

RE-ASSESSING NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION ON PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL RELEVANCE, BEST PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

The government at all levels at the global stage has been making concerted effort in providing quality and accessible education right to its citizens. Among the efforts of the government are free education and school feeding for all the disadvantaged groups and out-of school children, Girl child, Nomads, Fishermen, Adult and Learners with disabilities. The government has provided these groups with different learning opportunities like part time, distance learning system, online education and Blended learning system with the aim of providing equity, access and quality to different levels of education in the interest of meeting up with global competitiveness on the eradication of mass literacy at world level by the year 2030. Globalization creates new values and thus demands new orientations, bringing about changes in circumstances with their corresponding complexity. This calls for serious reflection especially in the area of educational approach. Thus, the thrust of this work lies in the expansion of the scope of education in Nigeria as being vital for global participation especially as the drive for competition and marketization across borders, thanks to improved communication and transportation. Thus, to achieve this purpose, there is need to reassess the planning and the administration of education and the way forward for our nation to share in the global space.

Keywords: Education planning, administration, global relevance and competitiveness

Introduction

Societal dynamism, particularly in a multi polar era with its attendant globalisation has shifted attention primarily from military armament to *knowledge* (in all its ramifications), thereby making the 21st century a knowledge-based economy, also called the ‘new economy’ (Asuru, 2019). As aptly noted by Lopex-Leyva and Mungaray-Moctezuma (2017), a knowledge-based economy is one that implies radical changes in the stages of production, distribution and consumption within the economy with an attendant growth model based on knowledge. Basically, it is one where competitiveness is ranked on the basis of knowledge which in turn has a greater participation in the productive activities (Asuru, 2019). Education has remained vital in the world discussions as it play major roles in shaping events and things. Different civilizations are offshoot of educational prowess as civilizations supplant each other in accordance with the quality of education in vogue (Eze, 2021). In an effort to enhance sustenance in the face of an often-competing ideologies, each epoch was pre-occupied with providing a system of education delivered in ways compatible with and supportive of their world views. Hence, the choice of a system over another was dependent on the philosophical background upon which the educational agenda of a people was anchored. Education is

regarded as the key to the development of any nation. It is the tool for a country's political, economic, social and technological development (Akpan, 2019).

Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria's National Policy on Education

Since a national policy on education is government's way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be achieved using education as a tool, no policy on education can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and objectives of the nation. The five major national objectives as stated in the Second National Development Plan, and endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FGN, 2013).

Nigeria's philosophy of education, therefore, is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system. The ideology and educational goals of Nigeria are extracted from the above national objectives. In essence, the Nigerian education is evolutionary (rather than revolutionary). It makes it less convenient to achieve comprehensive, coherence and integration between its elements, to achieve the five national goals set out in the Second National Development Plan, and to run the framework effectively and efficiently. While Nigeria's philosophy of education has clearly stated that there is a need for functional education to promote a democratic unified Nigeria, and school programs need to be appropriate, realistic and comprehensive; while interest and skill should decide the path of the individual in education, this philosophy has not been tended towards what is on the ground. It should be noticed that the above claims are lofty, but this policy contradicts what is on the field. In general, the UNESCO (2014) criterion of 26 percent of any country's overall annual national budget has not been met by the budgetary allocation for education. In Nigeria, and in recent times, the highest budgetary allocation for education was 10.4% of the annual budget for all levels of education in 2006, including recurring expenditure, which accounted for 77.7% of the allocation, as shown in the table below. There is, in truth, no year in which recurring expenditure does not surpass capital expenditure. There may be glaring implications; no adequate support for research and infrastructure. Unfortunately, policy revisions have not resolved "noticeable gaps in the content and requirements that have arisen in the process of implementation, preserving currency, relevance and paying sufficient attention to emerging opportunities, problems and challenges" adequately in line with best global practices.

Educational planning

For education to play its key role in the transformation of a nation, it needs to be adequately and effectively planned because a faulty educational planning can jeopardize the development of a nation for decades. Planning means deciding in advance what is to be done, when to do it, where to do it, how to do it and who is to do it in order to achieve predetermined goals and objectives. Educational planning on the other hand involves a

systematic and scientific set of decisions for future action with the aim of achieving set educational goals and objectives through optimal use of scarce resources. This implies that educational planning provides the tool for coordinating and controlling the direction of the different components of an educational enterprise so that educational objectives can be achieved (Mba and Ugwulashi, 2020). In any country, educational planning is necessitated by varied reasons which include among others, the desire of government to meet the yearnings, needs and aspirations of the citizenry, the demand for education and access to education, provide quality education to the people, to respond to technological development, to ensure global competitiveness and more importantly to actualize government political philosophy. However, the type of educational planning adopted in a country is not decided by professional planners or technical planners and the democrats but by the polity. The polity is a representative body of the government in power at the time of the educational planning (Akpan, 2019).

Educational planning involves a systematic and scientific set of decisions for future action with the aim of achieving set educational goals and objectives through effective use of scarce resources. It provides the tool for coordinating and controlling the direction of the educational system so that educational objectives can be realized. It is a process of identifying and classifying educational needs of a nation and the direction education should take and the strategies for implementing decisions concerning educational development. Educational planning should reflect the state of development of a nation including the needs and readiness to execute the planned objectives. Thus, educational planning must take into consideration the population growth of children of school age in relation to access to education, educational opportunities and the demand for education. Mba and Ugwulashi, (2020) described educational planning as the application of rational systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of the learners and the society. This means that educational planning should take into account the needs of the pupils/students in terms of learning facilities and equipment, textbooks, classroom spaces and qualified educational personnel. In meeting the needs of the society, educational planning should take cognizance of the manpower, cultural, social and communication needs of the society (nation) as well as the economic changes. Therefore, educational planning is a blue-print that gives direction for future development of a nation's educational system and prescribes courses of actions for achieving defined goals and objectives. Educational planning involves restructuring of the present educational system, forecasting future possibilities, formulating realistic and achievable goals and objectives developing action plans for implementation and periodic appraisal of progress and achievement. The political, social, economic and technological needs of a nation must be considered in educational planning.

Education Administration

Educational Administration is a discipline within the study of education that examines the administrative theory and practice of education in general and educational institutions and educators in particular. The field ideally distinguishes itself from administration and management through its adherence to guiding principles of educational

philosophy (Manichander, 2015) Educational Administration is regarded as the process of integrating the appropriate human and material resources that are made available and made effective for achieving the purposes of a programme of an educational institution. The term “Administration” doesn’t refer to any single process or act. It is like a broad umbrella encompassing a number of processes such as: planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, controlling and evaluating the performance. The same situation occurs in the field of educational administration. The concept of educational administration is applicable in case of an educational organisation which has certain purposes or goals to fulfill.

Education involves the process of training a person to develop in him/her the good qualities and bring out the best in the person. It is the act of training or teaching an individual to learn and acquire desirable skills, attitude, knowledge, values and understanding that will enable the person to think critically about the various issues in life. Education involves the process of teaching and learning. The learner is taught to understand the deeper things of life, the need for good human relation and the cause and effect relationship in life. Education can also be viewed as any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. It is the process by which a society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. These definitions reveal that education is not only limited to formal education but also involves informal and adult education. Education is an enlightening experience that illuminates the mind and enables the individual to make informed decisions about himself or herself and to constructively contribute to the development of the society. Therefore, it is the process of training an individual to develop his intellectual and mental potentials so that the person can make mature and useful decisions in various situations he finds himself. According to Froebel cited in Peerzada (2016), education is the unfolding of what is already enfolded in the man. This implies that education is a process through which a person is trained to develop his innate potentials so that it can be fully expressed externally. This means that education is the gradual or progressive development of a person’s innate powers or potentials. It is development from within the individual until the person becomes conscious of his unique existence and begins to seek his own place in the society (Peerzada, 2016). Education deals with the development of the total man or the whole man. This means that education is an act that trains man in the cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings, attitude, behavior) and psychomotor domains. Education deals with the all-round development of the person. It therefore, develops an individual into a well-educated, cultured, disciplined, employable and productive person. Education leads, guides and directs the learner to the acquisition of desirable knowledge, attitude, and healthy behavior (Akpan, 2000). In this period of continuous technological development and globalization, education should train man to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable the person to compete favourably, globally and to successfully adjust to changes in his/her environment.

Global Relevance, Best Practices and Competitiveness

In our interconnected world, global perspectives in education have taken on increased importance. For one, they can enhance cultural competence. With a global outlook, students are more likely to understand, appreciate, and respect cultural diversity. They can appreciate

the similarities and differences between people, fostering mutual respect and reducing prejudices. Furthermore, a global perspective in education can foster critical thinking skills. By examining complex global issues, students can learn to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize diverse viewpoints, increasing their ability to make well-informed decisions. For instance, understanding the differing perspectives on an issue like global migration can help students develop nuanced viewpoints, enhancing their critical thinking skills.

A best practice is a standard or set of guidelines that is known to produce good outcomes if followed. Best practices are related to how to carry out a task or configure something. Strict best practice guidelines may be set by a governing body or may be internal to an organization. The term "Best Practice" has been used to describe "what works" in a particular situation or environment. When data support the success of a practice, it is referred to as a research-based practice or scientifically based practice. As good consumers of information, we must keep in mind that a particular practice that has worked for someone within a given set of variables may or may not yield the same results across educational environments.

Global competitiveness is derived from economic and econometric terms, as ability and performance of a form, sub-sector or country to sell and supply goods and services in a given market, in relation to the ability and performance of other market (Wikipedia (2003). It implies that the ability and performance of any sector in the country must be measured, compared and in tandem with what is obtainable in other nations of the world as the best practice. On the other hand, World Economic Forum (2013), defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determines the level of production of a country. From the researchers' point of view, competitiveness could be the production of quality and superior goods and services that would be acceptable as meeting the standard and better option when compared to others. In other words, the quality of goods and services produced must be assessed under the prevailing global market force. In view of the uniqueness of the "new economy", there is renewed competition among firms and countries where knowledge is highly priced as a strategic resource and as the index of measurement of global strength and relevance. This has resulted to a new global pecking order referred to as *global competitiveness*. In a more general context, global competitiveness is the ability of a nation's industries and entrepreneurs to produce goods and services that can be sold at competitive prices to other nations. This is predicated on the existence of competing organisations that serve international customers. Putting it succinctly, The World Economic Forum (2016), defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The Forum opines that competitive economies are those that are most likely to be able to grow more substantially and inclusively, meaning more likelihood that everybody in the society will benefit from the fruits of economic growth Asuru, 2019.

In the context of education, global competitiveness has to do with the internationalisation (global marketability) of education and the ability of the education system of a nation to meet global standards and produce human capital that has the capacity to innovate and compete effectively in a knowledge-driven economy. Thus, the products must have the requisite competences, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are substantially comparable with global benchmark and provide the country the requisite innovation for development. This is because the 21st century, has increased channels and access to global

customers through enhanced communications, improved transport system, centralized financial system and globalisation with its attendant reduction (in most cases removal) of barriers. This has increased labour mobility, thus making knowledge a global commodity (Asuru, 2019).

Re-Assessing Education for Global Competiveness

One of the founding fathers of Nigeria's national educational policy framework defines education as the "processes by which a child or an adult learner develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior that are of positive value to society they live. That is to say, education is a process of disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee the rational direction of the society or both" (Fafunwa, in Enyiazu 2022). This means that, regardless of tribe, race or family background, every child has the right to a sound and quality education in the society where they live, as education contributes to the growth and development of societies in Nigeria and the globe at large (FRN, 2007). However, a study carried out by Okoroma (2006) opines that the issue of falling standard of education and the inability of the Nigerian educational system to meet its desired goals and standards becomes a matter of distress to every reasonable citizen. Over the years, the gap between national educational policies and goal attainment has been due to inadequate implementation policies, which has become a great concern to many observers. Okoroma (2003) also comments that education is a distinctive way society induces its young generation into full membership or involvement. Every society needs well-structured educational policies and implementation plans to guide it in the process of such initiation. The three levels of Nigeria's education sector have passed through different stages with various goals and objectives.

The Portuguese traders and early missionaries introduced education in Nigeria to convert to their religions and make Nigerians understand their language to facilitate their trades. The colonial government later developed an interest in the education of the citizens out of the necessity to train law enforcement agents, interpreters, clerical officers, messengers, cooks, stewards, servants, typists, and invariably refined enslaved people (Oke & Odetokun, 2000). Many efforts have been put in place to develop education, especially the tertiary sector in Nigeria since her independence in 1960. Various policies in the interest of promoting education for the country's development have also been formulated; unfortunately, little or no desired effect has been produced from these efforts. Before the return of civil/democratic rule in 1999, the Human Development Index of Nigeria, especially its educational indicators, ranked poor (Federal Ministry of Education, 2003). Most Nigerians expected that democratic rule would improve key growth indicators, including poverty reduction, low mortality, good governance, and high-quality education (Suraj and Olusola, 2011). Indeed, between 1999 and 2015, successive Nigerian governments introduced a series of policies and programmes to improve governance in general, including policies and programmes relevant to the six objectives of the Education for All (EFA) programme. The Collaboration between the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and other line ministries like Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and International Development Partners (IDPs) in response to global education reforms brought some successes in enhancing enrolment at the pre-primary and primary education levels. However, the conditions of education in Nigeria are still wretched.

Nigeria is known as the great giant of Africa in terms of resourcefulness as a significant oil and gas producer. However, most Nigerians live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. Ordinarily, Nigerian leaders want the country to stand out best in everything, including education. However, political will has been lacking. Perhaps this is a result of the instability of governments or lack of continuity. Between 1960 and 2022, the country has had several governments.

In 63 years, Nigeria has had fifteen heads of State, out of which one was named by the Colonial monarch president and only six democratically elected. Others came through military groups, which show that most Nigerian heads of state had never had time to draw up plans of action before drafting themselves or were drafted into leadership. Therefore, they have been ill-prepared for any development efforts, whether in education or other spheres. Most of their actions have not national patriots but for personal aggrandizement (Hodges, 2001). Hodges (2001) went further in the final analysis, stating that Nigeria's development failures have sprung from the lack of success in achieving an effective governance model. So, various governments formulated educational policies, but political instability discouraged the political will to implement such policies. As new governments came in succession, continuity in policies implementation is not guaranteed; this has affected educational policy implementation in Nigeria.

Challenges Affecting Educational System in Nigeria

The intriguing aspect of this section and perhaps the most agonizing is in isolating those issues within our education system that can be appropriately tagged "contemporary". Consequently, we may just have to discuss the issue of quota system, federal character, educationally disadvantaged states among others.

Quota System: This refers to an Affirmative Action policy by which admission into federal secondary schools (popularly called Unity Schools) and higher institutions (polytechnics, colleges of education and universities) is conducted on the basis of the percentage or proportion reserved for each state in the federation. Thus, each state is reserved a number of chances (quota) in schools located outside its geographical boundaries which it cannot exceed. The obvious implication of this is that no matter the brilliant performance put up by candidates from a particular state in a nationally conducted entrance examination, once its chance are taken up, those not fortunate to be accommodated within the quota are dropped to try again another year. This is without prejudice to the fact that candidates from other states who may have performed poorly in the exams relative to the dropped candidates will be short-listed for admission.

Federal Character: Federal character in terms of design and purpose is synonymous with the concept of quota system except that it is normally applied to employment and postings in the federal public service. Its essence, according to the 1999 constitution is to ensure adequate representation for the federating units at the decision-making centres at the federal level. The constitution also established a federal character commission whose main function is to ensure the effective realization of the objective. Within the education system, application of the policy had implied that while officers on Grade Level (GL) 01-06 are recruited from the

states where the educational institution is located, those on GL 07 and above are recruited and posted through the federal civil service commission, which adheres strictly to this criterion in the execution of its assignment,

Educationally Disadvantaged States: These are states within the country, which are presumed to be backward educationally compared to their neighbours. It is not clear whether any state can claim to have been held down by another in its attempt to develop its people educationally, but suffice it however to say the concept has its roots in the colonial era where some sections of the country were receptive to western education and other sections were not. That head start over time refracted into an educational gap between the regions, which was carried over into our present thirty-six states structure. The result has been that government has had to pump more resources into these educationally disadvantaged states to enable them bridge the gap and eventually catch up with their contemporaries.

Commercialization of Education: Following the implementation of the Bretton Woods engineered policy of structural adjustment in the country in 1987, social services in the country has witnessed a drastic reduction in government funding and, as a corollary, the gradual commercialization of activities in the sector. The result has been the introduction of commercial charges for services that were hitherto subsidized or provided entirely free of charge by government for the citizens. One of the sectors worse hit by this liberalization policy has been the education sector. Although the government has remodeled its former Universal Primary Education (UPE) into a Universal Basic Education (UBE) insisting that its thrust is to provide free but qualitative education at the basic (primary) level, yet the hidden charges paid by parents who are sometimes saddled with the responsibility of buying chalks, dusters, drinking buckets and schools uniforms for their children and wards put a question mark on the avowed objective of the government. Even at the tertiary level where government claims that tuition is free, the removal of subsidy on feeding and accommodation has ensured that the poor can no longer have access to higher education. It remains doubtful if the interest of government here is not to promote educationally inequality among the "population in order to foreclose the only leverage that would have afforded the poor the opportunity to aspire for high positions in government. This in essence is the politics of education.

The Way Forward

The Need for Innovative Education:

Today's students want an education that meets their individual needs, and opportunities that connect them to what is happening around the globe. This challenges us to be innovative and to make learning environments more exciting, challenging and rewarding. We need to explore creativity. The use of teaching aids in education cannot be over emphasized as it helps not just in making understanding easier, it equally reinforces the use of skill. Apart from this, "it also engages students' other senses since there are no limits in what aids can be utilized when supplementing a lesson", with this, opportunity is created for interaction with the content in a way more comprehensible to them. Teaching aids make teaching and learning more exciting and engaging, that is why it is growing in popularity and advancement. The task of educators

is to focus on students growing with technological aids. Today, the lecture style teaching, a version of rote method of learning, is giving way to a more involving technological advanced method as blackboard and chalk are being replaced with LCD Projectors and screens. This demands continuous education of teachers in the area of techno – scientific update so that they can transmit the knowledge to learners. When learners become acquainted with requisite modern technologies, they will no longer consider themselves as victims of technological advancement but as fellow beneficiaries in the global market. The concept of global citizenship with equal right of struggle will be fully appreciated.

Education beyond the Classroom

It has been observed that due to over emphasis in certificates, students seem not to care so much in inundating themselves with requisite knowledge as they are with sitting for and passing examinations. It is very noticeable that many Nigerians are certificates conscious. As a result of this, anything outside of their regular curriculum no matter how educative, and how contributively the knowledge can be in the global field, becomes a distraction. Besides, since premium is always giving to the one with certificate, caution is thrown to the field in the pursuit of certificate. This has a devastating effect on globalizing education since class work becomes the central focus, and the almighty teacher who sets the examinations, becomes the sole determinant of educational future. The learner propelled by the desire to get certificate may just decide to be attentive without interest. In fact, the shocking thing is that majority whom we consider as having wonderful certificate cannot compete favourably in the same area of competence with others in the open global field of knowledge. The fact is that the era of formal education being limited only to classrooms is over. Learners must engage and be engaged in new ways of learning with a prospect that goes beyond the classrooms, aiming strongly in getting the learners prepared for relevance in the global community. In the modern world of education, people organise conferences, workshops, Seminars and forums thereby expanding the learners' educational scope. In such academic gatherings, the effect of modern means of communication comes to forefront and opportunity for a wider interaction is created as participants come from various fields of life and backgrounds. This makes it more attractive and compelling to the participating audience than the 'omnipresent teacher of the previous system, who fills the student with basic information that can be found on a digital encyclopedia'. Therefore, in order to be relevant in this global market, resilience to study and docility for new techniques must be evident.

Policy Consistency

The Nigerian education sector has been plagued by inconsistency in education policies and programmes. We have over the years, navigated from one policy direction to the other. Furthermore, sub policy changes within each structure of the education ladder have been introduced and re-introduced by successive education ministers. These have created serious disarticulation and disorientation in the sector, thus negatively affecting service delivery and national development. It is advocated that in-built feedback mechanism for policy review, re-design and re-structure should be put in place in view of evolving societal dynamism.

Repositioning Teachers for Global Service Delivery

For our education to be globally competitive, teachers, who are the facilitators of knowledge, and change agents must be adequately positioned for globally competitive service delivery. The quality of a nation's human capital largely depends on the quality of its teachers as no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This is put in perspective by the popular Latin maxim; *Nemodat quod non habet*, (no one gives what he does not have). Only globally repositioned teachers can produce globally competitive students. For our education system to key into the global competitive platform, teachers who are the critical factors, catalysts and change agents must be quantitatively adequate, adequately educated, professionally prepared and adequately motivated in line with global standards (Asuru, 2013). This calls for re-orientation, re-training and redirection in our teacher training curriculum in line with global realities.

Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation of School Processes

To ensure that our schools meet the new mandate, school inputs, processes and outputs/outcomes should be periodically monitored and evaluated. This will ensure education quality assurance (EQA) and also provide a feedback mechanism for system improvement.

It is in the light of this that Asuru (2013), opined that such periodic monitoring and evaluation will stimulate answers to pertinent questions.

Transformational Leadership

For our education to gain global competitiveness and drive innovation, the nation's leadership at all levels must be transformed. This is hinged on the premise that leadership is the dynamic process of influencing, inspiring and directing others to work towards achieving the goals of an organization. Since leadership is dynamic, it therefore implies that we are all leaders at one level or the other, at national, state, local, school and family levels.

The leadership must be exemplary, focused, demonstrate political will to move our education to a new level. In the school setting therefore, teachers/lecturers, heads of departments, deans, directors and Vice Chancellors must appropriately play their leadership roles for the new direction. This way, the appropriate platform will be placed for innovative university governance.

Funding of Education

It is advocated that the minimum of 26% annual budgetary allocation to the education sector prescribed by UNESCO be maintained or at least 20% minimum as recommended by the 'Dakar Framework for Africa' for developing countries. This will expand the revenue frontiers of our education systems in meeting global standards. Furthermore, our educational institutions, especially the tertiary institutions should fully explore their internally generated revenue (IGR) options.

Conclusion

As articulated in this paper, education has remained vital in the world discussions as it play major roles in shaping events and things. Different civilizations are offshoot of educational prowess as civilizations supplant each other in accordance with the quality of education.

Nigeria is yet to benefit from the full potential of education as the nation still lags behind in virtually every critical global efficiency rating. The good news is that Nigeria can still affect significant positive shift in her current ratings by re-assessing and re-positioning the nation's education system, in response to the current social realities. Specifically, if the government will invest seriously in education and remove the bottleneck of quota system, federal character, EDS and commercialization of educational system in the country and reviewed National Policy on Education to reflect the key competencies required of education minded nation in the world; more so, opportunity for good leadership, innovative ideas, policy consistency and funding of education system in the country.

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