



Planning of Education for National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Philosophers have always sought to explain how education should serve moral, social, political and economic ends. Governments, therefore, use schooling to strengthen national identity and inculcate citizenship values, which is the national cohesion that this write up is said to talk about. A Nation therefore determines the specific values that its education system should achieve? How are these values achieved need some form of planning so as to meet a global standard and its learners marketable globally? Issues and challenges with planning education for national cohesion and global competitiveness in Nigeria are may include inadequate skilled personnel, ever changing technological growth, political arrangement, inadequate planning, poor implementation agencies (proper supervision) and lots more. These issues can always be solved when proper approach is given to handle the menace.

Key words: *National Cohesion, Educational Planning, Universal Basic Education (UBE), Society*

Introduction

Education is a deliberate, purposeful activity directed at the achievement of a range of ends which could potentially include the development of knowledgeable individuals who are able to think rationally, the formation of a sustainable community, and the realization of economic goals benefiting both individuals and their communities. The term education, therefore, has normative implications: it suggests that something worthwhile is being intentionally transmitted. Philosophers have always sought to explain how education should serve moral, social, political and economic ends. Schools play a crucial role in the making of our social world.

Governments, therefore, use schooling to strengthen national identity and inculcate citizenship values. How then does a country determine the specific values that its education system should achieve? How are these values achieved? This is the role of educational planning. (UNESCO 2014) Agi and Adiele (2009) have discussed in their respective works the crises and problems facing education in Nigeria. These problems are not peculiar to developing countries; schools in developed countries still compete for public funds with other sectors of the economy. Educational objectives can be achieved when resources are made available and put into maximum use. Educational planning,



human resources (HR) training and development have evolved as disciplines to guide the allocation and utilization of educational resources in the school system. This is required to arrest areas of waste of resources to make educational production more effective. In this regard, educational planning, HR training and development have become indispensable tools in the management of the school system in order to achieve the desired goals of education systems around the world.

The planning process is the plan itself, which is a blueprint for action. It ensures that the educational industry is effective in its activities. In a broader sense, an educational system must develop a plan that ensures that the appropriate products and services are offered to its student's appropriately. More specifically, planning gives guidance and direction to members of an organization as to their role in delivering the products and services activities needed for the education industry to realize its goals. Therefore, in the words of Ololube (2009), educational planning in its broadest generic sense is the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. The principal focus of educational planning in this definition is to make education more result-oriented for the development of the individual and the larger society.

Social Cohesion

Going by Microsoft Encarta dictionary 2009 social may be seen as society: relating to human society and how it is organized. And also society can be seen as a structured community of people bound together by similar traditions, institutions, or nationality. Hence social cohesion is national cohesion. The sociologist Emile Durkheim was the first who used the concept of social cohesion. According to him national cohesion is an ordering feature of a nation. National cohesion is the capacity of a nation to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization (easterly et. al. 2006). In other words, we can say that it is the foundation of human existence and co-existence. National cohesion is universal, indivisible, and interdependent and is principle by which we create the sacred home for human dignity. Social cohesion has been seen as contributing to cohesion, and education is viewed as "the most powerful generator of social capital" in our society (Green, et.al. 2001). education is thought of providing such a bridging capital to individual. Vasiliki, (2011): examines the ways education is related to social cohesion, mainly in sociology of education approaches. Education is viewed as an important institution that contributes to cohesion by socializing the new members of the society, providing them with knowledge and skills in order to facilitate their social participation (national participation).

Global competitiveness

Relating to or happening throughout the whole world (global). Competitive may be seen as; inclined toward wanting to achieve more than others. Microsoft® Encarta® 2009. Competitiveness pertains to the ability and performance of an institution, a firm, sub-sector or country to sell and supply goods and services in a given market. The Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum (2012-2013) defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country.

**Planning education for national cohesion**

The development of a comprehensive system of education for national cohesion, democracy & peace, embracing all levels of education and available to all is the long-term objective of UNESCO. In other words, formal, non-formal and informal education is covered by the system evolved. By the combined efforts of educators, families, mass and intergovernmental and non-intergovernmental organizations a culture of national cohesion.

Zebun, (2016). Suggested the following in this regard:

1. Education should cease to be considered as a one shot affair meant for children and youth.
2. Education and work should be looked upon as complementary forces, which operate simultaneously throughout the entire life of an individual.
3. All the three channels of education- fulltime, part-time and own-time should be developed in every state and in every sector of education and given equal status.
4. Education should cease to be looked upon as a school process: it should be a social process covering all learning that take place, whether in or outside the school.
5. Education should cease to be delegated responsibility of a profession and should become the direct social responsibility in which every individual is involved, both as a teacher and as a student.
6. The right to learn should be assured to every individual, without any discrimination and with full equality of opportunity, and he should also receive all the support and facilities necessary for its effective exercise throughout his life.
7. The non-formal sector, which has been neglected in the past, should be developed and blended with the formal sector in an integrated fashion to create a new system of education, which will have advantages of both the sectors and also eliminate the weakness, which arises when these sectors are developed in isolation.

Education should contribute to national cohesion in the following ways.

1. Schools ought to teach the rules of the game: those that govern interpersonal and political action. They consist of the social and legal principles underpinning good citizenship, obligations of political leaders, behaviour expected of citizens, and consequences for not adhering to these principles.
2. Schools can also facilitate a student's appreciation for the complexity of issues related to historical and global current events and, in so doing, may increase the likelihood that a student will see a point of view other than his or her own. By teaching the rules of the game in this manner, schools foster tolerance and lay the groundwork for voluntary behaviour consistent with social norms.
3. Schools are also expected to provide an experience roughly consistent with those citizenship principles, in effect, decreasing the "distance" between individuals of different origins. The educational experience derives from a wide variety of activities, whether in the classroom, the hallway, schoolyard, playing field, or bus. The degree to which a school may do this well depends on its ability to design



the formal curriculum, its culture, and the social capital if its surrounding community. The purpose for providing experiences that are consistent with the principles of citizenship is clear. Both formal and informal social contracts require elements of trust among strangers—to the extent that the socialization of citizens from different social origins allows them to acknowledge and respect each other; that is, decreasing the "distance." If the educational task is done effectively, this allows political institutions to adjudicate differences and economic institutions to operate efficiently.

School systems are expected to provide an equality of opportunity for all students. If the public perceives that the school system is biased and unfair, then the trust that citizens place in various other public institutions is compromised. For instance, the willingness of adults to play by the rules of the game may be compromised if fairness in the system appears suspect. Public schools are expected to incorporate the interests and objectives of many different groups and at the same time attempt to provide a common underpinning for citizenship. Often there are disagreements over the balance between these objectives. These disagreements must be adjudicated. Adjudication can be accomplished through many mechanisms—public school boards, professional councils, parent-teacher associations. The success of a school system is based in part on its ability to garner public support and consensus, and hence its ability to adjudicate differences over educational objectives.

Role of Education to National Cohesion

It is the educational system; which can introduce the social cohesion education in the schools especially at higher level. According to Green, et.al. (2001): the suggestion given below does come under the purview of the social cohesion:

1. Survey of awareness about human rights among college and university students, college and university teachers, parents, school teachers, school students, educational administrators, child labourers and their parents, politicians etc.
2. Organizing exhibitions on the different aspects of constitutional provisions and their violation.
3. Carry out evaluation of textbooks in the light of human right violation.
4. Evaluating classroom activities of the teacher in the light of the right of the child.
5. Studying newspaper report on violation of human rights.
6. Studying the problems concerning non-enrolment of the children in school and developing plan of action to solve the problem.
7. Evaluating activities such as one act plays, street plays, etc. portraying various aspects of human rights.
8. Organizing public meetings in the locality to develop awareness of public on human rights.
9. Studying the problems of the girl's students in coeducational institutions.
10. Studying the problem of women teachers in coeducational school and colleges.
11. Studying the revision for equal opportunity in education.
12. Studying the conditions of work at home and other work sites.
13. Studying the superstitions existing in the locality.



14. Providing courses on human rights education.
15. Studying the extent of punishment given in schools that dissuade a child from attending school.

Issues of educational planning in Nigeria which may affect its global competitiveness

Educational planning for national cohesion faces many challenges. Some of the issues include:

Inaccurate Data

One of the most difficult challenges that educational planners face is the issues of inaccurate statistical data. The quality of technical planning is in most cases inhibited by statistical deficiencies and inaccurate data. Nigerian education systems has failed to effectively plan because of lack of accurate data, which is because of the use of mediocre to prepare data for use in the planning and forecasting processes.

Inadequate Skilled Personnel

Most educational planners in Nigerian do not have complete competence in planning. Qualified planners are the single most significant resource that can lead to greater and efficient planning productivity and knowledge, skills and talents to achieve planning objectives. The quality of planners should not be nothing less than the basic acceptable standards worldwide. Another case in point is the lukewarm attitude of many state governments to the Federal Teachers Scheme (FTS) that is meant to assist them with needed manpower. Despite the importance of the FTS to quality UBE delivery, numerous teachers under the scheme have suffered untold hardship in their states of deployment particularly with regard to accommodation which the states are to provide. To make matter worst, in most states when UBE teachers finish their mandatory 2 years' service, the state government do not absorb them into their teaching service automatically as envisaged.

Technological Problem

Another serious problem in the planning of education in Nigeria is the lack of attention paid to emerging technological innovations planning mechanisms. The success of Nigerian education planners depends upon their ability to identify and respond to technological changes in other to elevate their planning output. Over the years, a number of technological changes have taken place that involves the introduction of modern advancements into the planning process and approaches, and understanding emerging issues related to educational planning and development.

Political Arrangement

The existing political arrangement has influenced the control over educational planning in Nigeria. Political instability has had its toll on educational programmes. Planning process started by one administration is brutally interrupted by the next and the differences between federal and state government education policies are quite challenging. The inability of the Nigerian political structure does not allow for education planners to be accountable for their wrong doings.



Economic Circumstances

The budgetary allocations that are available for educational planning in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. Funds provide for education planning is too small for proper planning to take place. The condition of the sector remains a thing of concern. Under-funding and systemic corruption makes the matter worse. The insufficient funding of the education planning sector stands as one of the major factors working against effective planning and implementation of education programmes.

Inadequate Planning

There is a popular saying that “he or she who has failed to plan has planned to fail”. Education planning in Nigeria has always been inadequate in line with the enormous facing our educational system. The lack of effective planning poses a significant obstacle to the advancement of education across the country. The success of any educational system hinges on proper planning. Planning of human and material resources has evolved to guide the allocation and utilisation of educational resources in the school systems. Such planning is required to arrest areas of wasted resources and to make educational production more successful. Consequently, for any educational system to truly develop effective planning is indispensable as education and planning are essential characteristics for effective education (Ololube, 2013).

Poor implementation agency

Policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria are often plagued by a number of factors. Very often, laudable policies formulated by government go into thin air at the implementation stage. The effectiveness of policy implementation is largely determined by the efficiency and competence of governmental implementing agencies. Because corruption is of serious concern in the Nigerian society, the issues of proper utilization of funds and accountability are critical. It is obvious that not all funds allocated for the UBE programme are used for the intended purposes due to high level of corruption in key implementing agencies and wasteful spending. Today, most primary and junior secondary schools in many parts of Nigeria are not being effectively monitored and supervised by the appropriate agencies in order to maintain uniform national minimum standards. Therefore, Nigeria cannot be said to possess the required executive capacity to effectively implement the UBE programme on a national scale, as there is lack of high quality personnel in the implementing agencies especially at the state and local government levels.

Possible solutions to the issues

Human Resources

According to Isangedighi (2007), the teacher is a decisive element of any instructional setting that decides the mood of the class. His qualification and experience determine his productivity. In most cases Nigerian basic school teachers who are overloaded with the task of teaching the students are not even qualified to teach, (Opoh, Unimna & Ogbaji 2014). To overcome this problem of acute shortage of qualified and trained teachers to cope with expected increase in students' number, there is need for the training of teachers in the right quantity and quality. They should also be made to benefit



from training and capacity building for the acquisition of pedagogical skills. To Kautto-Koivula (1996, p. 154) professional competence is often considered to involve at least two main domains: (1) proficiencies specific to the profession, discipline or organization. These include the discipline-specific knowledge-base, technical skills considered essential in the profession, and the ability to solve the type of problems encountered within the profession, and (2) general characteristics of the individual that facilitate the individual's development and maintenance of professional competence; these are intellectual ability, personality traits, motivation, attitudes and values. The author further distinguished three cognitive domains of competence: (1) skills (either manual or intellectual); (2) knowledge which is simply information committed to memory, and (3) the deeper learning variously described as understanding, conceptual learning or meaningful learning.

Financial Resources

A major challenge facing the UBE and implementation of the curriculum at this level is funding in the mist of rising demands and cost of education. To address this worsening problem, governments at the local, state and national levels must shoulder higher responsibility for boosting basic education by allocating more funds to the sector Ladan (2012) reported that the low level of fiscal allocation to the sector which is below the UNESCO's threshold of 26% of the total budget certainly affects the implementation of government policy on education in the country and in particular the Universal Basic Education since its inception.

Infrastructure

To enhance the learning environment, massive investment in school infrastructure improvements is needed. There is need for a complete overhaul of primary education infrastructural facilities, monitoring of its leadership, teachers and use of resources for education by multi-stakeholder's forum. Every primary and junior secondary school according to Ejere (2011) should be provided with adequate infrastructure and other physical facilities like classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computer centres, potable water, electricity, toilets and furniture.

Quality Assurance

Nigeria is a country with a culture of anything goes, characterized by utter neglect and abandonment of projects without a call to order. Quality control through effective monitoring and proper evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis at the various stages of the UBE programme. More attention should be paid to school inspection, monitoring and evaluation as a quality control strategy to check the quality of the delivery of the UBE programme (Ejere, 2011).

Social Mobilization and Enforcement

The success of UBE plan depends on the commitment and support from stakeholders such as parents, community members, teachers, church and donor agencies, and all levels of government. There is need to ensure sustained community participation and ownership of basic education. As such, public enlightenment and social mobilization



should be a continuous process in UBE implementation so as to engineer full participation by all sections of the Nigerian society particularly at the community level.

Conclusion

In comprehensive system of schooling, equality of education is very much important to promote national cohesion. Education and national cohesion are closely linked to each other. Education trains the people for preserving society for the upcoming generation. Education contributes to maintain social order and affect the national cohesion.. Education system needs an improvement to meet the needs of the population for the enhancement of their academic achievement. It will thus give them opportunity to live together in peace in the country and thus will have an impact on social cohesion.

Suggestions

1. Adequate planning of the human and material resources is needed to address the issue of ever increasing enrolment and the need to provide them with teachers who can help them achieve appropriate educational objectives.
2. Additionally, the rising cost of education leaves some schools with low quality and inadequate material and human resources. This is because there is no cheap education the world over. Thus, the need for alternative ways of utilizing slim resources to attain set objectives makes planning imperative. The complexity of schooling, its constraints, contingencies, and other difficulties also make planning for national cohesion a necessity for global competitiveness. The scarce resources in schools may be wasted if their utilization is not properly planned.
3. If the power, rail, oil and agricultural sectors deserve special attention by government, the education sector deserves the more funding from government.
4. Anti-corruption agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should monitor closely the disbursement and utilization of UBE funds at all levels of governance.

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