CURRENT PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper focuses on some of the current problems of educational development in Nigeria, namely (1) the issue of responsibility and control of the society's education: conflict between the Federal, State and Local Government. (2) the prevalence of multiple system of education; (3) diversification of the educational system; (4) unstable curriculum and subject (5) the need to relate the schools' curricular to national manpower needs; (6) unstable staff (7) the poor state of the nations economy: SAP, FEM and the financing of the education system; (5) politicization of education; (9) procurement and servicing of equipment (10) inadequate classroom accommodation; (11) poorly equipped libraries, laboratories and subject rooms and (12) scarcity and prohibitive cost of books at all level of education.

Introduction
Just as the physical and social development of the average child is beset with many problems, so the development of education in any given society is hampered by a variety of problems, some of which are associated with the responsibility for and control of the society's education, the diversification of the educational system, the need to relate the schools' curricula to national manpower needs, and the society's economy. All these problems are retarding the pace of educational development in Nigeria today.

1. THE ISSUE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL OF THE SOCIETY’S EDUCATION: CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The greatest problem of educational development all over the world is that of responsibility and control. In this exercise, 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. In this connection, Castle's ideas about under-development and development speak with much relevance. He conceives of under-development as

a constellation of circumstances, physical, social and political, which contribute to the deprivation of the mind as well as the body. It involves the poverty that debilitating health, the ignorance and superstition which depress the human spirit, the conservatism that resists change, the 'social privileges which inhibit the fruition and proper use of talent and skill (Castle 1972: 9).

He therefore defines development as "a situation wherein man himself becomes both the object and the subject of his own improvement, not merely an instrument in a process imposed from above and from without." It is therefore evident from these ideas that the conditions in the
developing countries present great obstacles to development in all spheres of life, particularly in education.

The question as to who should assume responsibility for, and control of education is as old as the beginning of life itself and it does not seem that the question has yet been satisfactorily answered, even in highly developed countries of the world. The conflicts of opinions as to what should be the appropriate roles of the various agencies of education are a proof of this assertion. Hence, there is no rigid rule as to what should be the limit of the educational roles of such agencies as the family, the Church and the State. In particular, the perennial debate on the relative roles of the Church and the State in educational matters is still largely inconclusive because the degree of participation of one or the other in the provision of education still varies from one country to the other. In Nigeria, for example, the Church played a predominant role in the provision of education by opening and maintaining schools and by training and recruiting teachers for the nation's schools at all levels of education. It was only in the closing decades of the colonial period that the Government intensified its efforts in providing order and direction for the Nigerian education system, although even in those decades, Government efforts were more noticeable in the passing of Education Ordinances, Codes and Regulations to control the growth of schools and the development of the educational system, side by side with the provision of substantial grants to the major Christian Missions.

However, in the early 1970s, the Federal and State Governments became more sensitive to their roles in the provision of education for the citizens. More schools were opened by the Governments, more grants given to the voluntary agencies and more scholarships and bursaries were given to students. But the conflicts between the various Governments and the Voluntary Agencies continued, so that it was still not clear who was or should be responsible for what or controlled what. It was probably in an attempt to remove those conflicts that the Federal and State Governments embarked, from the mid-1970s, on the policy of gradual take-over of schools from the various voluntary agencies an exercise that was not completed until the early 1980s. By the mid-1980s, the Governments had started to feel uncomfortable about the running costs of the schools and it would appear that today some State Governments would be willing to hand over the schools if the proprietors are able and willing to take them back, with all the financial burdens entailed.

So, it is clear that one of the most prominent problems of educational development in Nigeria today is that of responsibility and control: the conflicts between the Federal, State and Local Governments in the management and control of various levels of education in the country.

2. THE PREVALENCE OF MULTIPLE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

Another major problem of educational development in Nigeria today is the prevalence of multiple systems of education. As of today there are thirty-one systems of education in the country: the national system, or Federal (Abuja) system and the thirty one state systems. Each education system is unique, backed up* by the Federal or State Education Laws. In a situation like this, uniformity is virtually impossible and this has the potential for disrupting the education of the children of Federal staff moving from one part of the country to the other. However, the gap that this multiple systems could create, particularly at the senior secondary school level could be closed or narrowed by the existence of a common curriculum and the influence of a common external examining body.

This writer believes that the national education system should supersede the State systems. In other words, the nation (the Federal Government) should set a standard, a pattern of operation to be adopted by all the states. The present system whereby each state follows its own
way, particularly in the operation of the primary and secondary school systems, does not make for national uniformity. For example, there are variations in the duration of primary schooling between and within states, even in spite of the provisions of the current National Policy on Education. Further, there are variations in the nature and scope of school leaving examinations set for outgoing pupils of primary and junior secondary schools in the various states.

This is because each state system is independent in this area of academic activity. Thus, there is no central examining body to organise a joint School Leaving Certificate Examination for children in the final year classes of the primary and junior secondary schools, as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) does for the senior secondary school leavers.

3. DIVERSIFICATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

As a result of the prevalence of multiple systems of education in the country, there is the problem of diversification and control. Who controls what level of education? Who inspects what subjects, how often and for what purpose? Education efforts are diversified everywhere. Dual controls and inspection are also common, sometimes leading to conflicts, misunderstanding and retrogression within the school system.

4. UNSTABLE CURRICULUM AND SUBJECT SYLLABUSES

Because of the need for schools and colleges to meet the requirements of certain examining bodies, Nigerian educational institutions, particularly at the pre-tertiary level have to change their syllabuses from time to time. Even when the national subject curricula are constant for some years, the school subject syllabuses are subject to change or modification by teachers, particularly where subject teachers are changed frequently. This is particularly the case with rural schools where teachers frequently ask for transfer to urban primary or secondary schools. In effect, rural schools are usually filled with itinerant teachers: Youth-Coopers, fresh graduates on state service or other categories of newly-employed teachers who have no other option. The tendency for these categories of teachers is usually to modify the syllabus to embody their newly-acquired knowledge.

5. THE PROBLEM OF RELATING THE CURRICULA TO NATIONAL MAN-POWER NEEDS

One major aspect of Nigerian education that has been quite often criticized is the curriculum. The early critics include members of the Phelps-Stokes and Advisory Commissions who submitted their separate reports in 1925. They observed that education in Africa generally had not been adapted to the needs and aspirations of the people. In their various reports, the Commissions suggested that the subjects taught in African schools should henceforth be related to African life and culture. A subject like history for example, should emphasize the activities of the Africans (chiefs, heroes, warriors, educators, etc.), rather than those of the Europeans. It is interesting to note that a few decades after the publication of the Phelps-Stokes and Advisory Committee Reports, particularly after World War II, slight adjustments were made in schools' curriculum which were now slightly oriented towards African life. But the progress in this direction was not remarkable, for as late as the 1960s, education in African schools, particularly in Nigerian grammar schools, was still “too literary; ... not practical, not adapted to the needs of a developing agricultural nation.” This type of academic education only “tends to produce proud, lazy people who dislike manual labour and prefer white-collar jobs.” (Ajayi, 1963) This assertion by Ajayi (1963) is representative of the opinions of later critics on African education curricula generally. The flaws in this aspect of African education have been traced to missionary influence.
Formal education was introduced into many parts of Africa by the Christian Missions. In Nigeria, for example, they arrived between 1842 and the late 1840s. First to come were the Wesleyan Methodists, followed in quick succession by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), the Baptists and finally the Roman Catholics. As soon as they came, the Missionaries, particularly the Methodists and the C.M.S., opened a number of primary schools for the general education of the converts. Instruction was given in the Four R's: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion. The purpose of this early education was to train teacher-catechists, interpreters, servants and cooks. Education beyond the primary school was not an aim of the missionaries. It was only later that the few educated Nigerians in Lagos began to clamour for a kind of post primary academic education that would enable their children to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, civil servants, and the like. The result was the opening of the Lagos Anglican Grammar School in June 1859. The early curriculum of the school was wide and instructive, including Religious Knowledge, English Grammar and Composition, History, Geography, Book-Keeping, Euclid and Natural Philosophy (Ajayi, 1963). Other grammar schools that were opened in Nigeria after 1859 followed the same or similar curriculum as that of Lagos Grammar School.

One significant point to note in the discussion of the curriculum is that the curriculum of the academic grammar schools was popular while that of other institutions was not. This may explain why there was a constant rush to the academic grammar schools while enrollment in vocational schools, agricultural institutes and trade centres was correspondingly poor. No wonder, then, that the Catholic Agricultural Training Institute at Topo (in Badagry Division) and the Blaize Memorial Institute at Abeokuta dwindled while St. Gregory's College, Lagos, and Abeokuta Grammar School continued to flourish because they were highly recognized and patronized. Commenting on this state of affair, John W. Hanson stated:

It is understandable why the European and American experts who still play an influential role in education in most African nations should cherish the educational systems by which they themselves were nourished. What is not as clearly recognized by those who have been anticipating an essential change in education following independence is that the first generation of Africans who have taken the place of the colonial authorities in most nations face equal or even greater intellectual and emotional difficulties in breaking with the past. They are as frequently as conservative concerning the educational status quo as are the most traditional of the "colonialists" (Hanson, 1986).

Today, all educational authorities in Nigeria are aware of the pressing need to relate our curricula, at all levels of education, to our national man-power needs. Conferences on Curriculum Development and the utterances of renowned professors of education and government officials are a proof of the people's awareness, of this major flaw in our educational system and of the pressing need for reforms at all levels of education. For example, the Curriculum Innovation Workshop held at the University of Ibadan, July 16 - 29, 1972, considered the possibility of initiating some reforms in teacher education programmes. Similarly, the National Workshop on Teacher Education Curriculum, April 1972, offered some useful suggestions on what should be the content of teacher education in Nigeria. At continental level, the UNESCO-sponsored Addis Ababa Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, 1961, gave ample space to the discussion of the schools’ curricula in African countries. A few years later, S.J. Cookey, the Federal Adviser on education, expressed the view that the purpose of Nigerian education should be reviewed with a view to relating the curriculum to the needs and aspirations of the society (Cookey, 1970). And currently the Nigerian National Policy on Education emphasises the need to relate school curricula to national man-power needs.
6. UNSTABLE STAFF

As for teaching staff in Nigerian primary and secondary schools today, the problem is no longer that of unavailability, but that of instability. This does not help the development of the education system. Because of the comparatively poorer conditions of service of teachers in the Nigerian society, the tendency for many teachers in the nation's schools today, as was the case with their predecessors in late colonial and independent Nigeria, is to use the teaching profession as a stepping stone to other highly esteemed and more attractive jobs. In consequence, teaching is gradually becoming a profession for fresh graduates of Universities and Colleges of education who are ready to call it quit, without provocation, as soon as they find greener pastures elsewhere. From time to time, therefore, the teaching staff in Nigerian educational Institutions is usually unstable. Consequently, the teaching-learning process is stalled everywhere. Unless the conditions of service of teachers, at all levels, are improved and their status raised higher in the Nigerian society, the teaching staff of our educational institutions, including the universities, shall continue to be unstable and educational progress shall continue to be retarded; but this must not be so for a country that is virtually ready to take a plunge into a world of science and technology!


Another major problem of educational development in Nigeria today is that of providing funds for the implementation of government policies on education and carrying out curriculum innovations in various disciplines and at various levels of education. The National policy on Education, for example has not been fully implemented. Many schools have not got adequate supply of equipments and personnel, particularly for the teaching of such subject as Introductory Technology.

Further, curriculum innovation has not got adequate attention and sponsorship by Government because funds are not usually available. For example, to introduce a new curriculum, a number of workshops must be held in order to bring together experts in all fields of learning. The results of the deliberations by these experts must be widely published to afford members of the public the opportunity of following the new trends in the development of education in their own country. To teach a new curriculum at all levels of education, the teachers or instructors currently employed by the Government have to receive further training in teaching the new body of knowledge. In addition, new experts have to be trained locally or abroad while some experts have to be recruited from abroad in such disciplines where no qualified Nigerians are yet available. All these projects depend on the availability of funds. The picture today is that funds are not sufficiently available for the kinds of curriculum innovation activities described above.

The introduction and retention of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the Foreign Exchange Market (FEM) tend to worsen the situation. SAP and FEM have led to continued devaluation of the Naira with the result that more money is now needed to carry out curriculum innovation or to implement Government Policies on education. Indeed, the impact of SAP and FEM is being felt everywhere, and in all areas of the nation's economic and social life. This twin-policy of the Federal Government has adversely affected the quality of life of the average Nigerian citizen and it has rendered the Government itself and other public and private organizations incapable of providing, at least adequately, certain essential social services, and education is not an exception.
8. **POLITICIZATION OF EDUCATION**

The politicization of education is another major problem of educational development in Nigeria today. In an attempt to catch up with their counter-parts, many states in Nigeria, particularly the new ones, indulge in the opening and running of many educational institutions, even when they are least prepared to do so. This results in the lowering of standards and in various educational projects collapsing mid-way. This was particularly the case during the second republic (1979-1983) and the activities of the various state Governments during and after the second Republic clearly show that education is still being politicised in Nigeria. We are likely to see more of it during the Third Republic.

9. **PROCUREMENT AND SERVICING OF EQUIPMENTS**

A majority of the educational institutions in the country lack the various equipments needed for effective teaching and learning, particularly equipments needed for teaching and learning such subjects as Introductory Technology, Woodwork, Metalwork, Home Economics etc. The negative impact of SAP and FEM is felt here again. Governments, at Federal and State levels, do not seem to have enough funds to provide these essential equipments for schools; and where they are available there are no stores to put them in. Like the vehicles that we use everyday, these equipments need regular service so that they can serve well and last long. The experience in several secondary schools is that there is usually no adequate provision for servicing the equipments, and when any of them gets damaged, it is always difficult, sometimes impossible, to get it repaired.

10. **INADEQUATE CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATION**

In a majority of Nigerian secondary schools, the classroom accommodation is grossly inadequate. As a result of the large enrolments in these schools, the classrooms are usually overcrowded, with up to sixty or more students receiving instructions in classrooms designed for only thirty or forty students. In most cases, the chairs and desks are not enough; you see them sharing chairs, standing up, or sitting on windows or broken desks! When students are over crowded like this, there is a stalling of the teaching-learning process and a disruption of the children's mental activity, 'a situation that generally militates against effective teaching and intellectual development of the children.

11. **POORLY-EQUIPPED LIBRARIES, LABORATORIES AND SUBJECT ROOMS**

For effective teaching and learning, well equipped laboratories and subject rooms are needed; but the truth is that a major of Nigerian secondary schools today lack these essential facilities Many schools and colleges have buildings that they call libraries, but most of these are not equipped with essential books and current journals and magazines. Also, many schools and colleges do not have science laboratories while a good number of those that have, do not possess the basic tools or equipments as microscopes, dissecting instruments and specimens. Also, many schools do not have "special rooms for teaching such basic subjects as history, geography and French. In such a situation as this, the teachers cannot put in their best; and the students, too, cannot derive maximum benefit from the instruction being given. Again, the teaching-learning process is stalled and the overall development of the children, within the school system is retarded.
12. SCARCITY AND PROHIBITIVE COST OF BOOKS

Again, SAP and FEM have adversely affected the production, distribution and cost of books in Nigeria. The implication of a weak Naira for the book production/distribution industry is that the production cost of each book would be higher than before. It does not matter whether the books are imported or produced locally. If imported, the cost of buying them in Europe or America and the cost of transporting them to Nigeria would be very high. If they are printed locally (i.e. in Nigeria), the cost of importing raw materials (paper, ink a related printing materials) would still be high, shooting up the overall production cost. In either case, therefore, the unit cost of every school or college book in Nigeria Is high; and many titles are out of print. The results are a dearth of essential books for teaching and learning in Nigerian educational institutions and prohibitive cost of the ones available. Again, this factor militates against effective teaching and learning and the overall development of the Nigerian education system.

CONCLUSION

In order to remove some of the major problems of educational development in Nigeria, the issue of responsibility and control must be resolved and a uniform system of education introduced and operated nation-wide. This would mean the abolition of the present school system whereby children of the privileged class attend special schools. Further, special concession should be granted to Nigerian educational institutions to import books, stationeries and other educational equipments,  duty-free. Also, Nigerian publishers and printing industries should be allowed to Import newsprint and other materials needed for book production without paying any import duties. The cost of books would thus be reduced. All schools should be provided with adequate equipments and facilities for teaching and learning. Additionally, frequent changes of subject syllabuses should be discouraged while teachers of all categories should be encouraged to remain in the same school for many years so that a tradition of teaching and learning could be established in each school. Finally, the Federal and State Governments should endeavour to remove or at least minimize the adverse effect of SAP and FEM on teachers and learner by increasing their salaries of all categories of teachers in the nation's educational institutions and providing substantial financial assistance to all pupils and students.

REFERENCES


