

Education and Transformation Agenda in Nigeria: An Appraisal

¹Ekpo, C.George and ²Is'haq A. Bello

¹Department Science and Environmental Education, University of Abuja, PMB 117, Nigeria

²Oasis Educational Consults, Abuja, Nigeria

Email: ¹ekpocg@yahoo.com; ² oasisconsults@gmail.com

Abstract

There is no doubt that education is the foundation of any development in every society. It is important to every individual, and the society, at large, as roots are important to the growth and development of a tree. This paper is an evaluation of effects of Transformation Agenda (TA) on education sector in Nigeria. The study covers only two years (2011 – 2013) as the Federal Government of Nigeria rolled out mid-term report of the agenda. The study revealed the challenges of education in Nigeria and the contributions of TA to the education sector. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations, among others, were submitted: more budget allocation to education; non-politicization of education sector; and improvement of conditions of service for teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria.

Key Words: Education, Transformation Agenda (TA).

INTRODUCTION

Education is a life-long process through which man's all round (moral, emotional, physical and intellectual) development is facilitated for him to be useful to himself and the society into which he is born (Ijaiye and Ijaiye cited in Ijaiye and Lawal, 2004). It is a mechanism through which the society generates the knowledge and skills required for its survival and sustenance. It enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society, at large (Kazeem and Ige, 2010). Education, according to Osundare (2009), is the supreme light-giver, the breezy dawn after a night of suffocating darkness. It clears a path through the jungle and; it is the compass that takes man ashore from the rough and clueless waters.

Human capital theory emphasizes education as enhancing the productive capacities of individuals (Almendarez, 2011). It positions education as the bedrock for the development of any nation, because it is the driving force behind the socioeconomic advancement of nations through production of human capital, who are essential managers of the other capitals of the economy.

Adesina (1985) submitted that:

Education is the tool for integration of individual effectively into a society so that the individual can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological process.

When citizens of a country are educated; they would think right, act right and bring about positive change for the development of their nation and the world at large. This corroborates Fahd al-Qudah (2006) thus:

if a nation is successful in developing (educating) its people as strong and complete individuals, it will be able to realize a glorious future for itself, promote peace within its boundary and defend its sovereignty. However, if a nation fails to develop (educate) its citizenry and make them deficient in carrying out some of the activities of life effectively, then that nation is doomed to weakness, destruction and obscurity.

Education, therefore, is important to the growth and development of the society because of its power to fashion an individual to be integrated into his society, and to become a promoter of his societal culture, and development. It is a weapon for acquiring skills, knowledge and competence for survival in a changing world (Adepoju & Fabiyi cited in Ekpo & Is'haq 2011).

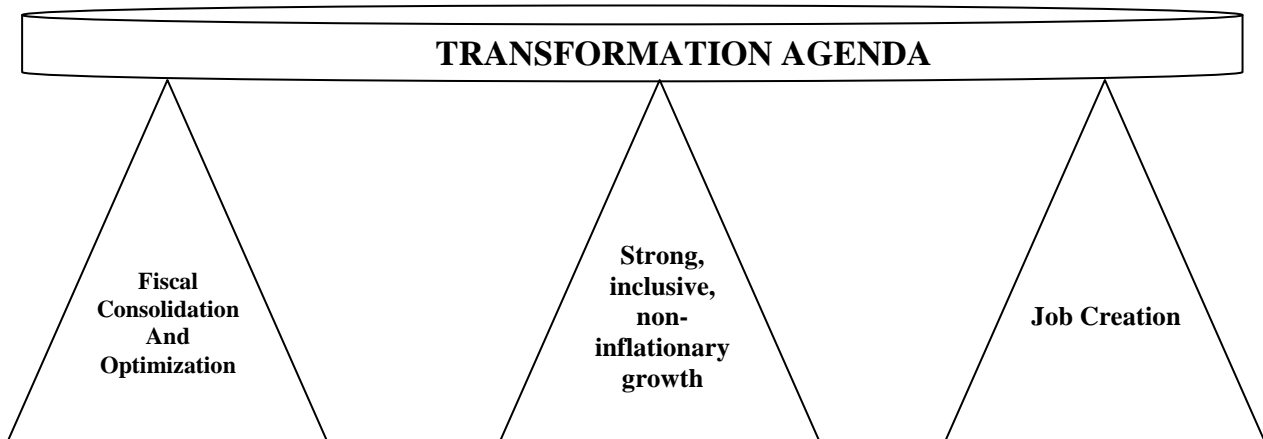
In a bid for Nigeria to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the vision 20:2020 target, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan on inception of power in May 2011 came up with a four-year development plan tagged: Transformation Agenda (TA), 2011 – 2015. TA is based on a set of programmes aimed at transforming the Nigerian economy to meet the needs of the present Nigerians without jeopardizing the needs of future generations. TA therefore emphasizes continuity, consistency and commitment (3-Cs) and makes education a key component of the human development capital of the agenda.

This paper is an appraisal of the transformation agenda on the education sector in Nigeria. It explores the federal government’s effort to revamp the education sector from mere proclamation to real transformation of the sector. In May 2013, the federal government delivered interim report of the agenda. The remaining part of this paper, which is discussed under the following subheadings, is an appraisal of the government’s transformation agenda on education.

An Overview of Transformation Agenda (TA)

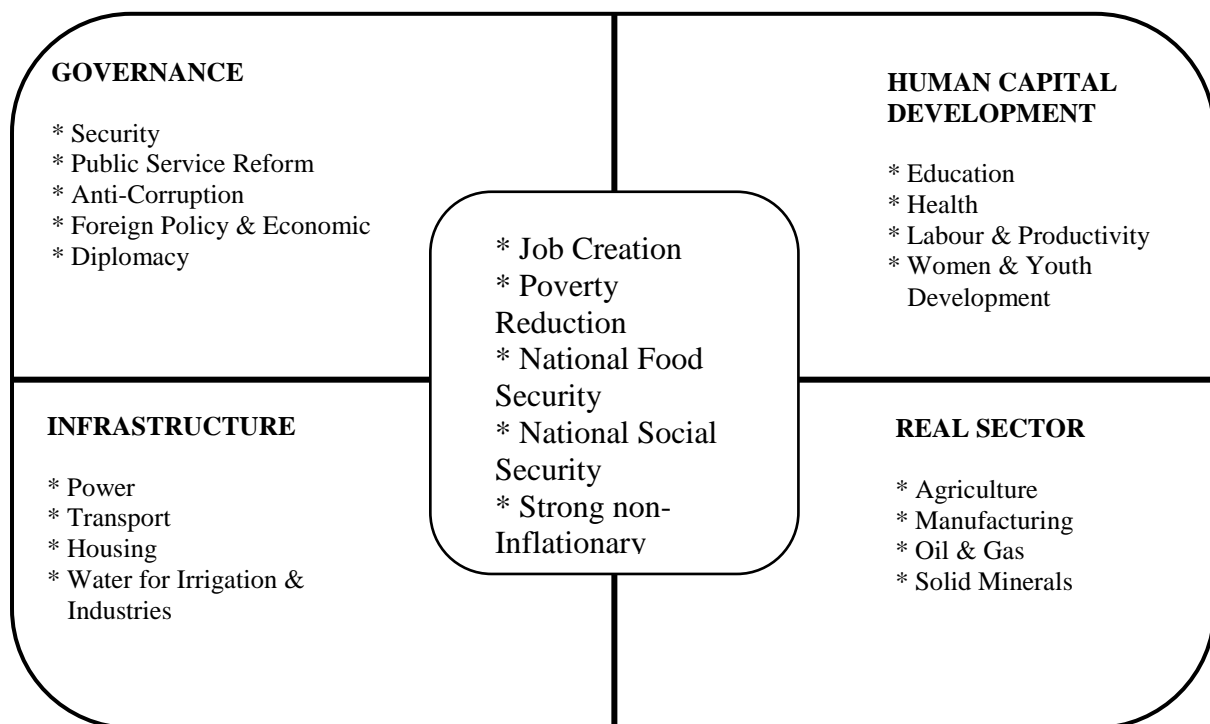
Transformation Agenda (TA), which covers the period 2011 – 2015, draws its inspiration from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); Vision 20:2020 and; the first National Implementation Plan (NIP) 2010 - 2013. TA was based on a set of priority policies and programmes to transform the Nigerian economy to meet the needs of the present generation while future needs of the Nigerian people is not jeopardized. Figures 1 and 2 depict the pillars and development priority of the TA.

Figure 1: Pillars of Transformation Agenda



Source: Adopted from Mid-term Report of Transformation Agenda (2011 – 2013).

Figure 2: Development Priority of Transformation Agenda



Source: Adopted from Mid-term Report of Transformation Agenda (2011 – 2013).

There is no doubt that investing in human capital development ensures nation's human resource endowment and enables the optimal exploitation and utilization of other resources for effective growth and development. Priority policies for the development of education under the TA include:

- Promotion of primary enrolment of all children of school going age irrespective of the income profile of the parents.
- Provision of infrastructures such as classrooms across all levels of education to ease over-crowding, increase access, and reduction of pupils'/teacher ratio.
- Enhancement of the efficiency, resourcefulness, and competence of teachers and other educational personnel through training, capacity building, and motivation.

To actualize the goal of TA in the education sector, the Federal Ministry of Education drawn a 4-Year Strategic Plan (2011 – 2015) for the development of the sector. The plan has six (6) focal areas:

- access and equity;
- standard and quality assurance;
- strengthening the institutional management of education;
- teacher education and development;
- technical and vocational education and training; and
- funding, partnerships, resource mobilization and utilization.

State of Education in Nigeria

Formal, western, education was introduced to Nigeria in the 18th century through the efforts of the Christian missionaries. Schools were built alongside with churches to improve the activities of the missionaries in the country. Funding of the schools were catered for by the missionaries because the colonial government had little interest in education and, therefore made no deliberate policies to develop it (Dangana, 2011). Dangana stated the reason for the colonialists' little interest on education thus:

The indifference by the British colonialists towards developing education was based on their selfish interest. First, the education of the subjects was of no economic benefit to the colonial government, and secondly, the colonialists felt that educating the natives was tantamount to opening their eyes, which could inhibit the former's ability to subjugate the latter for a long time under the colonial rule.

After the country's independence in 1960, the country adopted a federal structure of government consisting the central and three regional governments. She projected education as a social service sector engaged principally in manpower development for the nation and enhancing knowledge for social and economic development. She also established more educational institutions than was obtained during colonial rule; and formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977. The goals and philosophy of Nigeria's education was spelt out in the policy document in an unequivocal terms (Sulayman, 2013). The country's educational system experienced several reforms since independence. The reforms include the restructuring of years a pupil/student should spent in school from the then 6-5-4 (i.e. six years in primary school, five years in the secondary and four years at the tertiary institution) to 6-3-3-4 (i.e. six years in primary school, three years in the junior secondary school, three years in the in the senior secondary school and four at the tertiary institution); and currently the 9-3-4 (i.e. nine years basic education at the primary and junior secondary level, three years in the in the senior secondary school, and four at the tertiary level) is being introduced. The main objective of these changes is to make the nation's education fall in line with global practices and make it to complete favourable with most educational systems in the world.

Nigerian educational system was known for high quality standard of education in the 1960s till mid 70s as noted by Dangana (2011) thus:

From the 1960s to mid70s, schools in Nigeria (though few) had good infrastructures and qualified staff; all that needed to give quality education were readily provided for the schools. This is because education was seen as pillar that other sectors rest upon.

From late 1970s, rot and decay characterized the Nigerian education sector. There has been a consistent denigration of the Nigerian educational system of recent. The status of the system now is unenviable. It is low in quality and standard, limited in its reach and disturbing in its future. Recent graduates in Nigeria are not only derided, but are also described as lacking in quality, low in perception, unfit in skills, and unemployable. Developed countries subject graduates of Nigerian schools to fresh training and examination in an attempt to

ensure their fitness into their own system (Kazeem and Ige, 2010). Causes of this menace are linked to underfunding of the system; bribery, embezzlement and corruption; acute shortages of infrastructures and facilities at all levels of education; lack of political will; policy inconsistencies; over-centralization of control; incessant industrial strikes, paucity of quality teachers, poor or polluted learning environment to mention but a few.

The resulting effects of these include the exodus of Nigerian students and academic staff to other countries. Sanusi cited in Orgu (2012) states that a revelation by the Network of Migration Research on Africa (NOMRA), shows that Nigerian migrating in 2009 who were granted visas into the United Kingdom (UK) numbered about 10,090 and they paid not less than ₦42 billion to their host nation. Sanusi stressed that Nigeria was ranked third on the list of countries with the highest number of students studying overseas. Statistics also showed that over 71,000 Nigerian students in Ghana in 2010 paid about ₦155 billion annually as against Nigeria's annual budget of ₦121b for all federal universities in the same year (Orgu, 2012). Other ills associated with fallen standards of education in Nigeria include numerous social vices like examination malpractices, cultism, and hooliganism in the school system (Kazeem and Ige, 2010). This is exacerbated by poor remuneration for teachers, which triggers a lackadaisical attitude to work; high dropout of students from schools, quantitative rather than qualitative-oriented education, campus prostitution, rape and sex abuse, to mention but few.

The decay and rot especially in Nigerian universities have most recently assumed unprecedented, unmanageable, and alarming proportions. In a bid to force the Nigerian government to revamp and reposition these citadels of learning, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria, embarked on a total and indefinite strike in 2009. The strike brought both ASUU and the Federal Government together and resulted in the signing of agreement to address the dispute as it affects the following issues among others:

- i. Funding requirements for revitalizing the Nigerian universities;
- ii. Federal Government Assistance to state universities;
- iii. Progressive increase of annual budgetary allocation to education to 26% between 2009 and 2020;
- iv. Payment of Earned Academic Allowances (EAA);
- v. Amendment of the pension/retirement age of academics on the professorial cadre from 65 to 70 years;
- vi. Establishment of Pension Fund Administrator;
- vii. University Governing Council;
- viii. Transfer of Federal Government landed property to universities; and
- ix. Setting up of research and development units by companies operating in Nigeria and teaching and research equipment;

This agreement however suffered non-implementation by the federal government. Only few issues were partially addressed. The non-implementation led to yet another strike in 2012. As a way forward, the Federal Government on January 2012 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ASUU and renewed its commitment and assurances to full implementation of the 2009 Agreement as follows:

- i. Funding requirements for revitalizing the Nigerian universities;

Government reaffirms its commitment to the revitalization of Nigerian universities through budgetary and non-budgetary sources of funds. Government will immediately stimulate the process with the sum of ₦100 billion and will build this up to a yearly sum of ₦400 billion in the next three (3) years. These interventions will be based on identified prioritized needs.

- ii. Federal Government Assistance to state universities

The state universities shall continue to enjoy federal special and other statutory interventions.

- iii. Progressive increase of annual budgetary allocation to education to 26% between 2009 and 2020

Government will improve significantly the budgetary allocation to education from 2013 to 2020.

- iv. Earned Academic Allowances

Government accepts in principle the payment of Earned Academic Allowances (EAA). However, there is need to work out practical and sustainable ways to do this. Consequently, the mandate of the Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC) has been expanded to include proposing practical and sustainable ways of paying the Earned Academic Allowances and the report is expected in 60 days. Government shall direct the universities to support internal staff development of all those not covered under Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFU) fund intervention on capacity building.

- v. Amendment of the pension/retirement age of academics on the professorial cadre from 65 to 70 years

As soon as the legislative procedures for the Bill on seventy years retirement age for academics at the professorial cadre are concluded, the president shall assent to it not later than the end of February 2012.

vi. Establishment of Pension Fund Administrator

Government directed the Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC) to take all necessary steps to register NUPEMCO within three (3) months. Where the IMC has difficulties, it should refer the matter to the Government for necessary action.

vii. University Governing Council

Government undertakes to reinstate Governing Councils of various universities on or before February 12, 2012, but may make changes in external membership where it deems necessary. The tenure of the Councils thus reinstated ends in February 2013.

viii. Transfer of Federal Government landed property to universities

Universities shall form a University Property Holding Company which shall, among other things, participate in the acquisition, management and concession of government properties.

ix. Setting up of research and development units by companies operating in Nigeria and teaching and research equipment

Government will encourage companies operating in Nigeria to collaborate closely with Nigerian universities in setting up research and development units.

x. The Budget Monitoring Committee (BMC)

Each council shall set up a Budget Monitoring Committee (BMC) which shall monitor the effective use of funds in each university. BMC shall, through the Governing Council, send its report on project execution, budget performance, and financial discipline to the Implementation Monitoring Committee quarterly.

xi. Expansion of the Implementation Monitoring Committee

The implementation Committee will be expanded to include one representative each of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Planning and the Budget Office.

In order to ensure effective overall monitoring of the implementation of the FGN/ASUU agreement, Government shall meet with the expanded IMC on a quarterly basis to assess progress.

Following Federal Government's refusal to fully implement the 2009 Agreement, ASUU embarked on another strike from 1st July, 2013 to demand the full implementation of the Agreement. After five (5) months of extensive deliberations between ASUU and the Federal Government, it was resolved as follows:

1. The non-implementation of the two of the nine items agreed in the 2009 Agreement between FG and ASUU are the main contentious issues, namely:
 - i. Funding for the revitalization of the public universities through the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Needs Assessment of the Nigerian Universities (CNANU); and
 - ii. Payment of Earned Allowances.
2. Other issues discussed include:
 - i. Composition of the Implementation Monitoring Committee of CNANU report
 - ii. Renegotiation of the 2009 Agreement
 - iii. Government patronage of University Consultancies
3. The challenges, which had affected the implementation of the agreements, were due to the financial difficulties confronting Government which were unforeseen at the point of signing the 2009 Agreement and have continued to be crucial factors militating against the implementation of the Agreement.
4. The FG is irrevocably committed to the overall improvement in the quality of education especially at the tertiary level in the country.
5. There is an overarching need to find a lasting solution to the challenges facing university education in the country through the development of sustainable, affordable and implementable strategies that are within the revenue profile of the Government.
6. Arising from the above understanding, it was further resolved with particular emphasis on funding that:
 - i. Nigerian universities must be revitalized for effective service delivery.
 - ii. All the provision in the extant agreement/MoU for the revitalization of the university system shall be fully implemented including the 2012 CNANU report.
 - iii. FG shall mobilize resources towards this goal.
7. In view of the above understanding, the following resolutions were reached:
 - i. FG shall provide funds for the revitalization of the university system in the following manner in six years:

S/N	Year	Amount (billion Naira)
1	2013	200
2	2014	220
3	2015	220
4	2016	220
5	2017	220
6	2018	220
Total	6 years	1.3 Trillion

- ii. A dedicated revitalization account shall be opened at the central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) by the FG. Funds shall be paid into the account on a quarterly basis, from which the universities will draw. FG shall ensure that these funds will be ring-fenced.
- iii. The ₦200 billion agreed upon as 2013 Revitalization Fund for public universities shall be deposited with the CBN and be disbursed to the benefiting universities by the Implementation Monitoring Committee.
- iv. An Implementation Monitoring Committee on the Needs Assessment Report, to be chaired by the Minister of Education, shall be established by the FG in consultation with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The Committee shall be inaugurated in one week and it shall submit quarterly report to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF).
- v. Earned Allowances. It was agreed that the Implementation Monitoring Committee of the 2009 Agreement shall monitor and verify the level of payment already made from the ₦30 billion released by Government and report back on the exact situation in the universities on this matter. FG undertakes to pay the outstanding balance after the verification report for the period 2009 to 2012. Furthermore, Government remains committed to the payment of the Earned Academic Allowance in the university system. A practicable and affordable strategy will be put in place to mainstream the payment of these allowances.
- vi. Government is willing to engage the services of the universities in special consultancy services such as geological/solid mineral survey, biotechnology, environmental impact assessment, shelterbelt and mineral mapping amongst others to boost the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) base of the universities.
- vii. The renegotiation of the 2009 Agreement shall commence in the Third Quarter of 2014.
8. It was resolved that nobody shall be victimized in any way whatsoever for his/her role in the process leading to these resolution and agreements.
9. The FG requests that ASUU shall within seven (7) days after signing these resolution suspend the strike action.
10. The above resolutions were reached in good faith between FGN and the ASUU.

The extent to which this new resolutions will go in repositioning, revitalizing, and addressing the ills and other social problems in Nigerian universities is yet future.

Appraisal of other Education Needs on the Transformation Agenda

Increase in the education budget has contributed to the achievements so far recorded in the the following sectors:

i) **Access to Affordable Quality Education and Institutionalization of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE):**

An early childhood education programmewas institutionalized as part ofthe transformation agenda in education system. All State Governments were required to establish early childhood centres in all public primary schools. This led to school capturing more children in the school system, reduction of the number of out-of-school children, as well as taking advantage of other important aspects of early childhoodeducation.

ii) **The Almajiri Education Programme (AEP)**

Almajiri Education Programme(AEP) was introduced to address menace of high number of out-of-school children especially in the northern part of Nigeria. The Programme mainstreams the Almajiri/Qur'anic system into basic education in threemodels:

- Integration of traditional Tsangaya/Qur'anic schools into the formal educationsystem at its original location.

- Model boarding almajiri schools to serve a group of tsangaya/quranic schools.
- Integration of basic education in established Islamiyyah and Ma'ahad schools.

More than eighty-five (85) of these schools had been constructed in twenty-seven (27) states of the federation and FCT.

iii) **Nomadic Education Programme (NED)**

The federal government has continued to offer nomads located across the country opportunities for participation in basic education. Education facilities and resources are being provided to sustain this programme; these include:

- Establishment of Model Nomadic Education Centres in Bauchi, Benue and Edo States.
- Rehabilitation of community-based nomadic schools in Bayelsa, Gombe and Taraba States.
- Provision of mobile collapsible structures with chairs and tables in the six geo-political zones.
- Construction of motorized boreholes in some states: Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Edo and Oyo States.

iv) **National Campaign on Access to Basic Education**

The government has succeeded in the National Campaign on Access to Basic Education across the six geo-political zones to reduce the number of out-of-school children. For the South-East geo-political zone, which is experiencing low participation of boys in education, the campaign is aimed at addressing the challenges of boys drop out in schools.

v) **Establishment of 12 New Federal Universities**

As promised by Mr. President, twelve (12) new federal universities have been established. This has made it possible for all States in Nigeria to have a Federal University. The first nine of these institutions have started academic activities and are providing state of the art infrastructures to ensure quality teaching and learning.

vi) **Standard and Quality Assurance**

As part of the strategies to address the issue of standards and quality of education, the Government has developed a 4-year strategic plan to address the issue in the 104 unity colleges.

Other key interventions made during the period under review include:

- Special funding of education for which over N36 billion FGN Intervention funds were disbursed to the States in 2012 through the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).
- Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) provided over N76.7 billion to tertiary institutions for the provision of infrastructure and related facilities. This is in addition to providing N24 billion to 12 institutions on the High Impact Fund to enhance their development to Centres of Excellence.
- The 9-year Basic Education Curriculum has been reviewed to enhance its effectiveness in meeting Nigeria's national goals, while draft Teachers' Guides in the nine subjects and the electives thereof have been developed and are being produced for distribution. In addition, capacity development programmes have been held to enable teachers effectively transmit the curriculum.

vii) **Supply of Instructional Materials to Schools**

- 51 Federal and State Polytechnics have been refurbished and equipped with modern laboratory equipment to encourage participation in Technical and Vocational Education and training.
- Over 352 science and technical laboratories in the 104 Federal Unity Colleges were refurbished, in addition to providing 62 ICT centres and 40 sets of mathematical kits.
- Scholarships were awarded to over 5000 staff of Nigerian tertiary institutions for doctoral level study, in Nigeria and overseas, in addition to a total of 101 beneficiaries of the Presidential Special Scholarship for Innovation and Development (PRESSID) selected for training in the top 25 universities of the world.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no doubt that the Transformation Agenda of the present administration is good for economic prosperity for the generality of Nigerians and seems to be on the best direction towards the realization of the national development and growth that Nigerians desire. However, the government has to do more in the education sector for the realization of the objective of the Transformation Agenda within the timeframe. Based on this fact, the following recommendations are submitted:

- i. Government should be ready and willing to implement in full agreements entered into with education unions and stakeholders for revitalization and repositioning of the education sector.
- ii. Government should be more proactive in the implementation of education policies, and demonstrate high sense of dynamism on the sector, which is seen as key component to achieving and sustaining the goals of the Nigerian society.

- iii. Government at all levels must commit vast resources to the education sector. Education in Nigeria is being underfunded below the UNESCO's recommendation (26% of national budget).
- iv. Apart from increase in education funding, a total reform in the sector is imperative; policy makers should initiate guidelines that will restore citizenry confidence in the sector and should monitor to ensure maximum and effective utilization of the sector's budget and foreign aids.
- v. Education should not be politicized. Paper certificate should be de-emphasized, and appointment into educational offices should be based on merit.
- vi. Government should take giant strides to tackle the menace of corruption, policy inconsistencies and over-centralization of control in the education sector.
- vii. Efforts should be made to curb the menace of examination malpractice during internal and external examinations; those who are not qualified to gain admission into universities should not be admitted in the first place. They should be encouraged to embark on other trades and vocations. This measure can reduce the population of cult members in our schools and make our campuses safe and conducive for teaching and learning.
- viii. Sincerity and honesty between government and her employees in the education sector is paramount; to avoid incessant industrial strikes. Alternatives to strike actions to settle their problems with governments should be developed.
- ix. Teachers, at all levels, should be well paid and given good conditions of service that are at par with employees in other sectors of the economy.
- x. There is need to restructure the teaching profession. There must be stringent entry requirements to pass through before becoming a professional teacher. Code of conduct should be given priority in the teaching profession.
- xi. Teacher education and in-service programmes for the servicing teachers should be given the desired attention in order to check the falling standard of education in the country.

References

- Adesina, M. O. (1985). *Foundation studies in education*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Ahmed Rufa'i, R. (2013). Transforming the education sector: Mid-term milestones. Presentation at the Ministerial Platform to Commemorate the Mid-Term Anniversary of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Administration. Retrieved from <http://fmi.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Ministry-of-Education-A.pdf>
- Almendarez, L. (2011). Human capital theory: Implications for educational development. Retrieved from <http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/BNCCde/belize>
- Dangana, J. (2011). *Building a new Nigeria: the right approach*. Kaduna: First Pyramid Digital Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Ekpo, C. G. & Is'haq, A. B. (2011). Education: an effective and efficient tool for conflict management. *African Journal of Allied Education*, vol. 5 (1), pp. 59 – 68.
- Fahd al-Qudah, S. (2006). Personality development in Islam and its effects on nations and civilizations. Retrieved from <http://english.islamtoday.net>
- Federal Ministry of Education (2012). *Transforming the education sector: Annual Report*.
- Ijaiye, M. A. & Lawal, W. A. (2004). Education sector financing and government spending in Nigeria: an investigation. *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, vol. 11 (1), pp. 3 – 11.
- Kazeem, K. & Ige, O. (2010). Redressing the growing concern of the education sector in Nigeria. *Edo Journal of Counselling*, Vol. 3 (1).
- Mid-term report of the transformation agenda (May 2011 – May 2013): taking stock, moving forward. Retrieved from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zkvxnhlhgyjtqes/MID-TERM%20REPORT%20OF%20THE%20TRANSFORMATION%20AGENDA%20.pdf>
- National Planning Commission (2012). *The transformation agenda: summary of Federal Government's key priority policies, programmes and projects*.
- Oghu, M. (2012). Challenges of Nigeria's education. Retrieved from <http://thenationonline.net/new/challenges-of-nigerias-education>
- Osundare, N. (2009). Education and sustainable development. Retrieved from <http://www.thenewsng.com/opinion>