

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CONFLICT IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a trend analysis of educational reforms in Nigeria, it looks at various reforms and analyzed the problems associated with these reforms, such as lack of actual statistical data, political will, poor implementation, lack of funds poor infrastructure and teachers training programme among others, and the effect of other social factors (such as teachers personality, societal perceptions of the teacher, students socioeconomic background) on the educational system. Education is the pivot of every societal development and as such adequate programme should be developed to always improve on the average citizen, therefore education is not only about the curriculum but the social factors surrounding the teacher and the students. Lately the performance of students in external examination have been declining in spite of the frequent review of the curriculum, as a result there is a need to look at other factors within the society (social) that might be responsible for this decline. Therefore to achieve a sustainable development, Citizenship education as a subject should be made a compulsory in all levels of our educational system, the private sector and non - governmental organizations should be actively involved in educational financing and there is need to improve on supervision of schools by relevant agencies.

Keywords: Sociological Perspective, Conflict, Educational System, Educational Planning and Policy

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has witnessed several educational reforms which started at pre-independence, one might note that reforms in Nigerian education system started with the Phelps Stock report with the introduction of the 1925 ordinance and amalgamation of the educational authorities in 1929. According to Azike (2010), some of the problems highlighted in Phelps stock report that led to the reforms in the educational system includes; multiplication of schools and lack of supervision; varied quality of schools; education is not portraying to a very large extent our culture and tradition among others. It was to the credit of Nigerians notably agitators for self- rule that led the British colonial rulers to change the educational system in operation in 1954 from 8-6-2-3 system that is 8year primary, 6year secondary, 2year higher school certificate and 3year university to a new system 6-5-2-3 that is 6year primary, 5year secondary, 2year higher school certificate and 3year university. The change resulted in reducing the number of years at the primary and secondary school levels. Nigerians then were more concerned about education. It is viewed as a patriotic struggle to effect a change in the educational structure for the general good of the country. The Ashby report at the dawn of independence led to the expansion of tertiary education and the introduction of teacher's grade 1(which was later changed to national certificate of education). In September 1969 there was a National curriculum conference held in Lagos. Participants at the conference

were eager to see Nigeria chart a new course in its educational system. Such a system they reasoned will empower the country towards the path of scientific and technological development. They criticized colonial education system as lacking in vitality and relevance. The conference recommended changes in the system, from 6-5-2-3 system to 6-3-3-4 system; that is 6year primary, 3year junior secondary, 3year senior secondary and 4year university education. It was only in 1976 before this recommendation was implemented and one year later for legitimatization of this policy through the National Policy on Education 1977. The national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) made radical departure from the educational policy bequeathed by the British colonialist. Other major reform policies include: the Federal Government takeover of regional universities in 1975, the Universal Primary Education Programme of 1976; the Universal Basic Education Programme of 1999, among others. The civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo (29th of May, 1999 to 28th of May, 2007) embarked on significant educational reforms particularly at the tail end of the tenure of the administration. These reforms are primed to bring about significant changes in the running of the Nigerian education system. The reforms cover every aspects of the Nigerian education system (grade levels, educational agencies, administration, curriculum, etc.). Teboho (2000) in Azike (2010), posit that one of the goals of the democratic government is to have a reformed system of education that will provide access to all levels of education and to improve the quality and efficiency of the educational system. Over the past decade, Nigeria has been plagued by frequent political unrest. This political instability has generated negative effects on the education system. Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded. The resultant effect of this are; shortages of material and human resources for education: lack of qualified teachers; a brain drain from the public sector; few instructional inputs, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems. Most of these problems were highlighted by Phelps Stock commission report in 1925.

Conflict in Nigerian Education

Conflict and crises have become an endemic problem in Nigeria. Government has always adopted the military option to quell these crises and a reactive approach to educational conflict. However, the failure and limitations of these options as response to conflict and crises management in Nigerian calls attention to desirability of a change in strategy to achieve permanent and sustainable peace and educational growth in Nigerian. This desirability for change in approach is based on the fact that sustainable peace correlates with development. In the old African society, values and ethics education were the major instrument for evolving a peaceful society. Through this medium, the traditional African society was able to evolve a system of co-existence in which everyone has concern for the welfare of every other person and was able to establish a conflict and crisis free society. It is based on this strength of traditional education that emphasized ethics and values to achieve the desired educational goals, today values and ethics are relative not because the teacher does not know the merits of these attributes but because he lacks the personality to adhere to these virtues. The Phelps Stock report of 1925 and the 1969 curriculum conference noted this when it highlighted that; education is not portraying to a very large extent our culture and tradition among others, the traditional Africa education does not only include the inculcation of the positive values of the society but a constant and continuous guidance and counseling of the pupil along the societal needs. The first serious attempt (after independence) at reforming the educational programme of the country after independence took place in 1969, through a curriculum conference held in Lagos, in 1969. The conference brought about radical changes in the country's education system (Fafunwa, 1974). The conference's recommendations led to the first post independent educational policy, tailored to meet the local needs of the nation. The national policy on education (2004) made radical departure from the educational policy

bequeathed by the British colonialist this policy was only implemented seven years after its recommendations in 1976 the delay could be as a result of the prolonged civil war and the political will. Other major reform policies include: the Federal Government takeover of regional universities in 1975, also taking over of private schools from the missionaries, the Universal Primary Education Programme of 1976; according to Azike A (2010), opined that between 1983 and 1999 various educational programs was introduced by decrees and edicts. This period witnessed the falling standard of education at all levels. This might have led the democratic government in 1999 to launch the universal basic education (UBE) program with the following objectives; as contained in the 1999 constitution S.18(1) and (3)

1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels
2. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end, government shall as and when practicable provide;
 - a. Free, compulsory and universal primary education
 - b. Free secondary education
 - c. Free universal education; and
 - d. Free adult literacy programme''.

These reforms were directed to bring about significant changes in the running of the Nigerian education system. The reforms cover every aspects of the Nigerian education system (grade levels, educational agencies, administration, curriculum, etc.). Teboho 2000, posit that one of the goals of the democratic government is to have a reformed system of education that will provide access to all levels of education and to improve the quality and efficiency of the educational system. Over the past decade, Nigeria has been plagued by frequent political unrest. This political instability has generated negative effects on the education system. Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded. This resulted in shortages of material and human resources for education: lack of qualified teachers; a brain drain from the public sector; few instructional inputs, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems. Bello (2007), in Azike (2010), highlighted some of the major reasons for reforms in education to include the need to: have education relevant to the need of the country, equip students with the relevant knowledge to change their private and professional lives, make education accessible to more people, and pay more attention to science and technology. Others include the desire to: intimate students with contemporary information and communication technology skills, equip schools with adequate resources, improve teaching methods and educational practices, improve financing and management of education, improve the school assessment system, and prepare the citizens of the country to face the challenges of globalization. The success or failure of any policy or scheme depends on a number of factors, namely; planning, finance manpower, delay in legislation and above all political will. Each of these factors has affected the various educational program of Nigeria. The education industry has become one of the largest industries in the country with almost one quarter of our population. It has witnessed rapid growth and expansion within the past 30 years, from about 6 million pupils in 1976 (Universal Primary Education) to 24 million in 2005(Universal Basic Education). Some of the features of the Educational reforms over the years in Nigeria include;

Conflicts between the Federal, State and Local governments

One of the problems of educational development in Nigeria is that of responsibility and control, the various agencies of education are actively involved, at times in unhealthy rivalry or competition, but the pattern of this rivalry or competition is often determined by the nature

and problems of development itself. The Nigerian constitutions over the years have put education on the concurrent list, which implies that all the three tiers of government are responsible for the growth and development of education. This was strengthened by the 1979, 1999 constitution S.18; 1-3,

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The question is how far has the constitution being implemented? Prior to the Universal Basic Education act of 2004, the implementation have varied from one state to the other, this could be seen from the implementation of the universal primary education were at inception only few states participated and when eventually states were involved the degree of participation varied. The Universal primary education has been a stated priority of every Nigerian government since its introduction in the seventies. The actual commitment of the different governments to the scheme, however, has varied substantially in 1979 while the NPN states seek for qualitative education at all levels the UPN states seek for free compulsory education. The economic problems encountered have also contributed to the difficulties experienced in its implementation irrespective of the revenue generated by the respective governments. Successful implementation depended on the availability of adequate resources, the sharing of responsibility amongst different levels of government, greater community and student participation. In recognition of the need for greater participation of the Stake holders in the implementation of the scheme, the military government passed legislation that spells out the responsibilities of different levels of government and those of various stakeholders. Other initiatives included the re- instatement of the National Primary Education Commission and other management structures from 1993. The objective at that time was to improve the management of the education system. A number of initiatives have also been taken as basic steps to promote increased access to education since 1999; this includes the implementation of the Universal Basic Education act 2004, and the educational reform act 2007.

Sociological Perspective in Education

Sociology simple put is mans relationship with other men, and teaching is the interaction between the teacher and the learner, a form of relationship with the aim of inculcating the desired attributes and value. Frankena in Azike, (2012) opined that education takes place when X is fostering Y, some disposition D by method M; where

X, the society, teacher or whoever is educating including oneself.

Y, the learner who may be a child, a youth or an adult or oneself.

D, disposition, beliefs, habits, knowledge, skills, attributes etc.

Therefore, for the teacher to impact knowledge he should be able to understand be able the child's psychomotor and affective domain. The teacher must not only understand the child's physical attributes and values. There is always a linkage between education and the mode and aspiration of the society and between education and the child physical attributes and values. Educational sociology therefore is an analysis of the socializing process within the school and between the school and the community. In spite of the various reforms in the education

system which principally addressed problems associated with; curriculum, education system (6-5-2-3, 6-3-3-4, 9-3-4 and 6-3-3-4) infrastructure, finance among others, none have addressed the state or personality of the teacher (who is the pivot for National development). While in most countries it is more difficult to become a teacher than becoming an engineer or a lawyer, the teacher undergoes personality/ character test where the degree of suitability is determined.

Dewey in Aggarwal(2007) posited that undesirable society is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in the good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationship and control and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (2004) noted that goals of wealth creation employment generation, poverty reduction and value reorientation can be effectively pursued, attained and sustained only through an efficient, relevant and functional education for the nation, so that the products of the educational system can be employable or be self employed. The universal basic education is designed to allow an exit point after nine years of schooling to continue careers through apprenticeship or other vocational training programs. The objective of basic education put emphasis on a balance between physical and intellectual development.

The goal of Universal Basic Education is providing functional, universal and quality education for all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, race, religion occupation or location. Efforts by government to promote education and literacy in Nigeria have failed because there was no provision for adequate funding; this might have been due to:-

- I. Timing between planning and implementation
- II. Lack of knowledge of statistical data e.g. population
- III. Corruption etc

The Universal Basic Education is funded by the states and local government with support from the Federal government through its intervention fund as provided by the UBE act 2004. The economy has always been seen as the key factor in the implementation of educational innovations. It is contentious that development and implementation of new ideas is linked with the economy, most especially when it is known that the economy is not stable. Linking implementation with the economy makes innovation susceptible to the instability of market forces. This is one of the main problems of the 6-3-3-4 system of education, the financial burden on the government at a point became too great and government began to shy away from its undertaken. As the New Nigeria 26th July 1985 put it; the production and the availability of text books to support the new system was another serious dimension adding that the bulk of the books and materials could not be imported because of the huge foreign exchange involved. It is expected that with the additional two percent provided by the Federal government from the consolidated revenue fund, the Universal Basic Education could succeed if only the funds are judiciously used to improve the existing facilities and adequate arrangements are made for instructional materials.

CONCLUSION

Education is the pivot of every societal development. The national economic empowerment and development strategy noted that goals of wealth creation employment generation, poverty

reduction and value reorientation can be effectively pursued, attained and sustained only through an efficient, relevant and functional education for the nation, so that the products of the educational system can be employable or be self employed; However, Nigeria has been plagued by frequent political unrest. This political instability has generated negative effects on the education system. Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded. This resulted in shortages of material and human resources for education: lack of qualified teachers; a brain drain from the public sector; few instructional inputs, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education transmits the culture of one generation to another. The rising generation does not only need to know the activities and experience of the past generation but in addition needs to be functional so as to be useful for themselves and the society. Therefore to achieve a sustainable developments the following suggestions are made:-.

1. Citizenship education as a subject should be made a compulsory in all levels of our educational system as this would play a vital role in strengthening emotional and national integration..
2. The funding of education should not be tied to political manifestoes.
3. The private sector and nongovernmental organizations should be actively involved in educational financing in Nigeria.
4. There is need to improve on supervision of schools by relevant agencies.

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