

DILEMMA OF EDUCATIONAL FINANCING AND CYNICISM OF NIGERIAN POLITICIANS

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ABSTRACT

The Dilemma of Educational Financing has been witnessed in academics and Non academics, traders and farmers. The issue in funding education in Nigeria has become a big scar which no one knows how to heal. ASUU started this fight since 1990, but it keeps deteriorating by the day because the politicians are using it as a tool to show their power. The questions still remain; how can this case be reverse? Is the educational policy faulty or is it the implementation that is faulty? What are the implications of industrial action to Education? These are the issues explored in the paper. Based on a literature review approach, suggestions and recommendations were made to avert the distortion in the educational system; and the ineffective implementation engendered primarily by ill political will, lack of continuity of programs, and corruption. The situation has hindered quality of education and, until urgent actions are taken to review Nigeria's educational system, its national aspirations will continue to be compromised. The paper also suggested that National Policy on Education should adopt the model practiced by Asian countries such as Japan, China and India which take the culture of the people into consideration and fulfill all the ASUU demands for the purpose of the provision of qualitative education and made compulsory and entrenched into the Constitution in order to encourage result-oriented implementation. Also there is a need for a strong anti-corruption framework to hold politicians and government officials accountable for their actions. This will help to curb the embezzlement of education funds and ensure that resources are effectively utilized for the development of the sector.

Keywords: Dilemma, Education, Financing and Nigeria Politicians

Introduction

Education is the foundation upon which a nation's progress and development is built. It is considered as a basic human right and a key factor in eradicating poverty, reducing

inequality, and promoting economic growth. In Nigeria, education has been recognized as a crucial tool for socio-economic development and has been given significant attention by the government. However, the dilemma of educational financing and the

cynicism of Nigerian politicians have hindered the progress of the education sector, leading to an underfunded and poorly managed system.

Many countries across the world have developed on the wings of their intellectual capacities. For several decades, past governments in Nigeria have made futile efforts through several policies and the reshaping of institutional mechanism to revamp the education system. The current deterioration of the Nigerian education sector proves no less good. Several literatures on the education system in Nigeria attributes the deploring condition of the education sector to poor financing, implementation, and monitoring, as well as the copy-syndrome. Education is one of the most crucial sectors in any society, because it is central to the preservation of the society membership. Education as a “process of imparting knowledge, skill and judgement facts, skills and ideas that have been learned, either formally or informally”, forms the basis for human capacity development, both physically and mentally to fit into the society. It is in this context that education is perceived to be the system motivating positive institutional changes and developments geared towards creating the required internal solidarity, cohesion and integration of people to achieve the common good for all in the society (Njoku, 2010). Developed countries like United States of America and Britain, and of course, the fast growing countries in Asia, such as China, India, Singapore and Malaysia, and in Africa, for example, Ghana, neighbouring Nigeria, are investing heavily with most sincere commitments to achieve required goals of educational developments. One

basic drive for achievements in these countries is the fruitful exchange relations in knowledge production, distribution and commitment of resources to achieving full intellectual employment and development. The case in Nigeria is on the contrary. On the other hand, Politicians are busy filling their pockets with the money they are supposed to use to work, therefore, the government have been blamed for poor financing of the sector and on the other, educational managers including policy makers, have also been accused of attributing to the deteriorating standard of education in Nigeria basically for lack of effective policy making and management. Beyond these impasses, the sector is suffering from virulent politicisation to untoward tendencies such as ethnicity, religion and godfatherism which have become an enduring legacy of colonialism and post-colonial politics in Nigeria.

Dilemma is a state of uncertainty or perplexity especially as requiring a choice between equally unfavorable options. In this context, financing of education in Nigeria are embedded in the virtually endemic problems of fiscal federalism - in particular the so called vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances. The former deals with the balance between financial responsibilities and financial resources at each level of government - federal, state and local.

Dilemma of Educational Financing in Nigeria

One of the major challenges facing the education sector in Nigeria is the issue of inadequate funding. The Nigerian government has continuously failed to meet the UNESCO recommendation of allocating at least 26% of its annual budget to

education. In 2019, the government allocated only 7.05% of its budget to education, which is far below the recommended amount. This has resulted in a lack of resources and facilities in schools, leading to a decline in the quality of education.

Moreover, the education sector in Nigeria is heavily dependent on oil revenues, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in the global oil market. The country's over-reliance on oil revenues has led to a neglect of other sectors, including education. When the oil prices drop, the government is forced to cut its budget for education, leading to a further decline in the already inadequate funding (Orubuiye, 2016).

Additionally, the distribution of funds for education in Nigeria is highly skewed towards the tertiary level, with little attention given to primary and secondary education. This has created a disparity in the quality of education between the different levels, with tertiary institutions receiving more resources and better facilities. This disparity has also contributed to the high drop-out rates at the primary and secondary levels.

Cynicism of Nigerian Politicians towards Education

The cynicism of Nigerian politicians towards education is another major obstacle to the development of the education sector. Many politicians see education as a means to an end, rather than a tool for social and economic development. They use promises of free education and better educational facilities as a campaign strategy to win votes, but once in power, these promises are rarely fulfilled.

Moreover, corruption in the education sector has become a norm in Nigeria. Politicians and government officials embezzle funds meant for education, leaving little or no resources for the development of the sector. The lack of accountability and transparency in the management of education funds has resulted in a significant decline in the quality of education in the country.

Furthermore, the political instability in Nigeria has also contributed to the cynicism of politicians towards education. The frequent changes in government and policies have led to inconsistent and ineffective education policies. This has created a sense of uncertainty in the education sector, with no long-term plans for sustainable development (Babalola, 2011).

Impact of the Dilemma of Educational Financing and Cynicism of Nigerian Politicians

The inadequate funding and cynicism of Nigerian politicians towards education have had a significant impact on the quality of education in the country. The lack of resources and facilities has resulted in a poorly equipped and understaffed education system, leading to a decline in the quality of education. This has also contributed to the high illiteracy rate in Nigeria, with over 10 million children out of school. Cylia (2011), cited Adedaja (2008) posited that among many problems which have bedeviled the Nigerian nation since independence, funding of education ranks very high. This is manifested in the country's decline in the proportion of government expenditure allocated to education sector relative to others over the years. This is in spite of increasing demand for educational activities either in primary, secondary or tertiary level.

Given this situation and the crucial role of education in the development efforts of any society, the problem of funding should be a concern of all.

Moreover, the decline in the quality of education has also affected the country's economic growth. With a poorly educated workforce, the country's human capital is not fully developed, hindering economic progress. This has also resulted in a high unemployment rate, as the education system is not producing graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge for the job market. These incidents brought about series of industrial actions and withholding workers salary in the name of no work no pay;

Ehi, (2021) wrote in guardian newspaper, about Inadequate funding of University education in Nigeria is the greatest developmental problem. Today, University education in Nigeria remains chronically underfunded! Our enthusiasm for education has not been matched with financial and developmental commitments. Associations of academics staff union of universities (ASUU) have fought politicians for many years to avert this situation. From 1992 to 2022, University Lecturers have embarked on industrial actions 19 times, because of inadequate funding of the universities and conditions of service.

In 1992, ASUU had an agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria led by former Head of State, General Sani Abacha. ASUU went on strike for 2 months in 1993 and 11 months in 1994.

Fast-forward to 1999. During President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, ASUU went on strike for 5 months in 1999, 3 months in 2001, (FGN and ASUU reached

an agreement in 2001), 2 weeks in 2002, 6 months in 2003 (JAMB results were a waste because thousands of young people could not process admission in 2003) and a few days in 2005.

Although the Federal Government and ASUU reached an agreement in 2001, this did not end the yearly strikes. So, on 14th December 2006, the former Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, represented the Federal Government and inaugurated a committee to re-negotiate the 2001 agreement between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). This re-negotiation went on from 2006-2009 and the key areas of discussion between the Federal Government and ASUU included the conditions of service of academics, university funding, and university autonomy. Representatives of the Federal Government and ASUU agreed that there was a need to address the rot in the university system in Nigeria, especially in the areas of infrastructural development and the welfare of academics.

In 2009, an agreement was reached between both parties. This agreement was to put a stop to the incessant strikes by ASUU in Federal and State Universities across Nigeria. While the re-negotiation was ongoing, ASUU went on strike in 2006, 2007, 2008, and once again in 2009. Because the agreement reached in 2009 was not implemented in full or to the satisfaction of ASUU, there was 5 months strike in 2010, 3 months strike in 2011, 5 months strike in 2013, and another 1-month strike in 2017. 3 months strike in 2018, 9 months strike in 2020 and finally 8 months strike in 2022. All these strikes by ASUU is to make

politicians to understand the need for financing education. Ngige was using ASUU to play, to the extent that he planned to divide ASUU into 2. He refused to pay University lecturers an outstanding months salary (Nwankwo, 2023).

This is a summary of how we got here. This is coupled with the fact that there has been a significant increase in Nigeria's population leading to an increase in student enrolment across our tertiary institutions in the last 3 decades.

Way Forward

To address the dilemma of educational financing and the cynicism of Nigerian politicians, there is a need for a comprehensive and sustainable approach. The government should prioritize education by allocating more funds to the sector and ensuring that these funds are effectively and transparently managed. This will require a long-term commitment and planning to ensure sustainable development.

Cyilia, (2011) also suggested that The first of the solution is universities in Nigeria should provide a professional accounting that would show what it costs exactly to provide its services. Nigerians should be encouraged to emulate what is obtainable in other parts of the world relating to university funding. It is significant to note that foreign students coming to Nigeria prefer private universities to federal or state universities. The obvious reasons include the fact that the university calendar is scrupulously adhered to, there is greater discipline among teachers and students.

Furthermore, there is a need for the government to collaborate with other stakeholders, such as the private sector and international organizations, to bridge the funding gap in the education sector. The private sector can provide support through corporate social responsibility initiatives, while international organizations can provide financial aid and technical assistance.

Additionally, there is a need for a strong anti-corruption framework to hold politicians and government officials accountable for their actions. This will help to curb the embezzlement of education funds and ensure that resources are effectively utilized for the development of the sector.

Conclusion

The dilemma of educational financing and the cynicism of Nigerian politicians have hindered the progress of the education sector in the country. The inadequate funding and corruption have resulted in a decline in the quality of education, leading to a poorly equipped and understaffed education system. It is imperative for the government to prioritize education and work towards addressing the challenges facing the sector. Only then can Nigeria achieve its goal of providing quality education for all and promoting socio-economic development.

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