The visible effort in meeting this challenges as Kanungo observed has been through the establishment of computer literacy centers and Cybercafés by private investors to complement the effort of government in the provision of ICT

infrastructure. Other benefits which Osinibi (2000) identified are promoting unity in diversity, since as he stated people are linked together in a network of networks "irrespective of location to communicate and exchange information and share resources". On the other hand, he observed that people are better informed through e-government leading to stronger democracy. Consequently, ICT gives Nigerian Youths the opportunity to compete on equal footing with their peers in other parts of the world.

Prospects of Education in Nigeria

The Need for Research Development
Everyone who cherishes genuine growth and sustainable development – Government, private
and corporate organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals should as a matter of due responsibility encourage and finance research programmes, inventions and mass production of invented products as a way of discouraging prospective students from indulging in any form of academic irregularities, who may not have seen anything good or meaningful on the part of those who have been hardworking and creative, research and invention in terms of reward for their efforts. Currently research interest by the government at all levels and corporate organization is nothing to write home about. Many who have distinguished themselves in this area of human endeavour got frustrated and discouraged due to lack of assistance and encouragement resulting in brain drain to other parts of the world, where such innovations are well recognized and encouraged. Despite the amount of knowledge and experience claimed to have been acquired or possessed by some scholars, occupying some prestigious and sensitive units as heads they still try to thwart the efforts of fellow scholars and that of upcoming ones as a way of perpetuating mediocrity with

low productivity and underdevelopment of the society as its resultant effect. Suffice to say, that these sets of scholars have thrown modesty and excellence to the wind as a result of jealousy.

Organisational Influence on Educational Standard
Many viewers have observed that, most corporate organizations today in the country are fond of employing series of measures which are in effect biased and unproductive. They indulge in an unfair selective judgment on applicants seeking employment opportunity into their establishment, by way of using certificate grades as well as institution attended as prerequisites for interview attendance and recruitment. In some cases, they rather prefer candidates with first class and second class grade certificates and those that attended the first generation universities at the detriment of some others with lesser grades who might be better if given equal opportunity. This is their own way of encouraging irregularities and malpractices in the process of grade acquisition by prospective job seekers, therefore compromising standard and perpetual dependence on the services of foreign expatriates for both medium and high tech services.

Conclusion
In some states for the past ten years, not even a single structure has been added to the existing ones or a significant maintenance, repairs or replacement of learning facilities and equipment carried out, rather the responsibility of school ownership and funding is being shifted while playing down on expansion of facilities to meet with the demand of increasing population. The monopoly enjoyed by WAEC as the national examination body prior to 1999, (when NECO was introduced) coupled with its consistent broadening of examination syllabus, its overstretched facilities due to the rapidly increasing number of applicants could be said to

be the basis for examination malpractices in the country. Some public secondary schools are only known to be functional during enrolment and examination period while most of the private schools, lack visible structure and any equipment required for science practical and studies, but enroll students with outrageous charges. More attention is required on the part of the government in the provision of vocational and technical education to the growing number of prospective students seeking admission to the few and poorly equipped centers. The low emphasis on this aspect of education in Nigeria presently is also an observed causal factor in the decline in educational standard, as it is more of a mono system of education. For an educational system to be classified as functional and effective, it must be all encompassing and all embracing. Thus, a well focused and defined pattern of educational system that is all embracing should be fashioned out where vocational and technical education will be well developed and every child given the proper and kind of education he or she desires, based on the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domain. It is however, the submission of this paper that all the stakeholders in the education industry – Government, private school owners, school heads, parents and students are joint collaborators in the decline observed in the educational standards in the country today, with the government playing a leading role.

Finally, since education is seen as a national development and since no nation can develop above its educational system, it becomes not only important but also imperative to find some solutions to the problems of dwindling resource allocation to the educational sector.

Recommendations

1. Equipment manufacturing industries should be encouraged to produce mechanized instructional and educational technology materials locally.

2. Teaching and learning should be boosted through provision of modern technological aids in the classrooms.

3. Multi-national companies and philanthropists need to be encouraged to provide ICT tools in our primary and post secondary institutions of learning as a way of improving ICT literacy and computer skills for young people seeking employment.

4. There is need to consider hard and software materials that are appropriate and inexpensive for teaching and learning in our rural institutions due to absence of electricity.

5. There is the urgent need for mass training of maintenance personnel on ICT materials in the country.

6. Government and the private sector should put in more effort and resources towards the development of education.

7. Educating and re-orientation of teachers, parents and students on the need to discourage examination malpractice in schools.

8. More vocational and technical education centers be established and the few existing ones properly equipped and staffed.

9. An independent inspectorate committee should be put in place to regularly monitor activities in schools as the existing inspectorate unit has seized to function effectively. Government should take over the payment of enrolment fees for both primary six examination and secondary schools external examinations.

10. Qualitative and affordable education should be made available for all

11. Schools should be properly staffed and equipped.

12. Applicants seeking job placements irrespective of grades obtained and institutions attended should be given fair

and equal opportunity to compete for placement.

13. More modern learning aids such as computers, internet web sites facilities, overhead projectors, etc should be provided in schools

14. Online registration being introduced now for school examination enrolment, by the National Examination Body should be encouraged, this will reduce the exploitative tendencies by school heads.

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