

# Historical Analysis and Challenges to Effective Control of Education in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper x-rays the historical antecedent of control of education in Nigeria from the pre-colonial to post-independence era. The various key players that are responsible for effective control of education in the country were examined with their respective roles or functions. Arguments for and against the government control of education were discussed. The various challenges to effective control of education in Nigeria were succinctly elucidated. In order to overcome the challenges to control of education in Nigeria, recommendation such as the need to appoint qualified and competent candidates as inspectors / supervisors to the schools with adequate training for them to improve the skills needed to perform their jobs was proffered.

## Historical Antecedent of Control of Education in Nigeria

The formal (Western) education was first introduced to the people of the Coastal areas by the Portuguese Merchants in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. However, 1842 marked the beginning of Christian Missionary activities which made a significant educational impact upon Nigeria. The Wesleyan Methodist Church, Church Missionary Society (C.M.S), the Roman Catholic and others who brought Christianity saw the need for Nigerian converts to be able to read and write so as to facilitate the memorization and understanding of the holy Bible and for the spread of Christianity in Nigeria. During the missionary era however, the organization, administration and general control of education in Nigeria in terms of what to teach, who to teach, for what to teach, the costs of these and evaluation or monitoring of the entire process rested solely on the Christian Missionaries (AbdulKareem, 1999 and Osokoya, 1989). The Colonial Government did not show interest in the control of education in Nigeria at the initial stage. However, in 1872, the Government made available the sum of 30 pounds to each of the three missions involved in educational activities in the country- the C.M.S, the Wesleyan Methodist and the Roman Catholic- to support their educational activities (Fafunwa, 1974, Osokoya, 1989 & Muraina, 2010). This therefore marked the beginning of the system of grants – in – aid to education which formed the major educational financing policy of the Colonial Administration. Thus, in 1877, the grant – in – aid was increased to 200 pounds per year to each of the three missions.

The various educational ordinances (1882, 1887, 1916, 1925, 1926, etc.) promulgated by the Colonial Government regularized the school system and laid down the conditions for grants– in- aid. During the periods, the control and general administration of education in Nigeria was between the Christian Missionaries and the Government. For instance, in 1882, Reverend Melcafe Sunter, onetime Principal of Fourah Bay College, was appointed the first Inspector of Schools for West Africa. Also in 1889, Dr. Henry Carr, a Nigerian was appointed the sub-Inspector of schools for the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. In 1891, he was promoted to Deputy Inspector and the following year, he became Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools for the Colony of Lagos. Henry Carr during his tenure of office advocated for government control of schools (Osokoya, 1987, Taiwo, 1980 and Fafunwa, 1974).

The 1946 Richards Constitution divided the Nigerian Commonwealth into three regions – East, West and North, and each with a Regional Assembly. The Regions were dominated by three major Political Parties, the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C), the Action Group (A.G) and the Northern Peoples Congress (N.P.C) respectively. The 1951 Macpherson Constitution further strengthened regionalism and particularly empowered each Region to pass laws on education, health, agriculture and local government. However, with regionalization of education in 1951, each Regional Government began to be responsible for the control of education in its region. Hence, Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched in the Western Region on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1955, in February, 1957, it was launched in the Eastern Region before it was nationally launched on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1976 by General Olusegun Obasanjo, the then head of the Nigerian Military Administration. During these periods (1955-1976), the Regional Governments were responsible for the control of education in their regions, at least by way of promulgating laws to regulate activities on education.

As soon as the country became independent, Nigerians began to seek for a new system and policy that would harmonize the educational system, by way of streamlining the duration of each segment of the educational system and above all ensure the government's control of education. Thus, the end product of the 1969 National

Curriculum Conference held between 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1969 in Lagos and the National Seminar held in June 1973 was the publication of the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education, which was published in March 1977. The publication of the education policy in 1977 was a bold attempt by the government to take – over the control of schools and administration of education in the country as elucidated in the introductory part of the policy document thus:

*Education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise,  
but a huge government venture that has witnessed  
a progressive evolution of government's complete and dynamic  
intervention and active participation (p<sub>3</sub>)*

Therefore, since the inception of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, the government has been the sole controller and administrator of education in the country.

### **Key Players in the Control of Education in Nigeria**

The control of education in Nigeria is centralized. The Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for overall control and administration of education in the country. Section 12, sub section 113 of the National Policy on Education (FRN,2004) states that:

*Government shall establish efficient inspectorate  
services at Federal, State and Local Government  
levels for monitoring and maintaining minimum standards  
at all levels of education below the tertiary level (p53)*

Section 12, sub – section 108 of the document states the functions of Federal Ministry of Education in the control of education to include:

- a) Enunciating a National Policy on Education;
- b) Setting and maintaining uniform standards;
- c) Coordinating educational practices in Nigeria;
- d) Establishing a Federal Inspectorate Services
- e) Planning and research on a national scale;
- f) Acquiring, storing and disseminating national education data;
- g) Co-ordinating non formal education including adult education, vocational improvement centres, correspondence courses etc
- h) Co-ordinating educational services
- i) Co-ordinating international cooperation in education.

Fafunwa (1974) summarized the functions of the Federal Ministry of Education to include:

- a) Formulating a national policy on education
- b) Collecting and collating data for purposes of educational planning and financing
- c) Maintaining a uniform standard of education throughout the country.
- d) Controlling the quality of education in the country through the supervisory role of the inspectorate services Department of the Ministry.
- e) Harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the states of the Federation through the instrumentality of the National Council on Education.
- f) Effecting Co-operation in educational matters on an international scale.
- g) Developing Curricular and syllabuses at the national level in conjunction with other bodies.

Sub –Section 109 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) states the functions of State Ministries of Education to include:

- a) Policy and control over primary, secondary education and tertiary institutions owned by the state in accordance with the requirements of the National Policy on Education.
- b) Planning, research and development of education
- c) Inspectorate services for monitoring and improving standards;
- d) The provision of broad educational services;
- e) Co-ordinating of the activities of School boards and / Local Education Authorities as prescribed by law;
- f) Examinations, testing and evaluation at primary and junior secondary school levels; and
- g) Proving appropriate education laws and ensuring their enforcement

In his own submission, Muraina (2010) enunciated that the State Ministries of Education in different States of the Federation are saddled with the responsibility of:

- Policy formulation
- School Curriculum development
- Provision of Funds, facilities and equipments for schools
- Conduct of JSS examinations
- Staffing, supervision and control of schools

- Payment of salaries
- Professional growth of teachers
- Implementing nation education policies at the state level.
- Making regulations for the admission of pupils into state schools and withdrawal of pupils from schools.
- Administration of the entire education system in the state.

The responsibilities of the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) as specified in the National Policy on Education (FRN,2004) are as follows:

- a) The appointments, promotion, discipline and transfer of primary school teacher and non – teaching staff within their areas of jurisdiction;
- b) The payment of primary school teachers' salaries and allowances;
- c) The payment of pensions and gratuities
- d) The retraining of teachers
- e) The overall management of their educational plans and
- f) Supervision and quality control in all primary school in their areas in conjunction with Federal and state authorities

Apart from the government being responsible for the overall control of education in Nigeria, there are still a number of key players connected directly or indirectly (and approved by the government) to the control and administration of education in the country. Some of these are:

1. National Universities Commission
2. National Board for Technical Education
3. National Commission for Colleges of Education
4. Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
5. National Examinations Council (NECO)
6. West African Examinations Council (WAEC)
7. National Council on Education
8. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council
9. Nigerian Union of Teachers
10. Parents- Teachers Association

#### **National Universities Commission (NUC)**

The National Universities Commission was established in 1962 based on the recommendations of the Ashby Commission Report of 1959. The NUC is to function in advisory capacity to the universities. Thus, the Ashby Commission Report (1961) stipulated that the NUC will play a vital role in securing funds for the universities and in distributing them, coordinating (without interfering with) their activities and in providing cohesion for the whole system of higher education in the country (AbdulKareem, AbdulKadir & Muraina, 2011).

Basically, the role of NUC as quality assurance agency consists of setting Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) for all programmes taught in the Nigerian universities and the accreditation of such programmes. According to Ibukun (1997), the main objective of the NUC is to ensure the orderly development of university education in Nigeria, to maintain its high standard and to ensure its adequate funding. Okojie (2007) posited that the NUC's activities in improving quality of university education in the country include:

- accreditation of courses
- approval of courses and programmes
- maintenance of minimum academic standards
- monitoring of universities
- giving guidelines for setting up of universities
- monitoring of private universities
- prevention of the establishment of illegal campus
- appropriate sanctions

The NUC has put in place various measures to ensure quality assurance in the Nigerian universities, prominent among these are: Nigerian universities management information system, library automation project, establishment of the central research fund team. (Okebukola, 2006). However, one of the area of criticisms against the NUC, according to (Aminu, 1986), is that NUC, as a body, has turned itself to a clearing house and inspector for the universities. Aminu further posited that NUC should have better positioned itself as a support system rather than a watchdog to the university system. However, the NUC has played vital role as a supervisory agency in maintaining standard in the Nigerian universities.

#### **National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)**

The NBTE was inaugurated by the Federal Military Government, as a statutory body on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1977.

According to NBTE (1984), the board is charged with the following functions, among others:

- (1) To advise the government on and coordinate all aspects of technical and vocational education falling outside the universities, and to make recommendations on the national policy necessary for the full development of technical and vocational education for the training of technicians, craftsman and other middle-level and skilled manpower.
- (2) To advise on and take steps to harmonize entry requirement and duration of courses at technical institutions.
- (3) To lay down standards of skills to be attained and to continually review such standards as necessitated by technological and national needs.
- (4) To review methods of assessment of students and trainees and to develop a scheme of national certification for technicians, craftsmen and other skilled personnel in collaboration with Ministries and organizations having technical programmes.

#### **National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)**

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established by Decree No. 3 of 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1989. The Commission monitors and controls the establishment of colleges of education in Nigeria. It determines the minimum standard for all programmes of teacher education outside the universities and polytechnics. It accredits the courses and the certificates awarded as well as other academic awards on such programmes of teacher education in Nigeria. Also, the NCCE deals with the selection and admission of students into the colleges of education.

The National Commission for Colleges of Education forms a link between the Federal Government and the various colleges of education (public and private) all over the country. This agency was initially set up to streamline the activities of all the federal and state colleges of education to ensure uniformity of standards.

#### **Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)**

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established in 1977 by the then Federal Military Government of Nigeria. It is Nigeria's official entrance examination board for candidates seeking admission to all Universities in the country. Before then, the existing Federal Universities in the country (numbering seven by 1974) were conducting their own "concessional" entrance examinations and admitting their candidates. This system of admission was observed by the government as having limitations and quite often, it was considered to be wasting a lot of resources in the process of administering the examination, especially on the part of the candidates.

The Committee of Vice- Chancellors felt concerned about the general untidiness in the uncoordinated system of admission into the country's Universities. The problem of admission into the Universities became more acute with the establishment of additional six Universities in 1976 by the Federal Military Government, under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo. This has made the government to set up a National Committee on Universities entrance under the Chairmanship of Mr. S. Angulu. The result was the establishment of Joint Admissions and matriculation Board (JAMB) in 1977.

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), according to Decree No 2 of 1978 (amended by section 5 of Decree 33 of 1989) has the following functions:

- a) To generally control the matriculation examination for admissions into all Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- b) To appoint examiners, moderators, invigilators, members of the subject panels and committee and other persons with respect to Matriculation Examinations and any other matters incidental thereto or connected therewith;
- c) To place suitably qualified candidates in the tertiary institutions

The JAMB takes the following conditions into account before placing candidates into the tertiary institutions.

1. Vacancies available in each tertiary institution;
2. The guidelines approved for each tertiary institution by its proprietor or other competent authorities;
3. The preference expressed or indicated by the candidates for institutions and courses; and
4. Other matters as the Board may be directed by the Honourable Minister to consider or which the Board itself may consider appropriate in the circumstance.

#### **National Examinations Council (NECO)**

Among the last acts of the Abdulsalam Abubakar's Military Administration was the promulgation of a Decree, in April 1999, that created the National Examinations Council (NECO). That Act, however was only the climax of a process whose beginning predated the Administration. Although, calls for the creation of a National Examination outfit had been on for over two decades earlier, the birth of NECO was not spared controversy.

While some Nigerians welcomed it and saw its arrival as opportunity for choice of examinations body for candidates to patronize, others doubted its capacity to conduct reliable examination that could command widespread national and international respect and acceptability. Some others believed that, as a Federal Government Parasatal, it would offer subsidized registration to candidates; yet others queried even its legal status. By its mandate, NECO was to take over the responsibilities of the National Board for Educational Measurement (NBEM) which had been created in 1992, by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration; although its enabling Decree was promulgated in 1993. However, the conduct of the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) which had, hitherto, been the exclusive preserve of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) was made an additional responsibility of the new examination outfit. NECO was to take exclusive charge of the conduct of the SSCE for school based candidates while WAEC was to take charge of the same examination for private candidates. NECO was to conduct its maiden SSCE in mid 2000.

The examinations being administered by NECO are:

- Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE internal)
- Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE External)
- Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE)
- National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE)
- National Entrance Examinations for Federal Students Certificate (NEEFUSC)
- Gifted Examination into Federal Academy, Suleja

#### **West African Examinations Council (WAEC)**

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) was established in 1952, following the acceptance of the Jeffrey Report by the then Colonial Government(s) in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Nigeria, Sierra-Leone and the Gambia, who passed appropriate Ordinances in their Legislative Assemblies in 1951. The Ordinances charged the Council with the responsibility of determining the examinations required in the public interest in West Africa, and empowered it to conduct such examinations and award appropriate certificates.

The Jeffrey Report had strongly recommended the setting up of a West African Examinations Council in the then four British Colonies of Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra-Leone and the Gambia. Liberia later joined the Council in 1974. The Ordinances have now been placed with the convection which confers legal personality on the Council as an international organization.

WAEC's vision is to be world class examining body, adding value to the educational goals of its numerous stakeholders. Its mission is that of West Africa's foremost examining body, developing and maintaining internationally accepted procedures in examinations, providing qualitative and reliable educational assessment, encouraging academic and moral excellence among the youth and promoting sustainable human resource development, mutual understanding and international cooperation.

#### **National Council on Education (NCE)**

The National Council on Education is the highest education policy making and consultative body in the country. It formulates the national policy on education in conjunction with the Joint Consultative Committee on Education. Members are the State Commissioners for Education and the Federal( Permanent) Secretary of Education.

#### **Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)**

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) was established by Decree No. 53 December, 1988. It replaces the former Nigerian Book Development Centre, Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre and Nigeria Educational Research Centre.

The NERDC is responsible for all researches in education which are eventually implemented. The research activities of this body also assist in curriculum development for both primary and secondary schools

#### **Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT)**

The Nigerian Union of Teachers was formed to cater for the welfare, interest and conditions of service of all members. It is an association comprising all the teachers of primary and post primary institutions in the country. The association has both the national and state branches. Its roles, which are majorly advisory and complementary in the organization, control and general management of education (primary and secondary) in Nigeria include, among others:

- To provide the means of cooperation among teachers and the expression of their collective opinions on education and teaching profession.
- To look after the welfare and conditions of service of its members.
- To raise the status for the teaching profession through improved quality of education and condition of service.

- To protect members from acts of injustices (Fafunwa, 1974).

### **Parents Teachers Association (PTA)**

The Parents Teachers Association is an association of parents or guardians of students and their teachers. Members come together to take decisions on educational enlistment of the learners.

#### **Roles:**

- To afford parents the opportunity to be sued to the learning environment of their children.
- To serve as a means of soliciting from parents, assistance in providing essential needs of the school, such as infrastructural facilities, textbooks, and funds for the day- to- day running of the school.
- To serve as a forum for parents and teachers to decide on important policies for the school (Muraina, 2010).

### **Arguments for Government Control of Education**

- 1) It facilitates uniformity in the educational policies, programmes and practices against religious imposition or religious indoctrination in schools.
- 2) Commercialization of education by private individuals, especially at primary and secondary schools shall discontinue. This shows that the government shall be actively involved in the financing of education which may reduce the financial burden on the individuals. (Government encourages privatization of nursery education)
- 3) The people of the society, especially at the grass root level would be actively involved in the organization, control and management of education.
- 4) Government's involvement in the control and management of education shall minimize the indiscriminate conditions of service of staff from school to school at the same level of educational system.
- 5) Government will intend to provide regular funds for running the school uniformly
- 6) Quality control through regular inspection and supervision of schools shall be ensured
- 7) There shall be uniformity in the system of evaluating students' academic programme and performance at various levels through the use of continuous assessment procedures and standardized tests at the end of every stage (level) of the education.
- 8) It facilitates transfer of students from one school to another at the same level because there is standard expected to be followed in each school (AbdulKareem, 1999).

### **Arguments Against Government Control of Education.**

- 1) Red tappism due to excessive bureaucratization of activities in public service is transferred to the school system and this slows down the rate of school progress. This may also kill curiosity and creativity because staff are expected to:
  - a) Do things right rather than do the right things and
  - b) Safeguard against the use of resources.
  - c) They are to follow rules and regulations laid down to guide their actions religiously.
- 2) This may lead to over centralization of policies and control of education of education, if care is not taken thus bringing about dictatorship in the school system.
- 3) Education may be over politicized, especially in the hands of partisan politicians. Sometimes, there may be political victimization in the school system.
- 4) Instability in the political system may lead to instability in the educational system and invariably in the school programmes.
- 5) There may be overreliance on the government to finance the schools, whereas the resources available to government are not only limited but they are spread on all sectors for development.
- 6) Educational system may eventually be inefficient in the distribution and utilization of school resources. For example, some schools may be overstaffed while some grossly understaffed.
- 7) Some parents may interfere with decisions taken in the schools and this may be detrimental to the progress of the schools (AbdulKareem, 1999).

### **Challenges to Control of Education in Nigeria**

Many variables jeopardize the effective control of education in Nigeria. Some of these variables are:

#### **Political Problem**

This refers to the degree of the extent to which the government of a nation controls educational provisions. In most cases, the government controls and dictates the structure, content, availability of funds, provisions of

teachers, facilities and virtually all other things related to the smooth running of education. It is therefore sad to note that sometimes the policies of the government hinder the control of education. For instance, if the government is not objective in the formulation of policies on education, such can hamper the control of education. Also, worth of mentioning is the government policy on appointment. If the appointment of key officers is based on “whom you know” or political affiliation with less emphasis on qualification and competency, such can affect the effective control of education.

One should also bear in mind that the stability of a country (political change or irregularities) is a challenge to control of education. Thus, when political stability is eroded, instability and retardation as well as other related problems are witnessed in the educational sector. More so, incessant strike actions of the teachers as a result of non-challant attitudes of the government to their demands often result in stagnation, frustration and social vices on the part of the teachers and the students. All these pose a great challenge to control of education.

### **Personnel Problem**

In Nigeria, there is preponderance of professionally untrained and academically unqualified teachers, especially at primary and post primary school levels. There is also an acute shortage of trained and qualified inspectors. There tends to be suspicion by the teachers of the motives of inspectors and regard the latter as fault finders. Similarly, many of the reports of the inspectors are either sent scanty or very late or two cumbersome for translation, digestion and implementation.

### **Curriculum Problem**

This covers the problem relating to the content of what is taught in the schools. The content of the curriculum of average primary and post primary educational institutions in Nigeria is anti-vocational, literacy, bookish and quantitative Agricultural, technical and vocational and other related practical subjects are not given the needed attention while there is an exaggeration of the virtues of white collar jobs, which in most cases are limited in number especially, in the industrial urban centres. Hence, the curriculum of the schools fails to equip the students with the required employable skills.

### **Financial Problem**

Finance undoubtedly is the backbone of any sector, education inclusive. In Nigeria therefore, the government’s annual budgetary allocation to education is extremely low. Nigerian government has not complied with the UNESCO’s recommended 26% of the annual budgetary allocation to education. This of course paves way for inadequate infrastructural facilities in schools, irregular payment of teacher’s salaries which invariably affect the effective control of education.

### **Statistical Problem**

Inadequate, inaccurate and unreliable figures of the schools hinder the effective control of education. Many school heads do not have the records of the number of students in their schools.

### **Attitudinal problem**

The attitudes of those directly involve in the control of education often serve as challenge to effective control of education in Nigeria. Many supervisors or inspectors assume an air of superiority over school teachers, many of whom were their former colleagues. Hence, their reports do not contain a true reflection of what had been observed in the schools.

### **The Problem of Adequate Monitoring and Evaluation**

One of the major problems of implementing educational reforms in Nigeria is inadequate monitoring and evaluation strategies. In spite of the provisions made in the National Policy on Education, the monitoring mechanism is grossly inadequate. In the same direction, the governments never deem it fit to evaluate the outcome of our educational system. Where it is done, it is not objectively done. Then, how can the control of education be effective in this manner?

Other challenges are:

- Bad leadership style of the educational managers and administrators
- Lack of adequate guidance and counseling services in the schools as against what is specified in the policy document (2004).
- Over-population
- Inflation i.e persistent increase in general price level
- Competition from other sectors of the economy.

## The Way Forward

In order to ensure effective control of education in Nigeria e may be, the following strategies are proffered:

- 1) Government should be very thorough in its efforts in educational policy formulation and such policy should reflect the needs and aspirations of the masses.
- 2) Qualified and competent candidates should be appointed as inspectors / supervisors to the schools and there should be adequate training for them to improve the skills needed to perform their jobs
- 3) The government should increase the allocation to education sector by complying to UNESCO's 26% of the annual budgeting allocation to education.
- 4) The curriculum of all levels of education should be reviewed most essentially in line with the needs and aspirations of the people and should be integrated with skills that will make the learners secure a place in the labour market.
- 5) There should be periodic monitoring and evaluation of any educational programme objectively. Hence, the actual number of schools and students should be recorded and kept by the government.
- 6) There should be good enlightenment and sensitization programmes to change the attitudes of the members of the society to any educational process.
- 7) The school system should have an effective working relationship between the school personnel and the parents and guardians in the interest of the pupils, thus, ensuring a high degree of interaction between parents and teachers and between teachers and pupils.
- 8) The schools should be encouraged to interpret to people the growth and progress of children in schools.
- 9) There should be co-operation with various organizations or bodies which have concern for the care and training of children and adolescents.
- 10) There should be guidance and counseling services in schools.
- 11) School rules and regulations must be clear and concise with sanctions on violation being correlative. Hence, such rules and regulations must be strictly adhered to.

## Conclusion

The control of education is an important and exigent issue or matter in any nation's educational system. Hence, there is no gain saying the fact that the control of education in any country determines the quality or otherwise of such country's education. Therefore, the government should ensure the overall control of education and should ensure the active involvement and participation of all stakeholders in the effective implementation of decisions, plans and policies on education. The government should also ensure adequate monitoring of the activities of the key players in the control of education in Nigeria.

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