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INLUENCE OF POLITICS IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

The influence of politics on education can be traced to the development of civil society itself. Societies evolved from the primitive stages where people agreed and submitted themselves to an authority for control. As a result of that and the legitimacy accords to the authorities, the forces of development in the societies in terms of economic, cultural, social, and political are determined and directed by the authorities. It is on the above backgrounds this paper looks at the negative influence of politics in education in Nigeria which ranges from inequalities in the Nigerian education sector, poor staffing, inadequate funding, and half-backed graduates among others. Furthermore, the positive influence of politics in education in Nigeria is also reiterated such as level of pupil enrolment, quality product, adequate budgetary allocation and funding of education, availability of adequate and quality teachers in schools, and many more. The paper concludes that educational leadership should be based on merit, policies are made considering the needs of the society, and graduate to be produced on the needs of the economy.

KEYWORDS

Politics, Education, Influence of Politics on Education.



INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important sectors in any nation, because it is an integral part of the nation membership'. Education as a way of imparting knowledge, skill and judgment facts that have been learned, either formally or informally' forms the foundation for human capacity development, both physically and mentally to fit into the society. It is on this note education is regarded to be the system-motivation positive institutional changes and developments geared toward creating the required values of integrating people to achieve the common goals for all in the society. Most developed countries like Great Britain, United State of America and Germany and of course, the fast growing countries in Asia, such as India, China, Singapore and Malaysia, and in Africa for instance, South Africa, Tunisia, Ghana, are investing significantly with sincerest commitments to achieve required goals of education. One basic tool for achievement in these countries is the adequate allocation of the required resources to education and proper utilization of the resources for quality matching product (output). The case in Nigeria is on the contrary. The government has been blamed for poor financing of the education sector which is below UNESCO recommendation of 26% out of nation's total budgetary allocation. Unfulfilled political promises to education, politics in appointment of education managers and allocation of resources and many others are deteriorating educational standard in Nigeria.

Concept of Politics

The term politics has been viewed from different perspectives. Politics is a process of bargain, negotiation, conciliation, and compromise through which individual positions by different objectives arrive at a decision within which all are willing to live (Okolie, 2004). Politics comprises all the activities of cooperation and conflict, within and between the societies whereby the human species goes about organizing the use, production and distribution of human, material and other resources in the course of the production and the production of its biological and social life (Johari, 2013). In the view of Jumare (2020) Politics could also be defined as an engagement by people aimed at having control of authority and resource of the land to achieve personal and societal common goals, which happens in agreements, disagreements, negotiations investments, arguments and appointments in societies. Similarly, Okeke (2007) sees politics as a civilizing agent and a way of ruling in divided society without violence. Therefore, whether defined in terms of man being a political animal; the art of the possible who gets what, where and how' the struggle for power; or the authoritative allocation of resources and values, politics has the state as its centerpiece. Samuel (2008) defined politics as the "activity by which an issue is agitated or settled". He however, defines politics in terms of three inter-related components namely; activities in which power is got and used through control of institutions or governments activities in which public issues are discussed and demands upon governments expressed through political parties, interests group, mobs or solitary individuals. Activities of the formal institutions of government, which make laws, interpret them and carry them out. From the foregoing, politics could also be seen as a process or struggle and strong desire to acquire power over humans and their economic, political, social, cultural and religious activities in a territory.

Concept of Education

According to Jumare (2020) the concept of education has among others the following definitions.

- a. Fafunwa (2004) sees education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitude, knowledge, competence and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the individual and the society in which he lives.
- b. Education is a method by which a society transmits from one generation to the next its knowledge, culture and values (Aliu, 2001).
- c. Ramalan (2010) defines education as everything that is learned and acquired in a life time habit, knowledge skills, interest and personality.
- d. Oyediji (2012) sees education as a social process in which one achieves social competence and individual growth carried on in a selected and controlled setting (environment) which can be institutionalized as a school or college.
- e. Education could also be defined as a step -by- step process whereby the young and old acquire skills and knowledge, which enable them to live and contribute to the development of the individual and the society for a period of life span (Jumare, 2020).

Brief History of Political Influence on Nigerian Education System

A look at the history of education in Nigeria will more or less indicate the important role played by politics on its educational system. As the British colonial influence in West Africa became stronger, there was the need for well-trained natives to assist in the administration of government agencies. The colonial government began to give grants in-aid to the various missionary groups for the running of schools on the condition that such missions fulfill the policies of colonial government. In 1886, Lagos was separated from Gold Coast (Ghana) and became the colony and protectorate of Lagos and therefore, the first purely Nigerian Education ordinance was enacted in 1887. The ordinance created a board of education, comprising the governor, members of the legislative council, the inspector of schools and four members. This was to make the supervision of schools and grant more effective and increase the involvement of the colonial government. In 1892 Education Ordinance, Henry Carr was appointed the Inspector of Schools and in 1908, separate education boards were created for the Eastern, Western and Central Province of Nigeria. In 1914, the Northern Nigeria was amalgamated under Lord Lugard and this led to his Policy on Education in 1916 which was partly aimed at educating the Muslims (Samuel, 2008).

Reasons for Political Influence on Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria as a whole, there are certain educational policies, reforms and programmes in education that have some political undertones. At the same time, certain political issues have found expression in the policies and programmes recommended and adopted for education. In contemporary Nigeria, Okwori and Edet (2012) enumerate some political issues that influence education which include the following:

1. Political party promises and interest in Education: During electioneering campaigns in Nigeria, political parties' fast track their grips on the people by promising them better educational opportunities. By this promises, the politicians regard education as a government responsibility and an instrument for national unity, political socialization and economic development (FRN/2008).
2. Control and management of Education: Since the governments (Federal, State and Local Government) commit huge funds to the provision of education for the masses, it becomes incumbent upon the government to assert some degree of control on educational management practices throughout Nigeria.

3. Social and economic gaps between states in Nigeria: The question of educational gap and imbalance generate so much heat in the politics of education in Nigeria that, politicians argue that National Unity and political cohesion cannot be achieved without bridging social and economic gaps between the different parts of the country. For instance, there exist staggering imbalance in University education between the Northern and the Southern States; therefore, the surest way to bridge the gaps, was to bridge the educational gaps.
4. National Unity and Political Cohesion: The government of Nigeria looks up to educational institutions as fertile grounds for the propagation and promotion of the desired national unity. For this reason, the schools' programmes among other things highlights those aspects of our cultural life that bud us together (Denga, 2000). Other aspects for national unity include school mapping (i.e. siting of Higher Education, Unity schools) in different parts of the country, government programme for fresh graduates, quota system of admission policy and introduction of general studies programmes (e.g. citizenship education).

Politics of Investment/Consumption in Nigerian Education

To the economist of education, the concepts of investment and consumption have been adopted to describe the involvement of individuals and the government in educational pursuit. As an investment, economists of education measure the cost-benefit of engaging in educational pursuit. As consumption, education is seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself. For this reason, education is seen as a public good. In the view of Babalola (2000) Education is, for the most part, a public good so that market forces are not completely free to determine the optimum quantity and price of education. The long lead time between the beginning of education and the time the recipient tries to sell his skills in the market place makes it difficult for the consumer to evaluate its worth at the inception. At the termination of educational pursuit through the appropriate certification, the recipients will desire to embark upon practical demonstration of skills acquired. This is where interplay of educational consumption and investment comes into the fore at the individual level. The politics of investment in education, in this paper, is seen from the broader perspectives of the government designated ministries, parastatal and agencies. We base our argument on the position of Obanya (1999) that: Since politics deals with power play for the governance of human societies, educational systems tend to reflect the politics of the nations they are designed to serve. In serving the course of nation building, political actors evolve policies, which determine the practice of education.

The key power players of the public governance with the educational sector "conspire" to keep the public school system in a moribund state. This is occasioned by poor funding of education and "predetermined" neglect in terms of poor infrastructural facilities. The consequence is the half-baked recipients of education. The collapse of the public school system gives room for the emergence of materialistic tendency in the Nigerian education sector. The Nigerian politicians and business tycoons, who have profited from embezzlement of the public funds and other forms of corrupt practices, now venture into the establishment of schools. There is, thus, a mad rush for the investment in education by the private individuals and corporate bodies' sequel to the realizations that a sizeable number of Nigerians now have an unbridled urge to be educated in any way. The relevant government agencies/parastatals in charge of approval and registration have failed to ensure quality. Many of these private schools (from primary to tertiary) usually fail to meet up with their minimum standards. They (most of these private schools) usually fail to have the required human-capital and

infrastructural resources that will sustain the institutions for the first decade of existence. The course and pattern of politics of investment in Nigerian education are identified below:

- i. The incongruity in the educational policy formulation and its implementation;
- ii. The entry of individuals and corporate organizations into the educational sector and the ability to buy their way through approval and registration;
- iii. The government unworthy attitude of double standard: implementation of free education with no human-capital and infrastructural facilities, whilst their children attend well-equipped schools abroad with public funds.
- iv. With the private investment in education (of individuals and corporate organizations), education for all (EFA) becomes impossible. This position is given because the fees of the schools are not affordable for the masses.

Relationships between Politics and Education

There exist relationships between politics and education as enumerated by Ogbonnaya (2009) which are:

- i. Education is a basic human right and its function is to develop the talents of individuals to the fullest possible extent
- ii. Every education system has political goals
- iii. Politics comes before education
- iv. Politics determines the type of education to be adopted
- v. The education of the youths is probably the most fundamental paces of society
- vi. The political order of society sets the pace for education
- vii. Politics is an aspect of the political needs of the society
- viii. Education is the servant and product of politics
- ix. Education is regulated by government policies and politics
- x. The rising cost of education is largely met from the public purse.

Indicators of Positive Influence of Politics and Education Relationships

Indicators of positive politics and education relation are signs which explain the existence of cordial interaction between education and politics. In other words, education and politics relate in peace and both help to move the nation forward by performing their functions according to the laid down rules and regulations. The following are some of those indicators of good politics and education relationship according to Jumare (2020):

1. **Level of Pupils Enrolment:** Level of pupils' enrolment is the number of children taken to school in an area in a particular time in comparison with the aggregate number of children in that area at a particular time. If the number is high, that means that, there is harmonious (good) relationship between political leader and education stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers and education managers among others. In addition, the relationship shows that all education stakeholders work together and on the same page pursuing common goal.
2. **Quality Product:** Quality product in this context implies school output (students) who have the requisite skills, knowledge and competences that are designed in the school curriculum. The product by all standards would be able to fix themselves in the society and in solving the societal challenges. The products (students) do not just come by accidents but by design and collaborative efforts of several individuals inclusive of education stakeholders and political

leader (government). As an indicator, this is also a good sign of cordial relation between politics and education.

3. **High Level Politics and Education:** High level policy implementations denote the levels of execution of government policies in relation to education in a government policy in relation to education in a particular period of time. Government policies are an ongoing decision and premise which change situations. The implementation of the policies (premise and decision of government) is a good indication of good relationship between the government in power and the education stakeholders. The good relationship means that the government in power keeps its words and also accepts contributions from education stakeholders. In an atmosphere, where there is good politics education relationship, education as a sector achieves more of its goals, since the political will is strong.
4. **Availability of Infrastructural Facilities in School:** Another indicator of good politics education relationship is the availability of infrastructural facilities in schools. Availability of infrastructure facilities in school implies having enough quantity and quality and relevant up to date facilities which aid teaching and learning in schools. These facilities include among others classrooms, tables, chairs, teaching aids (instructional materials) staff offices and all facilities required in the school library, sport facilities security gadgets, hostel accommodation, bookshops, road network, extra- curricular activities, and many more which would help to facilitate learning activities.
5. **Involvement of Education Stakeholders in Policy Formation:** Involvement of education stakeholders in policy formation means government making sure that all relevant contributors and beneficiaries in education are involved in education decisions. These education stakeholders include parents, teachers, school heads, and market women. Schools based management committees (SBMC), traditional rulers, religious leaders, students, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Development partners) and any development of education. This involvement of stakeholders makes policy implementation and acceptability easier for the society. It is also an indication of an existing good relation between political groups and education stakeholders
6. **Adequate Budgetary Allocation and Funding of Education:** Adequate budgetary allocation and funding of education here means the percentage of funds allocated to education in the national budget of a country. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization ratified 26% of each nation's budget to education. A government with good political will and commitment gives this percentage and is an indication of good relation of government and education. It is not only allocation of budget to education but rather release of the funds to execute relevant projects in solving educational challenges.
7. **Adequate Rule of Law and Due Process in Education Business:** Adequate rule of law and due process is the kind of obedience to guidelines in government operations. It could also be seen as total respect for bureaucratic process in government's operations and dealings in its everyday activities. As an indication of good relationship between government in power and education, there exist rule of law and due process could be seen in areas such as staff recruitment, promotions, discipline, transfers, posting and distribution of educational facilities to zones, districts and schools. Non-interference of political class in education operation is indications of good relationship between education and political leaders.
8. **Availability of Adequate and Quality Teachers in School:** Availability of adequate and quality teachers in schools means political leaders provide enough teachers to schools in

accordance with international standards. Adequate teachers could also mean reasonable acceptable teacher's student's ratio at all levels of education. Teacher's quality here means having teachers with requisite qualification, training and skills to teach at all levels of education. Therefore, adequate teachers should be enough in number to man according to subject/area of specialization. Teachers who are trained or equipped with recent teaching methodologies and approaches (are the qualitative teachers). This is an indication of good relationship between education and political leaders.

Indicators of Negative Politics and Education Relation

Negative politics and education relationship is not an issue of false claims, but rather an issue that could be seen in educational structures facilities, actions and sometimes, in the products of an educational system (graduates). The following are some of those indicators of negative politics and education relationship according to Jumare (2020):

- a. **Educational Infrastructural Decay:** Educational infrastructural decay implies deterioration of education facilities and structures due to neglect, careless and less commitment over a period of time. In this type of situation, classrooms exist without roofs, ceiling, windows, doors and floor or not in use at all. In the same vein, staff offices, laboratories, libraries, workshops, students' hostels, sources of water supply, carpentering and many more could be found in a dilapidated state. This is a clear cut of bad relationship between education and political leadership of a nation, state or local government.
- b. **Inadequate Budgetary Allocations and Fund Releases to Education:** Inadequate budget here means giving education low budgetary percentage which is grossly inadequate to cater for its needs and challenges. Inadequate fund releases mean release or slow release of the allocated funds in the budget. In Nigeria and most African states, education budget has been inadequate, coupled with late or even non release. In Nigeria, education budget has been between 5 – 10 percent over the past twenty years. This is an indication of bad relation between education and political leaders and also an indication of non-commitment to moving the nation forward, using education as an instrument. Bauvie (2002) argues that education is geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as towards, societal cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.
- c. **Poor Education Product (Out-Put):** Poor education product means the inability of a graduate at any level of education to display evidence in knowledge and skills of the certificate acquired at that level of education. An example of poor product in education is the inability of children who have completed primary schools to read and write (Sara and Lee, 2014). In addition, the public do have mixed feelings on employment of graduates these days. This is because the graduates could not provide evidence of having knowledge and skills of the certificates they obtained.
- d. **Inadequate Involvement of Education Stakeholders in Policy Formation:** An introduction of bad politics education relationship is unilateral decision by political class on issues pertaining to education. Those education stakeholders are not involved in deliberations in education policies. This makes the policies ineffective and education goals not attainable. In addition, it constitutes, a waste of time and resources in education

- e. **Low Enrolment and High Drop out in Schools:** Low enrolment is the high number of children who are supposed to be in school, but are at home. In other words, more children are at home, while less are in the school. High dropout means the number of enrolled pupils or students who stopped going to school for one reason or the other. Low enrolment and high dropouts are indications of several factors, such as unproductive education, inadequate school facilities bad teacher-pupil relationship, high level of unemployment in the society, theoretical nature of curriculum rather than practical vocational skills and many more. The results of these problems are inadequate political will and good relationship between political leaders and education stakeholders.
- f. **Inadequate Due Process and Rule of law in Education:** As an indication of bad relationship between education and political leadership, there is the existence of inadequate due process in recruitments, appointments, headship in school promotions, transfer, discipline, and distribution of resources in education, among others. These practices set education backward through creating disharmony among education stakeholders and at the end, prevent educational goal attainment
- g. **Poor Teacher Quality:** An introduction of poor teacher quality could be seen in areas such as absence or inadequate teachers training and re-training good teachers' salaries and remunerations and job security. Other indicators are high student-teacher ratio, inadequate school supervision overcrowded classrooms, and many more. These factors make teachers discouraged and bring about students' poor performance, especially in external examination.
- h. **Corruption in Education Business:** Corruption is the use of public office to derive undue benefits which is against the rule of law. A corrupt practice in education is a sign of bad relation between the political class and education stakeholders. Funds for education are usually diverted for personal use to areas of less priority. This cannot be acceptable by all, thus the relationship is bad.

Problems of Politics and Education Relationships in Nigeria

In education, generally, graduates become or remain unemployable after graduation owing to the following observable problems in the country's education according Kayode (2012):

- i. Dilapidated facilities for effective teaching and learning. The laboratories and libraries are ill-equipped for proactive and pragmatic learning outcome that will be problem-solving in approach.
- ii. Poor staffing. The teaching and the non-teaching staff are not adequate for effective teaching and learning.
- iii. Monetization of admission process. In the contemporary Nigerian society, admission process has become monetized under the name of post-UTME. With this practice, the higher institutions in the country rake money from the helpless and hapless students. The consequence of this practice is that it amounts to double standard that favours the highest bidder, which may lack the moral and academic intelligence to pursue a particular course of study.
- iv. Incessant strike. The country's tertiary education has been riddled by incessant face-off between the government and the lecturers in the colleges of education, Polytechnics and Universities. Among the reasons for this face-off are the poor funding of tertiary education and poor conditions of service for the lecturers. This faceoff lasts for the minimum of three months to one year, depending on the category of the institution.

- v. Poor process-product matching. The country has not been able to record enough success in technological development and economic advancement because the products of tertiary education have not been able to translate theory into practice. Thus, it can be said that Nigerian education since independence has failed to inculcate national consciousness, national unity and the right types of value and attitudes for the survival of the individuals and the Nigerian society. This situation is reflected with the spate of violence and insecurity, coupled with the magnitude of corruption in the country. In the real sense of the matter, an educated man should be cultured and proactive in the making of decisions for sustainable individual, societal development and national transformation.

Suggestions for Way Forward

On the position of this paper, the following were suggested as way forward:

1. Appointment of Educational Administrators, Managers and Leaders should be based on merit so as to avoid improper utilization of the human and national resources avoidable in the educational sector.
2. Curriculum should be designed and implemented in consideration of the need and interest of the society.
3. Qualified and competent teachers should be employed to teach at various level of education in Nigeria.
4. Graduates should be produced based on the needs of the economy and labour market demand with full of employability skills to avoid unemployment.
5. Entrepreneurial courses or skill acquisition training should be considered important so as to encourage self-reliance or self-dependence to the youths.
6. Educational administrators should be considered in ministerial appointments, commissioners, agencies and other educational organizations and be fully involved in decision making in the educational sector.

CONCLUSION

Despite the negative influence or impact of politics on education, the role of government in the provision of quality education cannot be overemphasized. It is important government places education in the wider context of public service reform, as an essential element in fostering values of openness and democracy.

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