



Reform in Educational Administration/Planning for Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper was on reform in educational administration/planning for attainment of the millennium development goals in secondary schools in Nigeria. The purpose for this paper was to fish out numerous reforms which, the government of the country have rolled out and why the goals were never actualized. The paper discovered that although the reforms were for the upliftment of education, public officers, and lack of capital infested it (education) with numerous (many) problems like lack of infra structural facilities, lack of continuity, phobia for change, corruption and unaccountability have resulted in unattainment of millennium development goals. Recommendations were made and the paper was concluded as thus, that reform in educational administration/planning for attainment of millennium goal should be an on going event irrespective of who is in power, adequate capital should be budgeted for and released, competent directors and teachers put in place last but not the least continuity must be made our watchword.

Introduction

In the olden days our forefathers had some sort of education which involved itself in the teaching and learning processes of the natives. This was true, as its curriculum methodology (planning) organizing and administration were mostly directed to reflect the beliefs, customs and experiences of the society in which the child lived. Although there were no special class of people called teachers, everybody in the community was 'involved in the education of a child. The older people in the family/community contributed a lot by way of. educating the child in an appropriate Nigerian traditional aspect, like conformity to the norms of the society. These include the development of character, the inculcation of respect for elders, intellectual development and promotion of skills, which led to suitable vocations later in life. In order words, the traditional education prepared the individual child physically so as to make the child good enough to shoulder the responsibilities of life. Agreeing with above view Fafunwa (1991) stated that the purpose of education in our traditional setting is functionalism.

Advent of Western education

Western education which was later brought into Nigeria by the Missionaries in 1842 and had its own reform agenda. The planning, administration and management of the schools were done by these missionaries since there was no central law and no legal constitution from the government to offer direction and there were no standard qualifications for employment of teachers. Adesina (1988) pointed out that because of this parents did not take the missionaries serious as they continue moving their children from one missionary school to another.

Education was free at that time, but was financed by the missionaries with grants from their home countries. In terms of infrastructural facilities the natives helped to erect the local schools and gifts of goods, eggs, chicken were given to augment the salaries of these teachers. Due to the financial constraints encountered by the missionaries, the size, quality and retention of their staff were determined by the financial strength of each missionaries. This resulted in the introduction of school fees since government showed little no interest in education of the people of Nigeria. This is true as the interest of the government then was to build good prison to guard against escapees (prisoners escaping), hospital and a few barracks for the police. The bulk of the money, which would have been allocated to education, was channeled to the military for effective operation. Eventually, when the government showed interest to schools they only gave grants to the missionary schools without interfering with the planning and management of the schools. This made Mr Carr who was an advocate of government control of education to insist that government should take over the responsibility of education because he believed that education was a vital force in the making of an individual and the nation.

Reform in educational Administration/Planning

After the independence in 1960, the missionaries continued to administer and plan for their owned schools, while the government opened their own schools like Government College, Afikpo etc. 1970 witnessed a new era of administration and planning in secondary schools. This is as a result of government taking over, of schools from missionaries and private owners. Not only that, the government introduced Unity Schools at the end of the civil war to unite the nation.

In this situation the best students from all over the Country irrespective of tribe, religion, rich or poor were brought together to form a new generation that identified with one other. These students that attended unity schools proved themselves by scoring higher and better grades both in internal and external examinations. It became a symbol of unity in terms of education, Here, the Federal government took the responsibility of administration and planning of the unity schools while the State government adhered to the administration and planning of the state schools.

In 1973 the Federal Government changed the school calendar from January -December to September-July. This reform according to the federal government will enable the secondary school leavers' to enter Tertiary institutions and also to help in the farm work in order to boost agriculture.

However, in 1976 the former Military Head of State General Olusegun Obansajo introduced Universal Primary Education (U.P.E) programme. By the introduction of this programme

primary education became free. It was to enable every Nigerian child to acquire basic education in order to reduce the level of illiteracy. Another reform came in.

when the government introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This system of education was to enable the students to acquire skills. In line with the National Policy on Education 4th edition (2004) which states that, "the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society".

The reform in education continued as government in 1999 re-introduced Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) which included part of the secondary education up to Junior Secondary School. This was buttressed in the National Policy on Education 4th edition (2004) which stated that, The basic education shall be of 9 year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. It shall be free and compulsory". Moreover, the emergence of Dr Oby Ezekwesili as the Minister for Education saw a revolutionary stage in the reform of educational Administration and Planning. She explained that the public-private partnership is a reform where the federal government remains the owner, regulator and the financier while the private partners manage the school for efficiency. These private partners (companies) will definitely charge fees, but the government will provide scholarship for smart children from poor families. This reform was only for Unity schools while the State secondary schools would have private partners mostly old boys/girls adopting their former schools in terms of refurbishing them. The PPP (Public-Private Partnership) which includes all stakeholders like the businessmen/women; old boys/girls, teachers, principals, religious groups parents, learners, politicians, community leaders, civil society organisations would have access to online information concerning their schools. The idea, according to the former Minister, will help the stakeholders in the educational administration, planning and funding of these schools. The result will be better management; accountability and empowerment to the community participation in the decision making of education. The students on the other hand will acquire quality and functional education. According to the Government, the Minister for education will give information on the amount of funds given to these schools, while the stakeholders will monitor, if the current changes in the schools equate the amount of money allocated to them. In fact, the Public-Private Partnership model is ramping up Unity schools which is visualized as a test-run and will be extended to public schools.

Problems

Misconstrued information/Phobia for change

Human beings have phobia for change, more especially when the information is not clearly defined. This came to focus when the Senior staff of Unity schools embarked on strike because of government new reform on their schools. They argued that the reform was government way of shifting its constitutional responsibility of financing education to profit making individuals or companies. This will result to increase in drop out of schools by students from poor homes due to increase in school fees. The Senior Staff Union also saw it as an infringement on the rights of these students to free and compulsory education up to JSS111 which

was enshrined in Section 2 of Compulsory ,and free Universal Basic Education Act 2004. .Agreeing with the above views, Ingawa (2002) observed that it is not easy to bring change especially when it threatens to eliminate the monopoly of a powerful minority group.

Incompetent policy implementers

A situation where a round peg is put in a square whole cannot work. A situation where a teacher who specialized in Christian Religion Knowledge (CRK) is assigned to teach Introduction Technology because of lack of teachers in that particular area makes nonsense of the whole reform. According to Mbanefor (1997), the vocational competent of the new system which is the success or otherwise of the terminal objectives of the JSS programme' has not sufficiently been installed. This is true as these teachers eliminated the practical aspect of intro-• technology, which was the backbone of setting, up 6-3-3-4 system in the first place. It makes the educational system to note knowledge and cramming of facts and figures from books. Martin (1997) reiterated that the young are being wasted by the educational system since the education they receive fail to make them contribute to the increase in the output, instead they are consumers and do not work as they learn.

Moreover, the non- implementation of the educational reform creates youth restiveness, as some of the young school leavers' are unemployed since the school did not teach them relevant vocations/occupational skills necessary for the youths empowerment and national development. This has defeated the self-reliance which the government had in mind when 6-3-3-4 system was introduced.

Corruption and unaccountability of public funds

Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) scheme is a policy that insists that the whole of the Primary schools and Junior secondary schools to free and compulsory education to all children in Nigeria. Some corrupt officials and heads of schools collect illegal fees/levies from students. This has made a lot of parents to withdraw their children/wards from school because of poverty, which prevented them from paying these levies. In October 2007, the Enugu House of Assembly passed a law banning the illegal collection of levies in schools by the authorities and non-adherence to this law would attract dismissal from the service. However, schools in our Country have witnessed corruption and nepotism as best students from poor families were sometimes blocked from securing places in Unity schools as more students from elite/wealthy families took their places.

However, funds allocated to the secondary education by the government were wasted through the purchase of unnecessary materials/equipment and most times shoddy jobs were done where contracts were awarded without adequate supervision. The result was that important projects were left unexpected or partially executed.

Moreover, misappropriation of funds by officials created a loophole in the purse of the government (Alagbu, 2004). This increased government expenditure without fully achieving the goals and objectives of the educational reform. In this case few were made rich at the expense of the masses. In collaboration with the above statements Ocho (2004), stated that, funds anticipated

on basis of approval budget were often not received, thus making rational planning impossible. Worse still were the reported cases of financial indiscipline, fraud, misappropriation and rampant, corruption so that funds released for maintenance, procurement of facilities and equipment and even payment of personnel emoluments were not so employed.

This prompted the former Minister for Education (Dr Oby Ezekwesili) to introduce Private Public Partnership (PPP), as corruption and nepotism had taken over our secondary schools especially that of Unity Schools. Ezekwesili (2004), has noted that corruption cronyism, bad governance and mismanagement have been posited to be the "Achilles Heels" of Nigeria's growth and development.

Lack of infrastructures

Due to introduction of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) in 1999 the number of secondary school pupils in the Junior secondary schools have been on the increase. The upsurge of students in these public schools has stretched the existing infrastructural facilities to a limit. In 2006, the former Minister for Education, Dr Oby Ezekwesili sent out some officials to various primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Their mission was to have an overview of the number of schools, students, teachers and the infrastructural facilities existing in Nigeria. The result was shocking, as most of these schools had dilapidated structures, inadequate classrooms, un-cemented floors, leaking roofs, some students studied under the trees, untidy-dirty environment, unequipped laboratories where it was existing. In some places students sat on bare floors due to lack of chairs and desks, unfurnished libraries, unexciting instructional materials etc. Nigerians lack maintenance culture and because education is capital intensive it became difficult to either refurbish the existing infrastructural facilities or replace old ones.

Lack of continuity.

Lack of continuity had destroyed some laudable reforms initiated by the past governments. Take for instance the Public - Private Partnership (PPP) reform introduced by the former Minister for Education Dr Oby Ezekwesili in 2006 and implemented in April 2007 was suspended on Friday, September 21, 2007, by the present government. According to the Ministry of Education's spokesman Mr. Timothy Apoili on Guardian (Saturday, September 22, 2007), the policy was suspended because the "manner and rush" in which the Public-Private.

Partnership (PPP) arrangement came about and put in place, did not give room for consideration of wider views and ideas on how best the schools could be effectively and efficiently managed, even as the arrangement "threatened public interests". In fact, human and material resources invested in this reform have come to nothing. It is worthy of recollection that prominent Nigerians lost their lives in a plane crash after attending the initial presentation of this reform to the cream of the society. Agreeing with the writer Mr. Miya Dauda reported on Guardian (Saturday 22, 2007), that the latest development is very unfortunate and a clear signal of lack of continuity of policies that have been the bane of development in this Country. The action as he continued will lead to once again, to rot in the sector and the modest achievement in the few months would now be reversed. This has shown that Nigerians take one step forward and three steps backward.

Lack of capital.

Lack of capital has frustrated some reforms policies introduced by the government. One of such reforms was free meal, which was introduced in primary schools to attract children to go to school and the Universal Basic Education (UBE). Some schools were selected as model but their governments gave up after video coverage at the initial stage. In South East it is no more in existence, while in Abuja the officers are complaining of lack of capital.

Recommendations

Identification of obstacles like lack of continuity should be the major part in planning for effective strategies and interventions for any reform agendas that a long measure should be adopted in the execution of policies' being implemented by the government. Even if the government" that initiated the programme has exhausted his tenure there should be continuity as long as the reform is for the betterment of the masses.

In the area of capital, reliable statistics should be taken to ensure adequate budget, Bassey (2000), observed that administrators and planners of education should therefore source tor reliable statistics to enable adequate funding arrangement to be made. Prudent directors and teachers should be employed for effective utilization of both human and financial resources. Take for instance, managers in private organisations are more prudent enough to manage their available resources in order that their pre-determined goals are achieved. So, government should borrow a leaf from them for efficient management of the nation's meagre capital.

There should be a cordial relationship between the companies (private and public) and the schools (primary and secondary). The schools should maintain a good public relationship with those companies within their catchment areas. This will enable the companies to perform their social responsibilities on those schools by giving (doling) out assistance on them. Accountability should be ensured.

In order to achieve set goals, evaluation should be the watchword for any reform instituted by the governments this will show the strength and the weakness of the reform implementation. In short, evaluation is like a torch light beams at the reform policies which enables the parents, teachers, and even the Education Minister to measure the outcome and improve on the performances.

Management by Objectives should be embedded into the system by the government when instituting any reform. This is true, as nothing will be achieved if the goal is ambiguous. So objectives must be clear and verifiable to those who will implement them. Koontz, O'donnel and Weihnih,(1 980), stated that, managers checklist should be,

- (1) Are the objectives communicated to all who need to be informed?
- (2) Are the short -term objectives consistent with the long-term aims?
- (3) Are the assumptions underlying the objectives clearly identified?
- (4). Are the objectives expressed clearly and in writing?
- (5) Do the objectives provide for the timely feedback so that any necessary corrective steps can be taken?
- (6) Are the resources and authority sufficient for achieving the objectives?

(7) Have the individuals who are expected to accomplish objectives a chance to suggest their objectives?"

These can take care of some people who have phobia for change on reform in educational sector.

Conclusion

Reform in educational administration and planning for attainment of millennium development has been an on going or yearly affair but unfortunately these reforms have never seen the light of the day. That is to say, that they were killed at the nips of their formation. These have made educational reforms unattainable as reforms are dropped and new ones adopted whenever a new government or minister comes into power. There is no stability or continuity in reform agenda in education. Nigeria should realize that no country develops with one step forward and four steps backwards since education is the backbone of development for any nation. Nevertheless, our country should have a tangible reform, which not only planned but also administered in the country for millennium attainable goals, as this will help Nigeria to be included in line with other world leading developed Countries.

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