



NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING.

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ABSTRACT:

Undoubtedly the Nigerian education sector is in a state of quagmire. This paper attempts a critique of the present day Nigerian education system, the intellectual capability of its products and its effect on the Nigerian State. It is obvious that the Nigerian education system is in dire need for restructuring. The quality of a country's educational system plays a great role on her security and economic growth. The paper argues that a restructure of the education system of Nigeria is necessary for solving most of her domestic problems. One synonymous thing to every society is the quest for progress and little or no dependence on other societies. This is lacking in Nigeria. Hence, the urgent need for the Federal Government to restructure the Nigeria's education system, so as to be in line with global trend, where little emphasis is laid on who passed and who failed, but on the knowledge they acquired and what they can do with it. Unfortunately, the education system in Nigeria is too examination and academic calendar conscious. The overall effect is that the need to pass examination has been prioritized against the need to gain the required knowledge. The study relied on qualitative research methodology sustained by ubiquitous secondary sources.

KEY WORD; Nigeria, education, educational sector, system, restructuring, Government

INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to lay a historical foundation of our topic and proffer a realistic solution to the problem. Education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school. Aiyamenchue (2011) maintained that it is the act or process of developing and cultivating ones mental activity whether physically, mentally or morally. It is also the expansion, strengthening, and discipline of one's mind and faculty. Education also highlights the forming and regulation of principles and character in order to prepare and fit for any calling or business by systematic instruction”1.Education is fundamental to human existence. It provides both young and

old the power to reflect and make choices that affect and invariably uplift their standards of living. It is a key ingredient in economic and social activity and therefore vital for National development. (Aiyamenchue 2011)

Unfortunately, Nigeria's education system is rather quantitative than qualitative-oriented. The Education system is in total shambles; and in a steady state of decline. The situation is saddening. There is an increasing desire to obtain foreign degrees by Nigerian citizens simply to be accepted in the world. This is because the education/degrees obtained in the Nigerian Government schools are rated lowly in the

world. It is worth mentioning that in 2017, only one Nigerian University was listed among the top 1,000 international university rankings in the Times Higher Education (THE) - The University of Ibadan, Oyo State at 801. While Universities from other African countries like South Africa, Ghana, Egypt and Kenya ranked significantly higher. (Alemika 2015)

It is sad to note that this was not the case before now, as the quality of education obtained in the first and second republic, is totally different from what it is obtained in the fourth republic. The Nigerian Education System which produced world renowned scholars in the past has now become a shadow of itself. This collapse in the Education system is evident in the entire level - primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The reading skills of Senior Secondary School (SSS) students of Government schools will shock you. Lack of knowledge and critical thinking among Nigerian University graduates will leave you disappointed. The system is too examination conscious and not to gain knowledge.

IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATION

The under listed according to Ajayi, J.F. Ade (1963) are the importance of education to the development of our country.

1. Education is the milestone of every type of development;
2. Education provides all knowledge to do any work with systematic way;
3. With education a country can develop its economy and society;
4. Well-educated population lives with silence and calm;
5. Education develops the personality of the youth of a nation;
6. Education makes people perfect by providing large number of skills;
7. Education creates awareness in the population that makes them self-reliance and self dependant;
8. Education has the power to create stability and equality in different religions, and people.

Alemika (2015) added that:

1. Education enables individuals, groups, countries and human race to explore, appreciate, understand and develop their physical and social environments for the satisfaction of their needs;
2. It empowers individuals and liberates citizens from ignorance, prejudice, bias, superstition, and manipulation by people who claim to have superior knowledge;
3. An educated person has a broad view of issues instead of narrow and parochial outlook;
4. He/she is tolerant of other people's religion, belief, culture and limitations

- and promotes social harmony and security;
5. Education produces and enhances knowledge, skills, productivity, governance, civility and status in society; and
 6. Knowledge produced and acquired through education is the most vital and sustainable basis of national development and security.

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

It is important to emphasise that Nigeria practices a Federal system of government, and that saddles the affairs of education in Nigeria on the shoulders of the Federal and State ministry of Education as the case may be. Problems of education in Nigeria are so many, but for the benefit of this work we will take just a few.

1. **Poor Governance:** Poor governance have crippled mostly all the sectors in Nigerian including the education system. The attitude of government towards the quality of education in Nigeria is lackadaisical. Our Basic universal education suffers most because primary education is neither fully controlled by the federal government, nor by the state or the local government but by individuals.
2. **Corruption:** It has eaten deep into the

nation. Bribes are collected not just by politicians but also people in the educational system. Funds meant for academic infrastructure, teachers' salaries, maintenance of schools etc are being mismanaged and diverted. Corruption is endemic in the education system and looks like there is no political will to deal with it.

3. **Poor infrastructure and learning facilities:** Most schools especially government owned schools are in a very bad shape and therefore not conducive for teaching good learning. Most of them lack practical facilities which make learning theoretic. Imagine a technical collage without technical workshop. The Nigerian teaching curriculum needs to be reviewed and updated, and more practical and research based
4. **Poor teacher's salary:** poor salary scale and irregular payment of teacher's salaries have become a num in the country. In most cases, teachers will have to take industrial actions before their salaries would be paid. It is sad that teachers at all level are not given allowances just like the politicians. This results to most teachers engaging in other businesses which they take more seriously.
5. **High level of examination malpractice:** The inability of the

government to curb examination malpractice has caused the decline in the quality of graduates produced in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that examination practice is now a trend practiced both by the students and the teachers.

THE NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Restructuring: what is it?

Many different definitions have been offered in the mass of written materials generated to date by scholars. Many different diagnoses of the ills of the educational system and many different proposals for their cure borrow this same label. If scholars and appraisers are to be true to the course of the word, all should at least have in common a concern to reform some aspect of the *structure* of schools. Beyond that common denominator, however, there is great variety.

Restructuring of the education system has, for historical and logical reasons, one central meaning and three associated ones. Most basically and centrally, restructuring means *a significant change in the pattern of school governance* (Conley, 1993)

Klauke (1989) pointed out also a significant change in the governance of norms and practices of decision-making regarding three

critical areas of school life:

1. instructional methodology and curriculum;
2. administrative management and organization; and
3. The generation, allocation and use of resources.

These three dimensions of the operation of schools is referred to as *the "socio-technology" of education*. (Klauke 1989). They are related to each other and obviously interact in producing the effects of schooling on participants and the environment alike.

The secondary meaning of the term 'restructuring' has to do with fundamental reform in each of these three particular areas. Restructuring in the school system is thus sometimes presented as a question of radically changing the technology of instruction in school. It is sometimes presented as an essential for basic reorganization of the teaching profession, or of the relation of the school to its community. It is also considered a call for thoroughgoing reform of the way in which resources for education are generated and spent.

For reasons that will become clearer, we consider these versions of restructuring to be secondary to the school administrative governance issue, though they are obviously closely related to it. They are closely related because the reason for restructuring school governance is essentially to promote lasting

innovative and locally-'owned' reforms in these critical areas of school life reforms that, it is hoped, will have a positive impact on learning outcomes and student achievement. So restructuring school governance is expected to lead to major and effective reform in at least some of these other areas. (Conley, 1993) At the same time, the governance issue is distinct, because experience with school reform in Nigeria has led much of the educational community in this country to the conviction that lasting improvements in the instructional, administrative and budgetary areas of school life are not possible unless underlying issues of the governance and structure of the system are addressed

Once again, therefore, we distinguish the fundamental issue of school governance from the equally important but derivative issues of instructional methodology, administrative organization and resource use. The latter topics define how schools are run; the former establishes who will decide how schools are run, and in what manner these decisions will be made.

Some authors, and some wings of the restructuring movement, focus directly on particular instructional, administrative or budgetary issues without raising school governance questions. In many cases, they propose and in some cases they have tried out

radical and innovative reforms

The Need for Restructuring

Why restructure? This is an important question that should be examined. Let us just note for the time being that public attention was drawn to a number of apparent ills of the educational system during the fourth republic. (Vincent 2016). The list of shortcomings included decline levels of average achievement on standardized tests; rising rates of absenteeism and drop-out, particularly in urban schools; rising rates of teacher turnover; worsening problems of drug use and teenage pregnancy in school populations; and frequent complaints from the business community that a growing proportion of entry-level employees did not have the basic skills required to do their jobs, or even to be trained for them.

Elmore (1990) points out that these highly publicized symptoms of malaise were of concern to several different constituencies and from several different viewpoints. The call for restructuring represents, he notes, "a fragile consensus that public schools, as they are presently constituted, are not capable of meeting society's expectations for the education of young people." The business community sees its competitive advantage in international markets threatened if we are not able to produce a more educated workforce for the new workplace. Fuhrman (1990) base his case for restructuring on a concern for equity and social justice, noting that the students

whose futures are most threatened by impending changes in the labour market are the low achievers in the bottom third of the school population. A third motive force driving the movement for restructuring stems from the claim that the quality of the teaching force has seriously deteriorated in recent years. Proponents of this view contend that making the work of teachers more attractive, financially and professionally, will serve to draw more qualified candidates to the teaching profession. (Fuhrman 1990)

Gotetz (1978) Researched on the effects of innovative educational programmes undertaken during that period suggested that such incremental efforts at reform had had limited impact. Something more thoroughgoing and systemic, something that would awaken the motivation of school staff and be adopted as a cause by them, was required. As a result, calls for restructuring have become increasingly energetic and insistent. One of the most succinct comes from Murphy (1990):

"The excessively centralized, bureaucratic control of urban schools must end.

Effective local leadership is crucial. Every school should be given the freedom and flexibility required to respond creatively to its educational objectives and above all, to meet the needs of students."

GOALS OF RESTRUCTURING

What then are the fundamental *objectives* of restructuring? The answer is not always clear, or at least not always specific. Most scholars would agree that 'school improvement' is a goal, and that contributing to remedying the sorts of ills outlined above is a priority. But there are many more vague exhortations than specific battle plans, and as we shall see the issue of evaluation of restructuring efforts, and of determining the bases on which their proponents should be held 'accountable', is still hotly debated. O' Neil (2003) poised, the question of the goals of restructuring is both as critical and as difficult to pin down as that concerning the overall goals of education in Nigeria While most can agree that schools should, among other things, ensure that students acquire basic skills of literacy and numeracy, plus familiarity with their cultural heritage and sufficient other competency and knowledge to earn a living. The problem is just how these attributes are defined, what 'other things' are included, and what relative importance is assigned to them. In fact, from Elmore (1990) point of view, we could say that, at root, restructuring is quite simply about admitting a larger group of people — like teachers, parents and community leaders to the debate concerning the objectives of Nigerian education and concerning the way in which they will be operationalized and attained.

Whatever the case, there is one **frequent** confusion in the literature on restructuring that

we should try to elucidate right away. The 'socio-technology' of schooling that is, the way in which resource use, administrative organization and instructional methodology interact to create the school environment and to produce the effects of education is obviously a complex matter. In this web of influences and interacting factors, there is seldom a one-to-one correspondence between cause and effect. Moreover, patterns of school governance, precisely because they are 'fundamental' or 'underlying' issues, are somewhat removed from classroom outcomes. Picture a network of factors that lead from supply of the materials, personnel and budgets which schools require, through administrative decisions about how these resources will be used, to staff training and support, to classroom interaction, and on to learning outcomes and fulfilment of the objectives of schooling. In such a network, it is clear that issues of governance may fundamentally determine how classroom activities take place and the general climate for learning, but that they are also distinctly removed from the concrete acts of teaching and learning.

Consequently, if this sort of restructuring is to have an impact on student achievement, it will obviously have to be by a two- or three-stage process. For example, reformed governance may affect personnel decisions which impinge on morale and positively

affect school climate, thus laying the groundwork for better achievement; and/or new decision making patterns may lead to effective reforms in the instructional methodology actually used in classrooms, and that may subsequently have an impact on learning, etc. In short, changes in school governance affect learning outcomes principally because they lead to locally initiated and effectively adopted reforms in the overall methodology of education.

One can conclude two things from this line of argument:

- (1) restructuring of school governance should not be expected, in most cases, to produce immediate changes in student achievement, even though those changes may be one of its principal long-term objectives; and
- (2) it is important to try to specify the 'battle plan' or strategy of such restructuring by examining the sequence of steps or effects by which modifications in school governance will affect the longer-term goals of the movement and by documenting, through research, the actual itinerary of these effects in schools.

The existing system is obviously not working nor producing desired result. An Overhaul of the system is highly needed at this point. This is very important because the survival of Nigeria as a viable society will notably depend on the state of her Educational Institutions. Since the quality of education in a Nation

determines the level at which it develops, drastic actions must be taken to restore our education system. The role of Education in the development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. It's on record that the different nations of the world, who paid special attention to their educational sector, have experienced unprecedented growth and development. Russia for instance, moved from a very backward poverty stricken country in 1917 to what we know today - one of the world's most technologically developed country. (King 2005) Education also transformed Japan from what it used to be in 1947 to what it is now - the third most industrialized nation in the world. (King 2005)

A country that is interested in her development like Nigeria needs to change her value system and invest drastically in Education which is the intellectual hub of any Nation and the engine that propels the economy

By restructuring the education system, the country stands to gain a lot. For example:

1. All interested citizens will benefit from good and standard quality of education.
2. There will be a drastic reduction of crime and insecurity in the Country, thereby creating peace and enabling environment for businesses to thrive. May I remind us that the alarming rate of crime and insecurity in the country is primarily as a result of poverty and

unemployment occasioned by our skewed dysfunctional system that keeps churning out uncooked materials that are not employable.

3. There will be a lot of competent and highly employable graduates in the country. This is what happens when you are a product of a working and functional State.

4. A breath of fresh air, knowing that the youths will be able to compete with the global challenges and keep pace with their contemporaries in the rest of the world.

Caveats and limitations of Educational Restructuring in Nigeria

There is a tendency to immediately evaluate the impact of restructuring on learning, to assess definitively its effects on the quality of education itself before proceeding further. At this stage such precision is not possible. The call for restructuring is a call for a reform effort that will extend well into the next century. Indeed, because there are different conceptions of restructuring, one can expect that how a country begins to understand what restructuring is will, in part, be determined by how it is actually implemented in practice. In this sense, practice can and should influence policy. Therefore, to evaluate restructuring prematurely may be to doom it to failure. Moreover, the research and evaluation necessary to fuller assessments has not yet been conducted. What research is available tends to be anecdotal, qualitative, developmental and frequently promotional. Most of the analysis is centred on defining the

issues, determining what is meant by restructuring, and what its implications are for school governance and teaching practice. More recently, some research has become available that documents what has been accomplished thus far and the impact it has had on those who are attempting to carry it out. Such studies are very useful and important, the more so as one of the most critical issues in restructuring concerns the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for evaluation and accountability. Restructuring, like most innovations, is being sold by promises of dramatic improvement in academic achievement; and, in a time of budgetary austerity, taxpayers do not want to continue paying for new programmes without understandable evidence of results. Yet we know how difficult it is to sort out the factors that influence achievement: there are so many confounding ones, including social class, level of parental involvement, quality of school, and a host of others, that attributions of causality are arduous at best. As one consequence, accountability and evaluation methods are themselves under scrutiny and are often considered to be part of the problem that restructuring purports to address. In any case, a little patience and circumspection joined to some disciplined inquiry would do much good for the restructuring movement.

THE WAY FORWARD

Special attention should be paid to the colleges of Education and the faculties of Education in universities. We all know that the college of Education is a tertiary institution primarily concerned with producing quality school teachers. The idea of pushing people with low JAMB scores to the faculties of Education in the different Government institutions has to stop as a matter of urgency. Getting into a college of Education in Nigeria is so easy and has very low requirements. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board offers automatic admissions to colleges of Education for the candidates with the lowest scores. This gives people the impression that unintelligent people are the ones made to do Education courses, when it should be the other way round.

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n Finland, for instance, currently ranked by World Economic Forum as the second most educated country in the world, teachers are selected from the top ten percent of the country's graduate (Colclough 2005). Granted that examinations and test scores are not the true test of knowledge, but we can also agree that test scores are a fair measure of academic ability. And there's a form of correlation between test scores and intellectual ability. So, sending the lowest scoring candidates in JAMB to learn how to teach the children is very wrong. This is one of the issues that restructuring the educational system will correct/address.

If the country seek a change in our Educational system (like we are currently doing), we need to update our system and adapt trending innovations in the institutions of learning (as it is done in other developed countries). The pattern of learning and teaching is very outdated. For example, Computer science students in the Government Schools do not learn how to code. It is not part of their curriculum. The country ends up producing Computer Science graduates who do not know coding and programming. How does Nigeria now expect them to excel in this fast evolving information technology world Nigeria find herself in? A revision of the current curriculum, introducing new and improved policies in the system is needed.

Corruption must be dealt with from the root as it plays a huge role in the falling of the Nigerian Education System. Major funds meant to build structures and equip Libraries are diverted; a student studies for four years or more without visiting a library because there's no functional library. Most of Nigeria's public Schools are in shabby condition. Providing good learning environment/infrastructure, with an expanded syllabus and vocational training with focus on optimum subject delivery methods (especially for the Colleges of Education) will go a long way.

It is also very important that the Government

sends and sponsors the Teachers and Lecturers on periodic update courses within and outside the Country, in their different fields, in order to keep up with the new trends and the world at large. Having Teachers and Lecturers who have up to date knowledge in their different fields is the greatest asset in the Education sector and the entire Nation.

Finally, there should be an upward review of Teachers' and Lecturers' salaries. It is no news that Teachers in Nigeria earn the lowest pay. How will they perform optimally when they are not well remunerated? On the bright side, though, there was a news flash some weeks ago on the Honourable Minister for Education, Prof. Adamu Adamu saying that Teachers would become the highest paid workers in Nigeria. I hope this is implemented soon and not become one of those "fake promises" that we have had to deal with for decades now.

CONCLUSION

The ever declining state of the Nigerian Education System begs for serious concern. An overhaul in this sector is needed to achieve the Nigeria of our dream. One of the consequences of not restructuring the system is that very soon (in the near future), the political landscape will be littered with illiterate Politicians who govern the nation at different levels. We call on the Federal Government to devote the Lion's share of our budget to Education instead of election, and to restructure the entire system. There should be active regulatory agency to monitor educational activities of all institutions (both

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