

# **Education as an Instrument for Effective National Development: Which Way Nigeria**

**Yekini Olawaiye Lawal<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

Education has various definitions. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit this life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society. The Nigerian policy on education had gone through many stages to the extent that, policy incoherence had negatively affected the success of the policies. There had been significant decline in the standard of education. All the stake holders have contributed variously to this decline. Education, rather than being used as an instrument for effective national development in Nigeria had become a tool for destruction. With the evolving curricula, reform and development by the emerging private schools, education would in the very near future become an instrument for effective national development in Nigeria.

**JEL classification numbers:** I000, H120

**Keywords:** Educational Policy, Development, Skill, Crisis, Reform

## **1 Introduction**

There are various definitions of education. Webster dictionary defines education as the process of educating or teaching. It further explained that, to educate means, to develop knowledge, skill, or character of the person. Thus, education was defined as the means to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of a student. It is also described as the formal process by society to deliberately transmit its accumulated knowledge, skills, habits, customs and values from one generation to the next. Education can then be described as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and

---

<sup>1</sup>PhD, Acting Provost College of Social and Management Sciences/Director of Academic Planning, Afe Babalola University, KM. 8.5, Afe Babalola Way, P.M.B. 5454, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State.

the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit this life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society.

Societies through ages have one form of education or the other, whether indigenous or Western education. This is because education is as essential to man as life itself on this planet earth. Uwaifor and Uddin (1) observed that, long before the advent of both Islamic and western education, Nigeria had an indigenous type of education (i.e. education for the survival of the people subsistence education). They lamented that modern influences had robbed the country of its indigenous education to a great extent. Abdul (2) argued that the colonial administration later promoted Christian education to suit its purpose of colonization.

### **1.1 Importance of Education**

Many perceive education as an instrument for self reliance, social reconstruction and economic development. The increasing demand for education and the resultant expansion in enrolments have quite serious impact on the future development of education in the poor countries (3). Bereday (4) observed that, distinguished economists had confirmed the conviction long held by educators that poor countries would become rich only if they invested heavily in education

### **1.2 Methods of Acquisition of Education**

In the past, children were exposed to the following fundamentally distinct education systems. They were;

- the learning and acquisition of the local skills by participating in the parents' and community vocation;
- the learning and acquisition of skills (apprenticeship) from professional masters within a pre-arranged period of time
- learning the reading, memorizing and translation of the Quran under the training of an expert or in formal Quranic schools
- learning the western education within the formal western educational institutions.

### **1.3 The Nigerian National Policies on Education**

The Nigerian policy on education has gone through many stages. Aladekomo (5) lamented that the lack of policy coherence was a matter of great concern. In 1981, Nigeria launched the National Policy on Education (6). Its main focus was on self-realization, individual and national efficiency, national unity with the objective of achieving social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological development. It was structured into three stages as follows:

- Stage one was 6 years of primary school education
- Stage two was 5 to 7 years of post primary school education for secondary, teacher training College and sixth form
- Stage three was 4 to 6 yrs of tertiary education in college of education or polytechnic or university. Fafunwa (7) described the policy as elitist and irresponsible to the need and aspirations of the Nigerian society.

In response to the various criticisms, the objectives of the policy were broadened in 1985, to include free primary education among others (1). The 6-3-3-4 system which broken the period of education into four stages emerged. It comprised; the first 6 years of primary school education for children of ages 6 to 11 years, the second stage of 3 years of Junior Secondary School, the third stage of 3 years of senior secondary school education and the fourth stage of a minimum of 4 years of tertiary education. Uwaifo and Uddin (1) described it as a system of education which was job-oriented as it placed premium on manual activities, technical proficiency, and respect for dignity of labour and economic efficiency.

In 2004, Nigerian education policy was redefined to adopt education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Education goals were then defined in terms of its relevance to the need of the individual as well as in terms of the kind of society desired in relation to the environment, realities of the modern world and rapid social changes (8). Emphasis was placed on skill acquisition. The policy on education proposed a priority of place for religion and moral instructions for the moral and spiritual well being of individuals but directed that no child should be forced to accept any religious instruction which was contrary to the wishes of the parents (8).

The Nigeria's education reform of 2006 shifted focus to entrepreneurship and skill training and realignment of curricula to meet emerging need of a global economy and knowledge society (9). The reform introduced the 9-3-4 system of education which was referred to as the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The four stages were compressed to three, with the first two stages of the former policy merged to one during which education was made compulsory. The first 9 years was referred to as basic and compulsory education (primary and junior secondary), the next 3 years was for the senior secondary school and the last was the four years in the tertiary institutions. Its curricula were drawn up to address Education for all (EFA) programme of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The scheme targeted total eradication of illiteracy by the year 2010 and increase in adult literacy rate from 57% to 70% by 2003 (10).

There had been the debate on educational standards in Nigeria. Fafunwa (11) argued that the standards in education have not declined. Whereas Ukeje (12) on his part held the view that the standard had indeed declined significantly. Deterioration in the standard of education and lack of specific training in the areas of relevance to the development of the economy was identified as some of the factors responsible for urban violence. It was also argued that, deterioration in the standard of education had caused the breakdown of social values in the traditional structures which had in the past kept Nigerians together. Afolabi (13) argued that, the quality of education determines the quality of the products of its education system and by extension the quality and quantity, pace and level of its development.

#### **1.4 Objective**

The objective of this work was to examine these policies with the view to determining how effective they have been used to drive the machinery of development in Nigeria. This author who was a curriculum planner for a private university was in a vantage position to interact with the various stake holders in the education industry in Nigeria.

## 1.5 Methods

This paper combines evidence from literature sources with those obtained from unstructured interviews and from observation of events as sources of reflections on the success of education as a tool for development of the youth in Nigeria. Major focus of the interviews was on students of primary, secondary and tertiary education, staff members of tertiary institutions, parents, politicians, policy makers, business persons and police in Nigeria. The interviews sought to establish the effectiveness or otherwise of education as a tool for effective development.

## 2 Findings and Discussion of Results

Most respondents agreed that, education was an instrument for development. They agreed that, without education, young people were more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and less able to fulfill the many roles they were to play to ensure their own and others' survival. This is because education was believed to nurture social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. They agreed that an educated mind was self-confident, self-reliant and adaptable, and that this should be the hallmark of Nigeria as an independent nation. However, many challenges had made these not feasible. These were discussed as follows:

### 2.1 Enrolment into Schools

In table 1 below, there is high percentage of enrolment of pupil in the primary school age group. That the percentage exceeds 100% showed that some pupils above the relevant age group enrolled for the programme. Most of the students were from the southern states of Nigeria. Whereas many pupils of primary school age were inherently herds boy accompanying the parents. Some others were "almajiris". These were children between the ages of seven and fifteen who attend informal religious school who roam about with the purpose of getting assistance or arms. They rather than being sent to formal schools were sent to Quranic lessons under the tutelage of the mallams. This class of pupils was never exposed to western education. Such pupils earned their living by begging and after graduation from the Quranic lessons, they were usually not gainfully employed. They lived on the rich in their immediate environment who recruited them to be used as thugs. Rather than contribute to the development of their society, they become a very serious leakage to the economy of the nation.

Table 1: Enrolment Table of People In the Various Groups

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Pre-primary %	8.21	11.93	11.56	14.35	14.24	15.64		12.57	13.39	13.91
Primary %	95.93	97.80	99.48	100.9	100.83	102.85	94.18	85.05	83.09	83.28
Secondary %	26.65	29.16	31.87	34.44	34.44	34.01	31.52	35.09	38.99	44.05

**Source:** Compiled from the various reports of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for statistics

Out of the candidates who applied to the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) between 1981 and 1994, only about 524,900 students were admitted out of a total of about 3.29 million (14). Thus many students who aspired to continue their education in a tertiary institution could not make it consequent upon their poor performance in the qualifying examination. Table 2 presents the performance of students that sat for the qualifying examination for admission into universities.

Table 2: Candidates qualified for admission in the Universities

Year	1992	1994	1996	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Percentage	9.7	13.7		32.48	30.32	35.02	41.55	35.13

**Source:** Compiled from data in Bello, Mulikat, A. and Oke, M.G. 2012. *An Appraisal of Candidates' Achievement in the West African Senior School Certificates Examination WASSCE Among WAEC Member Countries*, WAEC HQ, Lagos (15).

In its editorial of August 25, 2012, the Sun news papers lamented that, 61.19% of the candidates who sat for the May/June 2012 examinations failed to obtain credit in five subjects, including English and Mathematics that were required by the candidates for eligibility for admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions (16). The paper opined that, mass failure highlighted the failure of strategies designed by Nigerian education authorities to stem the tide of failures in public examinations. Those students who failed to secure admission ended up as drop outs. Most of them ended up as foot soldiers for political, religious and ethnic militia groups, miscreants and kidnappers whose activities negatively imparted on economic activities.

## 2.2 Quality of Graduate

In their analysis of the educational sector, Kazeem and Ige (17) had reported that, the poor state of education in Nigeria with the national literacy rate of fifty seven percent. They added that about forty nine percent of the teaching force was unqualified. They added that, graduates of the educational system were often derided, and described as lacking in quality, low in perception and unfit in skills. Employers had been reported to complain that, school graduates were poorly prepared for work. In many cases, employers compensated for insufficient academic preparation by organizing remedial training courses for new employees. Similarly, some countries have been subjecting graduates of our schools to fresh trainings and examinations in an attempt to ensure fitness into their own System.

## 2.3 Discipline in Schools

The educational institutions rather than focus on the development of students had been prone to violent demonstrations arising from incessant industrial crises. Students' unrest and indiscipline in schools are reflection of the general indiscipline in society; breakdown of law and order; excessive pursuit of money, material things and power; changing cultural values; parental abandonment of their responsibility to train and discipline their children at home; frequent absence of the teacher from classroom.

Many students lack commitment to academic work. Some have been found to be involved in various examination malpractices to obtain certificates not for the purpose of acquiring

skill or knowledge. In their pursuit of this objective, they turned to cultism for power to cow down their difficult teachers to award them pass marks. Students who were ill prepared for examinations usually went on rampage at the slightest opportunity under the guise of agitating for improved infrastructural or social facilities in their respective institutions, disrupting academic activities. These students usually made themselves available to be used as agents of violence for economic gains.

## **2.4 Strikes and Lockouts**

Staff members including the academic and non academic members of the educational institutions locked out students at the slightest opportunity to press home their agitation for improved condition of service, improved welfare, infrastructural, social facilities in their institutions and allegations of mismanagement against the institutional authorities. They caused incessant school closures at the slightest opportunities which were frequent and usually prolonged or as response to the frequent students' strike actions for both genuine and flimsy reasons. Consequent upon the regular closures and the poor working environment, commitment by both staff and students to academic work had virtually disappeared.

## **2.5 Brain Drain in the Teaching Profession**

The squalid condition of service in our universities have made lecturing unattractive to quality and first class students to the extent that, most of them do not bother to seek for job as university lecturers. Many of the best brains in the teaching profession had left the profession for better opportunities. The teaching profession had been invaded by jobless persons who took to teaching not by passion or training but as an alternative source of livelihood. Remuneration in most of the private institutions is not commensurate with the high fees that they charged. Hence there still existed shortage of adequately trained personnel to cope with the personnel demand in the face of the increasing number of both public and private educational institutions.

## **2.6 Inadequacy of Study Materials**

The non availability of standard text books and study materials exposed the teachers to the use of outdated lecture notes and provided a flourishing platform for the commercialization of substandard study materials which were usually referred to as "handouts". The dearth of functional library, poor state of learning infrastructure, lack or limited access to recent advances in various spheres of knowledge, length of time required to complete a PhD, are some of the factors which have compelled most lecturers to enroll for doctorate abroad (18).

## **2.7 Inconsistent National Education Policies**

The government had been inconsistent in its national education policies to the extent that before one policy could be properly evaluated, the policy had been thrown away and replaced with another. The governments at the federal and state levels have the reputation

of frequently disrespecting agreements which they freely entered into with the teachers, thus causing academic dislocations.

## **2.8 Quota System Policy of Government on Admission and Appointments**

The governments' geographical quota system policy which had introduced for students' admission into the Nigerian educational institutions and job appointments had sacrificed merit for quota consideration. Consideration for quality and merit are no longer the major determinant for appointment into the positions of council members and Chief executives of the tertiary institutions.

## **2.9 Corruption in the Schools**

Almost all the public institutions have been accused by the students and staff members of either, the mismanagement or misappropriation of their subventions which were usually in short fall of the budget. Management had virtually jettisoned the old policy of retaining first class first degree graduates as graduate assistants in order to encourage them to study for the degree of philosophy (PhD).

## **2.10 Crisis Management in Schools**

Chief Executives of educational institutions, politicians and religious leaders often took advantage of the poor education and poverty position of students and school dropouts. They were often recruited as foot soldiers in either inter-party or intra-party violence or inter or intra religious violence or ethnic militia groups violence with the main objective of protecting their empires or to expand their hold or to intimidate opponents. Crisis in the educational institutions had often been poorly managed, thus, leading to prolonged crises and sometimes violence allowing opportunist to hijack it for personal benefit

## **2.11 Role of Parents**

Some parents were found to have failed in their responsibilities to pay their wards fees as at and when due. Some, rather than use their privileged position in the society to support the schools, had been sending their wards to fee paying schools within and outside the country.

## **2.12 Funding**

Bereday (4) observed that distinguished economists had confirmed the conviction long held by educators that poor countries would become rich only if they invested heavily in education. It would then appear that many African countries have allowed their education systems to expand and grow at all levels without much planning, co-ordination or control and now they are incapable of funding the system in order to maintain established standards and achieve the expected results.

The free and compulsory policy of Nigeria's educational policy had tended to treat education as a social service. The free education policy in Nigeria had been poorly funded. Amaghionyeodiwe, and Osinubi (19) reported that, the pattern of government

budgetary allocation to education as a percentage of total budget since 1986, had been inconsistent. The duo noted that, regardless of the incessant strikes and negotiations to stimulate governments to increase the proportion, the proportion had never gone above 9%.

### **2.13 Emergence of Private Schools**

With the poor funding of education, many parents had opted for the fee paying private schools leaving the public schools for the less privileged students. The private institutions are increasing. Although, there existed adequate regulatory bodies that have put in place minimum standards for the operation of the institutions, monitoring and control had not been very effective. Sometimes, standards had been compromised because of corruption. Added to this is the very high cost of education relative to the Nigeria per capita income and minimum wage levels. Since the private institutions operate in a free enterprise, they charge extremely high school fees citing the cost of private education in neighbouring countries as justification.

The money making goal of a few private universities have relegated scholarship to the background in the training of university graduates. An applicant for the post of a lecturer in an interview deposed to the panel that his past employer, a private university sacked him for failing to compromise his position to make all his students pass their examinations. In the public schools, where tuition is free, the school management had been demanding high arbitrary sundry charges.

## **3 Recommendations**

Resolving the above challenges require the active contribution and participation of all stakeholders which included the following:

### **3.1 Government**

Government should as a matter of policy embark on the following;

- Review the policy on financial support to student to restore scholarship and bursary schemes to be managed by people of integrity
- Respect and implement all agreements that had been entered into with all the education staff members to eradicate the frequent academic work interruptions
- Increase fund allocation for renovation, development and provision of improved infrastructural facilities including lecture rooms, adequately equipped library and laboratory
- Increase the capacities of the public schools to meet up with the increasing growth in the population of youth in the country and the corresponding demand for education.
- Adequately fund the recently established entrepreneurship centres in the tertiary institutions.

### **3.2 Owners of Private Institutions**

Owners of private schools should ensure adequate infrastructure, provision of standard text books, other relevant study materials and laboratory equipment in compliance with the minimum set standard of the National Universities Commission.

### **3.3 Students and Militia Groups**

The Nigeria militants and cult group members are mostly youths with inadequate education and students who are ill prepared for learning. These groups must be outlawed in all educational institutions. To remove the perceived discrimination by the various ethnic nationalities, members of the militia should be given amnesty and time deadline to renounce their membership and surrender their weapons as it was done for the Niger Delta militants. Thereafter, they should also be rehabilitated and sent for training for academic and skill acquisition. Any resurgence thereafter should be treated as criminals. Education must be functional and lead to positive change in the live of the student. Regrettably, education has been abused. Instead of being acquired for development, some have acquired it for destruction. There is the erroneous interpretation of some youths' action which had been translated by the media to mean that 'Western education is forbidden'. This is far from it. The extent of the sophistication and coordination of the members' attacks could not have been the handiwork of persons lacking in Western education. Also, the technological ingenuity and innovations involved in the building of improvised explosive devices could not have been the brain child of persons without good knowledge of physics and chemistry. Unfortunately, education had been turned from development to destruction of valuable human lives and the inadequate existing infrastructure.

### **3.4 Parents**

- Parents should endeavour to send their children to school promptly and cooperate with the school authorities to enforce discipline as contained in the students' handbook
- Pay the fees and levies promptly
- Provide the required study and other learning materials

### **3.5 Teachers**

Managers of educational institutions should establish a well articulated maintenance and academic review mechanism to ensure the following:

- Regular improvement on academic curriculum, schools' infrastructure and all academic activities to ensure compliance with standards
- Compulsory practically oriented entrepreneurship training as a subject at all levels of education to establish strong link between curriculum and societal needs.
- Evaluation and continuous assessment of students that considers the total wellbeing of the student through class attendance, sports participation, leadership training and contribution to its immediate society that would make the student worthy both in learning and character at graduation

- Discipline in schools to include the introduction of attendance registers in classes, dress Codes, active students disciplinary committee, students' congress, replacement of students unionism with students' representative council
- Sustainable training and retraining programme for teachers through long vacation courses, regular seminars and workshops on teaching methods and school administration.

### **3.6 Review of the Various Curricula.**

Enormous emphasis had been placed on examinations and certificates in Nigeria and not the acquisition of the knowledge. Curriculum planners should incorporate programmes that will bring social order into the environment. Students should be taught to appreciate the virtues of labour, service, morality and good conduct. Civics, moral studies, handcraft and practical agriculture should be re-introduced into the primary school curriculum as instrument of teaching them the traditional African social ethics, moral values and the dignity of labour. Similarly, history, mathematics, general science and practical agriculture should be made compulsory for all junior secondary students in order to teach them, the achievements and the contributions of the nation's past heroes to the development of the nation as well as prepare them for self-employment and make them trainable products. Mathematics and English should continue to be compulsory subject for the Senior Secondary School pupils.

To prepare students for higher responsibilities, class room and practical courses in leadership, and entrepreneurship must be made compulsory for all students of the Nation's tertiary institutions. These done, every educated Nigerian, would have been prepared to contribute to the economic development of Nigeria at their various levels.

## **4 Conclusion**

Poverty and employment, economic misery, globalization had caused severe change in the traditional Nigerian value orientation. So also have foreign media directions, movies, cultural invasion contributed to cause serious cultural dilution to the detriment of the Nigerian students.

The quest for acquisition of advanced level of education is no longer attractive. Politics which had become the most lucrative profession required just secondary education for one to become super rich in a very short time. Academic excellence is no longer celebrated but money and wealth, even when illegally acquired. This must change. Achievements must be recognized and celebrated. This bad environment is antithetical to learning. The present societal problems such as armed robbery, kidnapping and bombings have all been linked to injustice in the social system, poverty and mass unemployment. All these are products of education.

Education, rather than becoming an instrument for effective national development in Nigeria had become a tool for destruction. Many students had acquired half education to become internet thieves, money launderers, fraudsters and producers of improvised explosive devices which are being deployed for mass destruction of lives and property. Many of them had been found to be ready and easy pawn usually mobilized and incited into violence by politicians and religious leaders because of their disadvantaged economic

positions and low level of education which made them gullible for easy consumption of misinformation. Hope is not lost. The evolving curricula and development of the emerging private schools would offer significant reform in the Nigerian educational sector. In the very near future, education would become an instrument for effective national development in Nigeria.

## References

- [1] Uwaifo, V. O. and P.S.O. Uddin, (2009), Transition from the 6-3-3-4 to the 9-3-4 System of Education in Nigeria: An Assessment of Its Implementation on Technology Subjects. *Studies on Home and Community Science*. ISSN 0973-7189, 3(2): 81-86. Kamla-Raj.
- [2] Abdul B. B., (2002). Issues in Nigeria Educational system: *Journal of Educational Studies*. Calabar, 7(3): 15-17.
- [3] UNESCO (1991). World Education Report. Paris: UNESCO Statistical records. Lagos: WAEC Office.
- [4] Bereday, George Z. F. (1969). Essays on world education: The crisis of supply and demand. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Aladekomo Florence O. (2004). Nigeria Educational Policy and Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Social Science*, 9(2): 75-83. Kamla-Raj.  
[www.krepublishers.com/...Aladekomo...O/JSS-09-2-075-083-2004-Aladekomo-F-.pdf](http://www.krepublishers.com/...Aladekomo...O/JSS-09-2-075-083-2004-Aladekomo-F-.pdf). Downloaded, 6th March, 2012.
- [6] FGN, (1981). National Policy on Education. Yaba-Lagos, Federal Ministry of Education. Printed by NERDC Press.
- [7] Fafunwa A. B. (1982). *History of Education in Nigeria*. London. George Alien and Unwin Press.
- [8] FGN (2004). National Policy on Education. (Revised). Federal Ministry of Education. Lagos, NERDC.
- [9] UNESCO (2007). Nigeria 10-Year Strategic Plan for Education: Policy, Cost and Financing Assumptions and their Implications. Working Document. Gwang-Chol Chang Education Sector UNESCO Published in March 2007 by: Division of Education Policies and Strategies, UNESCO 7, ED/EPS/2007/PI/1 March 2007 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP (France). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- [10] FGN (2000). Obasanjo's Economic Direction 1999-2003. Federal Ministry of Education. Abuja, Federal Government Press
- [11] Fafunwa (1998), Fafunwa, A. B. (1998). *Memoirs of a Nigerian minister of education*. Lagos: Macmillan (Nigeria).
- [12] Ukeje, B. O. (1995). *Crisis in the Nigeria education system*. Unpublished. Keynote Address at the Nigeria Academy of Education Annual Congress in November at Abuja.
- [13] Afolabi, O.A. (2010). *Opening Address at the National Examination Summit*, held at the National Universities Commission (NUC). Abuja, Nigeria.
- [14] JAMB (1997). University applications and admissions records. Abuja: JAMB Office.
- [15] Bello, Mulikat, A. and Oke, M.G. (2012). *An Appraisal Candidates' Achievement in the West African Senior School Certificates Examination (WASSCE) among*

- WAEC *Member Countries*. Unpublished. WAEC HQ, Lagos. [www.iaea.info/documents/paper\\_4e1239b6.pdf](http://www.iaea.info/documents/paper_4e1239b6.pdf). Downloaded on 25/09/2012.
- [16] Anon (2012). *Recurring failure in WAEC Examinations*. August 25, 2012 <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/editorial/recurringfailurein-waec-examinations>. Downloaded on 25/02/2012.
- [17] Kazeem, Kolawole and Ige, Olusola (2012). Redressing the Growing Concern of the Education Sector in Nigeria. *Edo Journal of Councelling*. **3**(1), 40-49.
- [18] Abudugana Adebisi Jelili (2009), *The Parody of Nigerian Education and the Alternative Search for Foreign Certificate: Whither the Hope of a Better Future?* Part 1. [www.gamji.com/article8000/NEWS8875](http://www.gamji.com/article8000/NEWS8875). Unpublished. Downloaded 15, July 2012.
- [19] Amaghionyeodiwe, L.A. And Osinubi, T.S. (2006). The Nigerian Educational System and Returns to Education. *International Journal of Applied Econometrics and Quantitative Studies*. **3-1**.