

EDUCATION SCENARIOS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Evidence in Nigeria over the year shows that government investment in education has not achieved the desired results, goals and objectives. The failure of the educational sector has increased the incidence of poverty and deprivation of the vulnerable groups most especially women in purdah, riverine areas and nomads. Government policies, plans, programmes and initiatives generally were based on top-bottom approach with little or no input from the supposed beneficiaries. This over the years has caused disaffection and distrust in the social polity of Nigeria.

Keywords: Education Scenarios and Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Education is a service provided in all countries of the world with many objectives in mind. These objectives include the skills required for a more rapid growth of the economy and the provision of basic knowledge to the citizens. Knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development in the 21st century. Through its capacity to augment productivity, it increasingly constitutes the foundation of a country's competitive advantage (Williams et al, 2004). This planning for human resources development remains the sine-qua-num for national development, political stability and technological progress. There is a general belief that a nation cannot grow or develop beyond the capability of its human resources. The countries of Europe and America developed simply because the human resources are developed, hence, if a country fails to develop her human resources, such a country cannot develop elsewhere. Therefore before any meaningful economic and social development can take place in any country, the human resources should be developed and this can only be possible if the educational sector is adequately developed (Human Resources Development and Utilization Department; 2006) World Bank (2001) observes that if a society is able to develop its knowledge industry, it would become a major stakeholder in the development and sharing of the benefits of globalization in this new millennium but if otherwise such a country would lay the foundation for poverty for its citizens.

Evidence in Nigeria over the year shows that government investment in education has not achieved the desired results, goals and objectives. The failure of the educational sector has increased the incidence of poverty and deprivation of the vulnerable groups most especially women in prudish, riverine areas and nomads. Government policies, plans, programmes and initiatives generally were based on top-bottom approach with little or no input from the supposed beneficiaries. This over the years has caused disaffection and distrust in the social polity of Nigeria. With the advent of democratic rule in 1999, the federal government set for

itself certain parameter for development which later culminated into a home grown reform programme National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The main focus of NEEDS is to deal largely with the gamut of problems facing the development of the country. NEEDS is about the Nigerian people, their welfare, health, employment, education, political power, physical security and empowerment which are seen as important in achieving the vision of the future. To therefore reduce poverty and inequality, the plan proposes acting on several fronts. One of such is reform in the education sector. There exists a connection between the provisions of the Millennium development goals (MDGs) and the expected outcome of NEEDS. Both documents relate to education as the crux for development, social capability and advancement in every frontier of life (Human Resources Development and Utilization Department, 2006).

So far education programmes in Nigeria have not yielded desired results. This calls for a new and more purposeful strategy for solving the problems of accessibility and unemployment among the educated youths. This is the rationale for this paper.

Identification of Some Rigidities In Nigerian Education System*

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 1981) highlights the goals of education as acquisition, development and inculcation of proper value-orientation for individual and societal survival.

However, over the years, academic situation in all educational institutions in Nigeria has been declining. This is preponderant on the following factors.

*The author borrowed most extensively from NISER Review of Nigerian Development, 2003/2004 in writing this section.

Funding of Education

The first fact is that financial resources required for the development of the education industry have been drifted to other sectors of the nation's life. For instance, while UNESCO-estimated cost per student was N30, 000.00 in 1983, Longe Commission of 1990 put minimum training cost of each Nigerian Student at University level at N7, 000.00. In the same vein, human resources which are major input in higher education delivery are on short supply across the sub-sector of the education industry. The situation as at now has not changed drastically from what it has been.

Education is capital intensive and of a long gestation period. The dwindling financial resources of government with the ever increasing financial demands from various sectors of the economy, calls for alternative sources of funding education in general and higher education in particular in the country. Developments in the last twenty-five years have demonstrated beyond any doubt that the government alone cannot adequately fund and manage education in Nigeria.

The UNESCO recommendation on the funding of education is 26 per cent of a country's budgetary provision. However in Nigeria, the budgetary share to education in 2003 was less than eight per cent. The reasons for the under-funding of education have been attributed to the inability of domestic financial resources to meet the increasing financial requirements for education and gross financial indiscipline.

Campus Cultism/Violence

The phenomenon of cultism in education system in general and higher education in particular has become a very big problem in Nigeria today. The spread and effects of this phenomenon have shown the failure of the education system to mould the character of the youths who are the future leaders of the country (Opatola, 2002). Consequently, the government has adopted a number of policies to deal with the problem. Some of the policies under the military administration were:

- Promulgation of a decree against any unlawful association of students under whatever guise that may bring injury or disrupt peaceful co-existence in the citadels of knowledge.
- Stoppage of registering students' associations suspected to be having cultist's tendencies.
- Under the civilian administration, the government has taken steps, which include:
- Giving the managers of the tertiary institutions a directive to flush out every cultist in their institutions within three months.
- Encouragement of social activities among students.
- Renovation of infrastructures in tertiary institutions.

While these policies are being implemented, the problem still remains a menace threatening the stability and peace on the campuses. This is because of the ineffectiveness of the policies adopted to deal with this fundamental problem that has its roots in the larger Nigerian society.

Admissions

There is a new development in recent time which shows that less than 20 percent of the total applicants into tertiary institutions are offered placement partly because the rest did not qualify for admission but also due to lack of facilities like lecture rooms, laboratories, equipments etc. The situation has not substantially improved even with the establishment of both state and private tertiary institutions.

Lecturer/Student Ratio

Another major rigidity in the development of Nigeria's education sub-sector is the issue of lecture-student ratio. The UNESCO norm is 1:10 but finding shows that in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, the lecturer student ratio is as low as 1:19. Table 1 gives a more detailed picture of this problem when compared to some other countries even in Africa, Europe and South Africa.

Table 1. University Lecturer/Student Ratio in Selected Countries 2001

Country	Lecturers	Students	Ratio
Ethiopia	1,440	26,415	1:18
Kenya	4,392	35,421	1:8
Nigeria	12,395	236,261	1:19
South Africa	13,326	380,184	1:28.5

Table 1. University Lecturer/Student Ratio in Selected Countries 2001 (Contd....)

Country	Lecturers	Students	Ratio
Zimbabwe	1,618	13,045	1:18
Mexico	72,742	125,207	1:7
Brazil	172,828	1,716,263	1:10
United Kingdom	97,274	923,878	1:9
Germany	243,303	1,856,542	1:7.6
UNESCO Norm			1:10

Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 2001, FOS. Lagos

The above ratio shows that an average University lecturer in such African countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa carries excessive load of students to deal with. The case of Nigerian lecturers may even be worse because of the constraints under which they are forced to work. (Adigun 2001, Yusuf, 1996: Mbanefoh, 1992)

This development among other things has led to mass exodus of lecturers to other lands for greener pastures.

Following from the above (i.e. lack of qualified academic staff) the enrolment for graduate studies has also declined (Adigun 2001: Yusuf 1996). To make matter worse, even the young and ambitious Nigerians find it difficult to work in the education sector because it is seen as unattractive coupled with lack of facilities to work with, low pay and frustration from every end.

Administrative Problem

Another major financial problem in higher education industry in Nigeria is the very high cost of administration. The problem faced by the higher education sub-sector of the knowledge industry has led to brain drain, industrial strikes and drastic decline in enrolment for graduate studies in Nigerian Universities.

Curriculum Reengineering

It has been debated in various academic fore that the curricula particularly in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are no more relevant to the needs of the labour market. The skill acquisition in these tertiary institutions is narrow and these lead to a mismatch between manpower supply and demand. There is a disconnect between what is learnt and the need of the industry. There is therefore a need for the country to have a 5 years regular period of curriculum review.

Student must be exposed to new ideas, new knowledge, new technology and all these should be in the education curricula.

Mismatch Between Products of Tertiary Institutions and Labour Market Demands

The central goal of education is to prepare the students for productive employment, it can either be paid or self generated employment. Over the past two decades, Nigerian graduates at all levels of education are increasingly facing the dilemma of prolonged period of joblessness. Obtaining accurate information on labour demand in perhaps the most difficult challenge in collecting labor market information. This is because hiring decisions by firms

are typically uncoordinated and in many cases unannounced: Additional labour analysis problems in Nigeria stem from the fact that no systematic collection of labour market data takes place. Therefore, it becomes necessary to infer labour demand for graduates of educational institutions through secondary data such as manpower surveys, and the few existing labour market studies.

Unemployment rate stands at 11 per cent in the country in 2004 particularly disturbing is the youths' unemployment rate as 3 million graduates are turned out every year without any job prospects in the labour market and with no indication of declining trend (FOS, 2001, National Manpower Board 2004). Many of the tertiary institutions as still in the habit of turning out graduates whose skills are less required in the economy. There is no connection between the labour market and the tertiary institutions in respect of the skills that are in high demand in the economy and which need to be produced by the institutions.

Persistence of Rigidities

Fund Allocation

Percentage of fund allocations to tertiary education from 1990 to 2005 has been consistently low. This a clear indication of the gross under funding being experienced by the tertiary institutions of learning over the years. This phenomenon of gross financial under funding affected not only the provision of the much needed facilities and equipment which could have made learning more meaningful and rewarding, but also affected the personnel, who because of the relatively poor remuneration package (not until recently when the remunerations were improved), found it difficult to put in their best. Hence they either found part-time jobs to supplement their income, leave the institutions for more lucrative and rewarding jobs in the industry, lobby for political appointments, or leave the system completely. Productivity therefore suffers.

The amount and volume of research carried out by the universities especially distinguished them from other forms of tertiary institutions of learning. Unfortunately persistent under-funding has been responsible for the death of researchers in these institutions bearing in mind that no meaningful research can take place where money is not available. This explains why the type of research emanating from these institutions may be substandard, irrelevant, and to a large degree unrelated to the nation's socio-economic needs.

Corruption/Lawlessness

Democracy is undoubtedly the best form of government that the people of the modern world cherish and on which they exert much of their energy to install and nourish. However it is very costly particularly to a poor country like Nigeria. Unfortunately, funding of Nigerian education in general continues to get worse in a situation where Nigerians expect a great dividend of democracy to rub on education. However corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, and embezzlement of public funds by elected public officials have made it practically difficult to implement government programmes, not only in education but also in other sectors.

Many instructional facilities that are supposed to aid academic programmes are either not in existence, and where some are, they are no longer effective. Various school libraries are depicting shelves of old and out dated books and journals. The global information technology, including electronic computers and e-mail services, have no physical presence in some of the existing tertiary institutions due to the fact that the costs are unaffordable. The

few departments and lecturers who have these facilities acquire them mainly through external sources.

Falling Standard

Another critical reason in education is that products of education in Nigeria are not adequately educated; that is, the standard has been falling over the years. This piece of work does not intend to enter into the controversy of what the standard against which we want to measure the present standard is. What informs us of this is the fact that while we can still not be involved in the controversy, yet one can objectively appreciate the present level of educational achievement of school products by examining certain important variables.

For example, already the Nigerian Law School has described law graduates from the country's universities as "half baked". Infant, the institute Director General, had even suggested that the course be restricted to post-graduate level. When delivering a speech at "the 1999-2000" session call-to-the-bar programme, the Director General highlighted that only 42 per cent of the 3,056 law graduates admitted for the 1999-2000 session met the conditions to practice the profession (*The Guardian*, Tuesday October 17, 2000 pg. 29).

In the same vein, the Nigerian Employers Consultative Association (NECA) are of the opinion that the quality of graduates is very poor hence, majority of graduates do not meet requirements of the industry. Such deficiencies are shown in four critical skills, which include communication, technical, conceptual, analytical, and human interactive/social skills (Dabalen and Oni, 2000).

When defining or measuring indicators of educational output, somehow we have to distinguish between output in the sense of students' achievement as measured by test and examinations, and the outcome as measured by the ability of school products to be socially and economically productive. While the issue of outcome reflects some variables like health of the national economy, relative rate of the absorptive capacity of the economy, particularly the industrial sector, the turn-out rate of graduates, and the degree of relevance of skills produced to meet the needs of the economy; the quality of output depends on many factors such as teacher-student ratio (TSR), quality as related by their qualification dedication and commitment, quality of teachers and student intakes, infrastructural facilities etc. The provision of investment in school inputs can increase outputs and internal efficiency, (many researchers have demonstrated that achievement is closely related to investment in inputs). Such inputs include Lecture halls, Laboratories, Equipments, ICT, and Research grants.

In Nigeria as at 2001 the Teacher-Students Ratio, which was 1:19 was below the UNESCO standard for university education of 1:10, was even 1:31 in 2005 (Table 2). The situation would be gloomy if we consider the problem of brain drain. According to Yusuf (1996) this problem of low teacher - student ratio continues to get worse every year as many university lecturers abandon academics in Nigeria for greener pastures in other countries. The consequence of this is the production of graduates who lack the necessary skills for either paid or even self-employment. This coupled with the fact that infrastructural facilities are grossly inadequate, which result in low quality output.

Table 2. Teacher-Student Ratio in Nigeria by Level of Education

Level	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Primary	1:32	1:24	1:26	1:21	1:20
Secondary	1:32	1:30	1:36	1:35	1:34
Tertiary	1:19	1:24	1:28	1:31	1:31

Source: Computed from the CBN Annual Reports (2012)

Suggested Strategies and Policy Measures

The two strategies by which the army of unemployed youth can be reduced as well as improving excess are **vocational education and training (VET)** programmes and **Public-Private partnership** in education provision. The informal sector operators should be well-recognized in the planning of VET in Nigeria. The curriculum of the vocational education should be restructured so as to accommodate the informal and small-scale operators.

Public-Private Partnership

Experienced across the globe reveals that the attainment of meaningful and sustainable development requires the genuine participation of both the public and the organized private sectors, donor agencies, individuals and civil society. Public Private Partnership therefore is one of the new trends in partnership strategies; it is being popularized as an alternative approach to the delivery of goods and services. It refers to contractual arrangement between the public sector and the private sector to achieve well-defined and shared objectives in a cost effective, efficient and sustainable manner. This arrangement always specifies targets, responsibilities, priorities and feedback processes. It primarily involves sharing of resources, knowledge and risks between the two sectors so that the country at large can benefit from the arrangement (NISER, 2005).

In Nigeria, several reasons were raised in favour of public private partnership in the delivering of services. This argument includes gross inefficiency in the delivery of services in various sectors. The present infrastructure needs huge capital investment to upgrade them to a stage where they can be more productive, as well as elimination of corruption in the civil service. There are different types of PPP, but these partnerships can be distinguished on the basis of the degree of risk allocated between partners, the amount of expertise required on the part of the partners and potential implication of cost of service delivery. However, risk between partners is a key consideration.

Table 3. Types of Private Partnership

Type of PPP	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Operators and Maintenance	The government contracts with a Private Partner to operate and maintain a publicly owned facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential service quality and - Efficient improvement of cost flexibility in structuring contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collective agreement may not permit contracting out - reduced owner control and ability to respond to changing public demand
2. Design and Build	The government contracts with private partners to design and build a facility that conforms to the standard and performance requirement of the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to private sector experience - Opportunity for innovation and cost saving - Flexibility in procurement 	

Table 3. Types of Private Partnership

Type of PPP	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages
3. Turn key operator	The government provides the finances for the project but engages a private partner to design and construct the facility for a specific period of time.	- Places construction risk on the private partner Potential public sector benefit from increased efficiency in private sector construction	- Reduced government control over facilities operation - Increased cost to incorporate change once contract is completed.
4. Wrap Around addition	A private partner finances and contract an addition to an existing public facility and operate the additional facilities until partners recover investment plus reasonable returns	- Public sector does not have to provide capital funding for the upgrade time reduction in project implementation - Public partners benefit from private partners in construction	- Perceived Loss Of Control - More complex contract award procedure.
5. Temporary Privatization	Ownership of an existing public facility is transferred to a private partner who improves and/or expands the facility. The facility is then owned or run by the private partner until he recovers the investment and makes a reasonable return	If a constraint is well structured with the private partners, the public partners can retain some control over standard and performance without incurring the costs of ownership and operation. It reduces cost of operation for the government Operational risks rest on the private sector Efficiency is implored.	

Sources: NISER RERORT (2005)

The above types of PPP (Table 3) are what the government can consider in the ownership and management of education to bring efficiency and effectiveness.

The Policy Measures to be adopted include the following:

Increasing the Amount and Efficiency of Resources to Education

Total resources to education can be increased through (a) relocation of increased resources to education within a given level of public expenditure and (b) increasing non-government contributions with no reduction (or a less than proportionate reduction) in enrolments (Penrose, 1998) The argument, in favour of the latter suggestion, for example, imposition of charges as well as higher indirect costs at the secondary and tertiary levels of education is that it permits greater Allocative efficiency, creating rooms for avocation from post-secondary budgets to primary education, arid stimulate accountability, more particularly in a country with weak fiscal management So also is the fact that improved quality teaching and learning may result from managerial improvements and better resource allocation. To the extent that the ability to pay of government is weak and the explicit high inefficiency of government in education provision are non-contestable, increasing non-government contributions for example, user-charges, tax, and private education institutions can be a reasonable option towards increasing the amount and efficiency of resources to education in Nigeria. (NISER, 2005).

It is necessary to cut down the cost of administration, thereby increase cost of producing the needed manpower in the society.

Improving Students Welfare/Reduction in Campus Cults

Most, if not all, students in higher educational institutions in Nigeria are teenagers who experience a lot of stresses in growing up. This calls for adequate care for them so that most of the violent protests and demonstrations which usually go with students' disenchantment with either government's or school authorities' policies and pronouncements can be reduced drastically if not totally eliminated.

In this connection, provision must be made for adequate feeding and accommodation (halls of residence with decent bathroom and toilet facilities) steady supply of electricity and efficient transportation on campuses at moderate charges.

Authorities should treat all issues concerning student unionism and welfare with all maturity and expertise that they require. The issue of campus cults can be effectively tackled through (apart from the above measures mentioned) proper education on the ills of cultism, proper rehabilitation of students who have renounced cultism, adequate support to anti-cultism campaigns and programmes by students and student union government, reward of excellence as opposed to god fatherism/ethnic cleavages/favoritism/tribalism.

Coordinated Job Creation Programme

While we admit the fact that reducing the rate of education growth is neither possible nor desirable so as to reduce the rate of unemployment among highly educated persons, the better alternative would be to institute a well coordinated programme of job creation which would require continuous monitoring of the labour market changes to which the manpower training sector could respond from time to time. This mechanism would involve stake holders such as the Nigerian Labour Congress, (NLC), Federal and State Ministries of Education, Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA), National Directorate of Employment, and Federal Ministry of Employment, labour and Productivity.

Improving Staff Welfare

The enabling environment must be created within institutions of learning such that the needed academic staff would be encouraged of stay in the trade of developing the needed manpower for the nation's development. This can be done by way of establishing welfare schemes and adequate remuneration for staff, grants for research and other academic work, and providing soft loans and bursaries for students.

Internally Generated Revenue

Higher institutions of learning must find innovative ways and means of marketing their research findings not only to generate funds internally, but also to serve as the first step towards commercializing such research findings by industries.

The mechanism of tertiary institutions research and development (R&D) should be put in place to serve as an effective link between private sector and tertiary institutions for human resource development and utilization as well as effective utilization of physical resources.

Funding of Education

Nigeria needs and deserves to have education that is functionally productive, politically constructive, philosophically relevant and cultural sensitive. An appropriate mix of education provision in Nigeria will be a combination of private and public actions while at the same

time both the government and private individuals as well as business organization bear a proportion of the cost of providing education.

Fund generating activities by the various institutions, the Education Trust Fund (ETF) intervention programme as well as other special grants released to institutions of learning from both local and external sources have not adequately solved the problem of gross under-funding. Therefore there is the need to consider the idea of charging certain level of fees to relieve the government of heavy financial burdens, thus shifting part of the costs to the students, their parents, and sponsors. This is particularly so when we consider the fact that demand for education will continue to increase as government financial responsibilities also will forever continue to rise.

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