
NIGERIAN EDUCATION AND CHALLENGE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

¹Abashi, J. A., ²Moga E, & ³Dantsoho M, A.

^{1,2,3} Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

Email: abashijohn4@gmail.com

Citation: Abashi, J. A., Moga, E, & Dantsoho M, A. (2022). Nigerian education and challenge of political leadership. *Journal of Science, Technology and Education (JSTE)*; www.nsukjste.com/ 6(2), 15-22.

Abstract

This article examines Nigerian Education and the challenge of political leadership in the country. Education is the systematic and institutionalized transmission of knowledge, skills, values and norms that are acceptable in time and space. The process of transmission has both content and method. In this regards, certain functions associated with the process must be made apparent so as to guide classroom practice for those who are responsible for dispensing these processes. The process of educating the individual or group of individuals at all stages of education is influenced by the political leadership of the country in one way or the other. Education is the best legacy and right of every citizen; hence government functionaries must play vital roles in the management of education. The political leadership of a country greatly affects the kind and standard of education a country has or is hoping to have. The nation's education system most often is anchored on the political ideologies of its leaders who are

the mediators of national policies. This suggests that it is difficult to separate politics from the education system of a country and Nigeria is not an exception as the case with other countries of the world. Political leaders have influence over education which in turn determines to a large extent the type of leadership in a country. This study uses secondary sources of information in the process of analyzing issues. The information gathered proves that there are challenges in education as a result of the activities of political elites. For the challenges to be eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum government must address the arising challenges with all the seriousness it deserves.

Keywords: Nigerian education, challenge and political leadership.

Introduction

Education encapsulates a variety of ideas; hence there are various definitions of the term or concept. Education can be seen as a process

of systematic institutionalized transmission of knowledge, skills, basic values and norms that are acceptable in time and space. It is also the process of developing a person which enables him to create and recreate himself, (Okorosaye, 2008). Audu (2004) describes education as the pursuit of a wide range of activities that are planned and managed for the overall benefit of the society and its members. Obanya (2016), positioned that education is the transmission from one generation to another of attitudes and skills; the accumulation of wisdom, skills, knowledge, values and attitudes of the society. Education makes one morally sound, and ethically impacts in him the shared values of the society. Asides, education inculcates in the individual, societal goals and objectives; and prepares young members of the society for future just as it defines the behavioural patterns of individuals in the society. Additionally, education enhances the productive capacity of individuals and society just as it reforms or shapes society and its members which brings about desirable changes in the behavioural patterns of individuals (Okorosaye, 2008).

Education is considered as a basic human right; hence it is very difficult to separate it from the political leadership in Nigeria. This is because politicians have always been at the fore front of education in terms of policy formulation. Invariably, education is a tool to produce skilled workers and knowledgeable personnel for various fields of endeavours. The expansion of industries and other sectors of economy as well as technology are proportional to the quality of education received by the citizens of the country. For example, the establishment of steel industry in Ajaokuta in Kogi State petrochemical and petroleum related industries in Nigeria were all influenced by political decisions.

The educational system of a country is an extension of its political system as Government is responsible for the formulation of policies concerning education. The policy makers in educational sector, the administrators and educational implementers rely on politicians for inputs. The situation where educational system is well funded and good policies are put in place brings good and effective functional education.

Concept of Politics/Political Leadership

Harold (2015), defines politics as who gets what, when, where and how. To him politics is concerned with the allocation of scarce resources to individuals, groups, regions and classes. For instance, in Nigeria, the Executive arm of government is given the mandate of allocating and implementing public programmes for all Nigerians. Whether the citizens are satisfied with the allocation or not depends on the political leadership. Anyaebenunam (2013) stressed that no doubt laws have been enacted by Federal and State tiers of government as provided by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria but the industrial facilities in virtually all levels are of low standard. The constitutional projection of good governance via Federal and State legislation have not been attended to due to clumsy legislative processes and procedures stressing that politics is concerned with the allocation of scarce resources.

Furthermore, politics is concerned with given responsibility to individuals or group as enshrined in the constitution In Nigeria, the legislative mandate and executive responsibility in democratic setting are clearly shared between legislative and executive arms of government (Bagasi, 2002). Politics is the authoritative allocation of values through law

making and administration; the execution of public programmes and politics for peaceful co-existence and for the welfare of the people and sustainability of the country. Ezeani (2006) supporting this statement argues that the civil service of any nation in the world remains a vital mechanism for rapid social economic growth and development.

Since independence, Nigerian government at all levels has assumed the mandate and responsibility of funding education, establishing industries, providing facilities, employment and others (Ezeani, 2006). Politics as a science of civil government has great influence hence, only individuals who are well prepared with a sense of self-discipline and responsibility should venture into it in order to bring about good governance. Anything contrary holds untold political, economic and social consequences which hinder development. Political leaders, therefore, must be responsible leaders who are well involved in the formulation and execution of government policies and programmes and have the capacity of facilitating the pace of national development. Malami (2008) supported this argument when he stated that government has a great responsibility and only those persons who have carefully prepared themselves and have high sense of self-discipline and responsibility should aspire to lead.

Conceptually, leadership connotes influencing people so that they can strive willingly, enthusiastically and confidently towards the achievement of a country's set goals. Sills (2015) defines leadership as the relationship between an individual and a group built around some common interest and behaving in a manner determined by him. To lead in this context means to direct, guide, inspire and

conduct followers to follow with trust and confidence for the good of all in the society.

In politics, a good and purposeful leadership makes significant difference and influence on the nation's history. History has it on record of ancient and contemporary leaders who turned their impoverished and disintegrated societies into dreamed lands. Equally available are instances of richly-endowed countries which have turned into impoverished and disintegrated societies by leaders with frustrated vision (Agbese 1994). Therefore, a good leader is one who makes for a generation with all the inherent interest pitfalls. Good and bad leaders are found in all societies. According to Agbese (1994) no nation has found a formula for doing without a leader, nor has any nation found a formula yet to prevent a leader from disappointing it. Nigerians are in dire need of good leaders but have found very few and this has caused challenges in different sectors of the society including education.

Challenges of Political Leadership to Nigerian Education

The Nigerian education is bedeviled by many crises. Most of these crises are the direct consequences of the political leadership in the country. The challenge of political leadership has affected other sectors notably economy, health and agriculture. African political history is full of leadership crises. For instance, former African leaders like Mobutu Sese Sekos, Samuel Doe's, Liberia or Somalia-led oppression regimes which provoked a countervailing reaction on the part of resentful groups that led to the eventual fall of their states. The Nigerian governments in all levels in the country are unable to put in place transparent and accountable institutions capable of securing economic progress,

governing effectively and protecting the entire citizenry. The bad government brings about authoritarianism and repression, dramatic economic decline accompanied by indiscriminate corruption and the adoption of exclusive policies that promote self-secession tendencies. The fall of first and second republics in Nigeria are attributed to lack of transparency of leaders in the governmental process.

As a result of lack of patriotic and charismatic leadership, corrupt interest elites muddle the state to serve their narrow interest instead of the interest of the nation. Consequently, the state is unable to perform these functions of protection, delivery of basic social services and provision of institutions to respond to legitimate demands and needs (Mahmud, 1999). The National Intelligence Council (NIC) report of January, 2017 which painted a depressing picture of the African continent as a failed continent; came up with ideas as globalization; patterns of conflicts, terrorism, democratization, AIDS; evolving foreign influences and religious; that Nigeria in particular could disintegrate or fragment within the next fifteen (15) years. Before now many African states like Somalia, Burundi, Angola, Congo, Liberia, Sudan, Sierra Leone at different stages of leadership have collapsed. The (NIC) reports had drawn the attention of the country to the enduring problems of leadership. Rotberg(1990) in his analysis of Nigeria as a failed state in 1990s categorized the country as a state that has collapsed and gradually recovering. Going by Rotberg categorization of Nigeria in 1990's as a collapsed state, the question that readily comes to mind is, can Nigeria relapse into failed state as predicted by National Intelligence Council report and what is the critical role of leadership in averting this situation? Leadership crises bring about bad

government which is the consequence of lack of accountability, transparency, corruption, lack of respect for the rule of law and inability to fulfil campaign promises.

The unstable government which is the challenge of political leadership in Nigeria seriously affect the education system.

Aims and Objectives of Nigerian Education

The political leadership in Nigeria in pursuance of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and good habits for its citizens came up with the philosophy and goals of education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2013), and outlined the aims and objectives of education to include the following:

- i. To provide an individual with skills necessary for him to function in the society and seek further knowledge.
- ii. Provide an individual with vocational training that will enable him to be self-supporting.
- iii. To awaken an interest in people/individuals taste for knowledge.
- iv. To make individuals critical.
- v. To put people in touch with and train them to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements of mankind.

The above listed objectives are to be pursued by government with the support of the political leadership; which means the education sector needs a lot of attention because it gives room for the country's development.

The quality and standard of education in Nigeria is poor because education has not been given the desired attention by political leadership. The Nigeria former president of the Academic Staff Union of Universities

(ASUU) observed that the National Assembly and some executive members are paid JUMBO (fabulous) salaries but when it comes to funding education the government always complain that she has no money. This statement was made with regards to the position of the federal government during the 2013 ASUU strike embarked upon to press for the implementation of the 2009 Federal Government and ASUU agreement. The Federal Government through its negotiating team had argued that it lacks the funding ability to implement the demands of ASUU in the aforementioned agreement. Again in March, 2020, the political leadership in Nigeria forced ASUU to embark on strike to press home their demand. From the above observation, it can be mentioned that there is a general public dissatisfaction with the performance of Nigeria legislative arm of government and executives with regards to funding of education. According to Adamolekun (2013), all the oversight mission functions of the national assembly in respect of the different sectors, including education are tales of corrupt practices without a single Millennium Development Agency being made to account for implementation, failure and poor performance. The Academic Staff Union of Universities is still on strike over the non-implementation of the ASUU demands. Negotiations have often failed due to Federal Government not honouring the agreements reached with ASUU.

Nigeria runs a Federal system of government hence education is in the concurrent list of Federal Government. It is run by Federal, State and Local Governments. The Federal Government through Federal Ministry of Education controls Federal Universities and secondary Schools. State's public schools and tertiary institutions are controlled by the State Ministry of Education. Primary schools are

controlled through State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). This arrangement is to ensure effective control and high standard of education but corruption that has bedeviled the political leadership in the country affects this anticipated high standard, as in most cases funds allocated to education at those levels are not properly utilized. In different states of the federation the counterpart funding of Universal Basic Education fund has not been accessed due to state government inability to contribute their quarter.

Tetfund contracts in various institutions have been awarded and revalidated and abandoned on flimsy reasons. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) money swallowed by a mysterious snake is a case of corruption. Money meant for the purchase of equipment and facilities in schools, faculties, departments are always diverted, Provost and Rectors of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics are in most cases dismissed for their negative acts of embezzlement and financial misappropriation.

The government; political leadership is responsible for funding of education in the country. The National Assembly and the National Executive Council through appropriate legislation are responsible for budgetary allocation to education. In the year 2017, the education sector was allocated only 7.04% of the N8.6 trillion In the budget, much less than the 26 percent UNESCO recommendation. The low budgetary allocation to education cannot sustain the high standard of education the country needs and it is a great challenge that enumerates from the political leadership who are in fore front of formulating and implementing educational policies in the country.

The government's inability to accommodate the rising number of population of school age children in the country is a political challenge that affects the education of children. The school age population of Nigeria as at independence was 45.2 million but as at 2018 according to UNESCO, the population is about 197.3 million; this is a major political problem as government cannot fully cater for the educational needs of the ever increasing population. In 2016, the Nigeria population under the age of 15 was about 44 percent. The basic education system failed to integrate large part of this growing population. The United Nations through its agencies UNESCO in 2017 stated that the primary school age of children who enrolled in school was 39.4 percent. According to UNESCO, 20th October 2018, 30 percent of child official primary school ages are out of school. Most of these are the 'almagiri' children and those in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPC) due to insurgency and terrorism.

One critical challenge of political leadership on education is that of the control of schools. The control of schools between federal, state and local government in the management of education is one of the fundamental problems confronting Nigeria education. For instance, the control of primary school education in Nigeria is neither fully in the hands of federal government; nor state or local government. This is a serious challenge that affects educational development at this basic level of education in the country as there is no uniform guide on the management of financial resources as a result of corrupt practices by political leaders at these different tiers of government in the country. For example, today, many institutions or schools are established on political grounds or flimsy reasons. Some secondary schools are sited on political reasons and such schools don't really

have students or teachers, yet there were absence of classroom/office accommodation for a friendly teaching and learning to take place. Admission into schools – University, colleges, polytechnic and secondary school are guided by politicians and not academic performance of the students. Sharp practices by political leaders often influence the lowering of JAMB cut off points for admission of students into tertiary institutions as what took place at the National Assembly in 2017.

Corruption is another challenge that stares the syndrome of political leadership on the Nigerian education system. For instance, cases bound of lecturers collecting bribes from students to give them good grades, university administrative staff demanding bribes from students to have their examination results compiled and submitted to required authorities.

Poor governance and mismanagement on the part of political leadership have equally crippled other sectors and education in particular in the country. For example, government lackadaisical attitude on the budgetary allocation to education has always been below the United Nations recommendation standard of 26%. This makes the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goal in the country difficult. Aside the insufficient teaching materials ranging from textbooks to other teaching aids notably audio, video, DVDs, projectors, computer to mention a few, are devices used by teachers to enhance classroom instructions in Nigerian schools due to the nonchalant attitudes of the government towards education.

Most of our schools lack infrastructure characterized by dilapidated structures which are incompatible with the conducive learning

environment. Most schools lack basic equipment and facilities for conducive learning and practical in science subjects. Where a library exists, they lack needed books, journals and magazines or they are stocked with outdated books. Government needs to provide these equipment and facilities for effective learning and good quality of education to thrive in the country. In Nigeria today, the question of inadequate teachers is almost an issue of the past. What is facing the educational system is instability of teachers. There is instability because the condition of service does not favour them to stay in the teaching profession throughout their active service, hence they move looking for greener pasture as alternatives. The unstable condition of teachers in primary and secondary schools has drastically affected the education system.

Further more important of note is the politicians' influence on the recruitment exercise of teachers. Most politicians are only interested in securing appointment for their political friends or relations. They do not bother if they are qualified or not. This has contributed to the employment of unqualified teachers in schools. The inability of political leaders to arrest this ugly situation constitutes a cog in the wheel of educational progress in Nigeria.

Worthy of note too as a political leadership challenge is the issue of continuous training for teachers. Adequate measures are not in place by relevant authorities to ensure that every teacher undergoes continuous periodic training and retraining program and workshop to keep them abreast with on current educational issues globally and nationally especially the modern practices that could help remodel their interrelationship with the

society and pedagogies of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

This paper reviews the challenges of education in Nigeria. The challenges are political, economical and societal. In reviewing the challenges the paper takes a look at the current happening in Nigerian Educational system visa vis the political leadership's contributions to the challenges. This is viewed from literature on Nigerian education system, political leadership, aims and objectives of Nigerian education; which is influenced by political leadership. Possible solutions to the challenges on Nigerian education system were elaborated. The paper notes that the Nigerian educational system is influenced by the activities of Nigerian political leadership and the standard of education in the country today is the aftermath of the work of political leadership.

Recommendations

The following are suggested possible solutions to educational challenges and political leadership in Nigeria

1. Adequate budgeting and provision to education (proper funding of education sector)
2. Employment of qualified staff
3. Good governance (proper management of education and educational guidelines)
4. Admission of students based on merit
5. Eradication of corruption and sharp practices in schools
6. Encouraging staff to attend training programmes and workshop as well as seminars.
7. Provide teaching aids for teachers
8. Check population explosion

9. Provide enough structures and facilities in schools
10. Provide incentives for teachers.

References

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National policy in education: Cout Press.

Obanya, P.A. (2016). The Dilemma of Education in Africa Li
[www.screpubo.com.reference](http://www.screpubo.com/reference)

Okam, C. C. (2002): Reading in new developments in Nigerian education: issues and insights: a collection of curriculum papers Jos: delta publications.

Oklo G. (2000). Education and political stability in Nigeria: Nigeria; (4)152

Okorosaye F, Godgift, & Nath M. (2008). Research publication
acadean.uniport.nig

Peters, R.S. (1996). Ethics and education: London: Nnwin University Books.
Uis.unesco.org/en/country/NG

University of Port Harcourt;
<https://www.researchgate.net>

Chinedu, O. (2017), Relationship between education and politics in Nigeria
<https://infoguideruger.com.society>

Retrieved from: <https://infoguidenigeria.com>

Retrieved from: <https://www.iiste.org>>

Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org>>

Retrieved from: www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40715305

<http://www.researchgate.net>>

Retrieved from: www.wordmaters.inforworld