

# **CHALLENGES OF POLITICS IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

**BY:**

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**Protocols,**

**Noble colleagues,**

I want to start by thanking most sincerely the Exco of this congress for accepting to allow me come home. I consider ANCOPSS as the bridge I crossed over before arriving at my present destination, for at one time I was the Sokoto state ANCOPSS Secretary from 1994-1998 and National PRO of ANCOPSS from 1998-2000, when I had to leave due to my elevation from Principal to Registrar of Shehu Shagari College of Education Sokoto. But ANCOPSS did not forgot me because in 2009 at Ilorin Kwara state during the annual National Conference I was among those awarded the highest honour of ANCOPSS that is the *Principal Emeritus of Nigeria (PEN)*. So you see I am an ANCOPSS veteran and coming home to join my noble colleagues.

Let me say, education is one of the social services provided by the political leadership and consequently whatever goes in education is a reflection of the political ideology currently prevalent in that society. The crux of the matter is that are the political ideologies in agreement with best practices in education. This and many issues are x-rayed in this presentation.

Education is a crucial sector in any nation. Being a major investment in human capital development. It plays a critical role in long-term development. Consequently, the challenges of politics in educational development at all levels has far negative impact on a nation's moral, civil, social and economic development.

A look at what education and politics means separately can help guide this discussion.

Ordinarily, education is exclusively used for development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho-productive domains. It also involves a desirable approach in human behaviour through the process of teaching and learning. Fafunwa (1974) defines *education as what each generation gives its younger ones which make them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behaviours which are the positive values in the society in which they live.*

Amaele (2011) asserted that education is seen as the total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his abilities and interests to meet up the needs of the society and for the individual to take his rightful place and contribute equally to the development of the society.

Also a brief look at what is politics would help us see through the interconnection between politics and education and why the challenges. Nwanko (1962) saw politics as “*a social process whereby the limited available resources and values whether material or symbolic, are allocated to the people or society by these who have the authority to do so*”. The political function of distributing and allocation of these values or symbols to the society by these authority is done through its socializing institutions and social agencies. In this process, the political parties in power become the primary socializing system which the school becomes the secondary socializing agents.

From the two definitions, one can infer that both politics and education are meant for human development and socialization. However, with the current trend in politics, it is clear that education is only an instrument of political socialization, the political leadership determines:

- ✓ The educational goals and philosophies of the educational system.
- ✓ The educational resources - funds, personnel, material, facilities, equipment and services.
- ✓ The educational production process - the curricular method, administrative, supervision and evaluation and,

- ✓ The educational outcomes - the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, impression etc.

It is these determinants that causes a lot of friction between politics and education and thus challenges arises.

A look at the history of education in Nigeria will more or less indicate the important role played by politics on the educational system. As the British colonial influence in West Africa became stronger, there was the need for trained natives to assist the administration of Government agencies. The colonial government began to give grants in-aid to the various missionary groups for running of schools on the condition that such missions fulfill the policies of colonial govern. In 1886, Lagos became the colony and protectorate of Lagos and therefore, the first purely Nigerian education 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 grants more effective and so increase the involvement of colonial government. In 1892, education ordinance Hercarr was appointed the inspector of schools and in 1908, separate education boards were created for eastern, western and central provinces of Nigeria. In 1914, the Northern Nigeria was amalgamated

under Lord Lugard and this led to his policy on education in 1916 which aimed to educate Muslim's.

From the foregone discussion, it can be seen that, from the onset of coming of western education to Nigeria, it was embedded with governance and that the two works together for the socio-political development of the society. Therefore as the political office holders perceive that, they have a mission to the electorates, they come up with various policies and programmes which can best be delivered through education not minding the ethics and real demands of the education sector.

This paper therefore identified some of the challenges of politics in educational development in Nigeria as follows:

1. Abrupt changes in educational policies and programmes.
2. Lack of political will.
3. Appointment of unqualified people into top positions of education.
4. Employment of unqualified and uninterested persons into the teaching profession.
5. Diverting budgetary provisions to other sectors of development.
6. Over proliferation of schools.

These can further be expanded as follows:

## **1. Abrupt changes in educational policies and programmes**

Afolabi and Loto (2015) asserted that education policy decisions in Nigeria are highly political, orders, directives and assertions bereft of synergy. This happens when the envisaged educational objectives are being politically manipulated to suit the whims and caprices of policy formulators. A very good case in question here is the continued change of education policies from the 7-5-4 system to the 6-3-3-4 system to the 9-3-4 system of education, again from the Universal Basic Education to the Basic Education policies. Through these policies, one can clearly ask categorically what went wrong with the former systems and culminated in coming up with the later. A lot of useful programmes and events were dropped, new ones were picked and also dropped leaving students and staff in doubt as to what is now achievable in education. Education was seen to be focused by millennium development goals and vision 20-20 which were abandoned or packed up after the owners of the programmes left the scenes of political power. Therefore the continued change of policy in education from successive governments which lead to policy adjustment is considered as one of the major political challenges affecting education. This is because most of the programmes initiated by a

particular administration after the termination of that government however good the programmes are. Rather, the incoming government would come in with its own agenda, inconsistent policy making is a problem in education, especially with high turn-over of education ministers at the National level, Commissioners and Special Advisers at state levels. These bring about the abandoning of laudable programmes, policies and structures. Certain structures may be left uncompleted forever culminate in wastage of funds given to contractors for such projects.

## **2. Lack of Political Will**

Political will according to Egonwan (1991) *is the key factor to government policy formulation strategies*. Nigerian government has adopted education as a tool for national development. However, political will has been lacking. Education is very poorly funded in Nigeria. Nigeria has, up till now, refused to comply with the UNESCO recommendation that at least 26% of every country's annual budget be spent on education. According to Igbuzor (2006), the national expenditure on education cannot be computed because various states expenditure on education cannot be determined in relation to the



UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of national budgets. Paul-Sewa (2012) pointed out that, the 6-3-3-4 system of education from inception was seen as system in the right direction which could move the nation towards technological development and industrialization. However, because of lack of commitment on the part of government the system have failed to catapult Nigeria into the realm of educational and technological advanced countries. Our leaders make promises that will never be fulfilled. Oladapo (2012) noted that the challenges facing education is a general malaise that has to do with our politising education. He stressed that politising education, by promising things that could not be delivered, we compromise the standard of education. This is clearly evident as year in year out various governments both at state and federal levels make lofty submissions in their annual budgets, the national and state assemblies approvals are secured, assents were made but implementation becomes a problem. Sometimes the funds are diverted from education to others sectors or not released at all.

**3. Appointment of unqualified people into top positions of the education industry.**

It is common scene that whenever a new government emerges at either federal or state levels, changes would be made in all education ministries, agencies and parastatals. In the process of doing so, great mistakes are often committed where individuals with no background in education at whatever levels would be appointed top positions of these ministries, agencies and parastatals thus rendering the leadership of such organizations incompetent and insensitive to the feelings of members of education industry. Such appointments would lead to rash and unbalanced decisions which would in the long run affect the overall performance of the education sector.

**4. Employment of Unqualified and uninterested persons into the Education industry.**

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act 3 of 1993, section 17(2) affirms that, it is a crime of any individual to teach, use the identify of a teacher or earned a reward of teacher without being registered and licensed by TRCN. Such a person on conviction is liable to a fine or jail term or both. The question one need to ask here is that, is

this act complied with by government and private stakeholders in education having private schools and other related educational agencies.

The answer is no! Teaching appointments by various governments are done to satisfy political demand for employment. Top political figures are given number of vacancies to fill within the teaching industry, whether, such candidates are qualified or interested in the teaching they are employed and payed salaries to do is to the detriment of these who are interested, qualified and can do it. Many people today in the teaching industry consider teaching as a garage to wait for the vehicle that would take them to the greener pasture. When that vehicle arrives they would surely move even the professionally qualified teachers, this is not unrelated to with the lack of motivation and proper remuneration as compared to other professions. The argument have always been that teachers are too many as such their remuneration if adequately put would be too colossal. But then, are pupils/students not too many and every child has right to education? Can we then curtail the number of school going pupils/students so that, the remuneration of teachers can be contained easily.

Recently the TRCN threatened not to extend its December 2019 deadline of flushing unqualified and teachers within the teaching

industry. The question is can that happen? Would the political class allow a large number of teachers out considering their political affiliations, relationship and what have you? Would the proprietors of private Universities, Colleges of Educations, Polytechnics, Secondary and Primary schools let go of this category easily? What social problems are going to be created when such category is out of job? Is Government ready to accommodate such in other areas of the civil service?

If such are again given a differential salary from the qualified ones, they could be demoralized and refuse to put their best and may even create chaos within the industry. It will take a great political will and determination to address this issue.

The paper is not anyway against the professionalization of teaching or the existing laws to boost the image of the profession. Rather, the paper is emphasizing that the right political atmosphere be created in order to accept the fact that too much over politicization of educational policies, laws and programmes is doing a lot of harm to the education and that is why the much hate and cry on moral decadence, moral laxity and falling in the standard of education.

## **5. Diverting Budgetary allocation to other sector**

As earlier mentioned in the paper, year in year out huge sums of money are allocated in budgets for education but in the long run, the funds would be diverted for the execution of other projects which may not even have any bearing with education. What the paper is suggesting here is that the political class is under-funding and diverting funds meant for educational development. There are instances where funds donated by foreign partners are diverted by some state governments and government agencies for other purposes. In some cases, counter funds are not given so that, the donated funds are accessed.

## **6. Proliferation of Schools**

This takes two dimensions, one is by government to establish a school in a place where it is not needed at that particular point on time, the other is proliferation of sub-standard schools by some proprietors. Governments for obvious reasons may decide to come up with schools in certain environment to satisfy the wishes of some individuals either by appointing their own as principal and given employment to their wards, children, wives and mistresses close to their home which does not augher well for performance because everyone there would see himself coming

in from one strong source or the other as such there may not be discipline among the staff who see themselves as equal and as such are above the law of the headmaster or principal. In such a situation, wrangling's would abound which is the detriment of the pupils/students who are to be moulded educationally, morally, socially and otherwise.

For the sub-standard private schools, it is a common scene now in the country, to find schools operating in motor garage within residential quarters, uncompleted buildings and make shift tents. The essence is to make money and offer to pupils and students sub-standard training, because if one decides to take cursory look at the teaching staff you will be surprised to find out that all shades of qualifications are accommodated to teach either as cheap labor or being relations of the proprietors of such schools.

The Sunday Magazine newspaper of 8<sup>th</sup> October 2016 stated this *“private schools are springing up like weeds in every corner, with many claiming to be ‘international schools’ or offering ‘Montessori’ curriculum/education, which is seldom not the case”*. The worrying aspect of this proliferation is that, you can't stop such schools because they either belong to ruling party faithfuls, wives/wards of party leaders and some for party leaders themselves.

To conclude this discussion I want to submit that, as long as the political class do not see education a tool for enhancing national development and work towards that, then we shall continue to cry foul. The most disturbing and annoying thing is that, sometimes our own are appointed in positions, by our own I mean Professional teachers but instead of doing their best for the education industry, you find them amongst those strangling it. It is now high time those of us who meant well for the profession to brace-up and join the train of politics so that our own dear industry would be safeguard.

There should also be the need for strong will among political leaders to ensure continuity for educational policies and doggedness in the fight against corruption in the country.

I want to thank the congress for giving me the opportunity to speak before this august gathering, I want to thank the congress for listening.

Thank you and may Allah bless all of us.

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