The Interplay between Politics and Education in Nigeria: Any Symbiotic Relationship?

Kayode Olu. Ijaduola Ph.D[1], K. Oluwafemi Odunaike Ph.D[2]* and Victor Babatunde Ajayi[3]

1. Department of Educational Management, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, P.M.B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.
2. Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, P.M.B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.
3. School of Education, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria.
*E-mail of the corresponding author: odunaikefemi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Education takes actual visible form in educational systems. They either are the work of states or are approved and supervised by them. No educational system can escape from the political community in which if operates. The system must reflect what the political community wants it to do. The system can set formally to change the community only if the community includes change of this kind among its aims. No doubt every educational system contains some germ of true education and is therefore likely to have side effects unexpected by and unwelcome to its sponsors. To this end, this paper takes a critical look into the influence of politics on the educational system in Nigeria. What good has emanated from the supposed symbiotic relationship between education and politics? What harm has politics unleashed on education? And what steps need be taken to straighten issues? Answers to the aforementioned and allied questions are the main focus of this write-up.

Keywords: Politics, Education, Community, Symbiotic

1. Introduction

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, education seemed destined to become the principal preoccupation of all states. Once a luxury of rich countries and individuals, a means of preparing citizens for their station in life, or at least a way of taking care of the young until they were old enough to go to work, education came to be regarded as at once a right of the individual and a necessity to the state.

The right to education arises out of democratic ideas – everybody should have a chance to become intelligent – and out of the special emphasis that all countries have come to place on employment, or a right to work. When a statistical connexion could be established between an individual schooling and his employability and income, the right to work had to lead to the right to schooling (Adeyemo, 2000).

As opined by Abdu (2003), democratic ideas became interwoven with the belief that education was the only path to a useful and productive life. In 1964, for instance, the President of the United States of America justified his interest in advancing education by saying it has been his passport from his parents' condition, that of tenant farmers, to the one he had himself achieved. Thus, education came to be regarded as a necessity to the state because it seemed to be the path to prosperity and power. This idea was not wholly new.

More important, perhaps, was the notion that the advance of industry and technology was intimately bound up with the expansion of education. The larger the pool of literate, schooled citizens, the greater the possibilities of industrial, technological, and scientific progress. This notion rapidly gained ground after the scientists had shown what they could do during and after the Second World War.

In the new age of science and space, UNESCO (2006) posited that improved education is essential to give meaning to our national purpose and power. Axinn and Mark (2008), added that it requires skilled manpower and brainpower to match the power of totalitarian discipline. It requires a scientific effort which demonstrates the superiority of freedom.

These considerations moved the advanced industrial countries. The multitude of developing nations that gained their independence after the second world war were affected by the immediate necessity of establishing governments

complete with civil services of every kind. Since most of them were also intent on industrializing as rapidly as possible, and since education is regarded as indispensable to industrialization, according to Ijaduola (2008a), they were forced to expand their educational systems as fast as they could. At this juncture, it is extremely pertinent to have a cursory look into the actual location and presence of politics in education. This is discussed in the paragraphs below:

2. Politics versus education

As earlier pointed out, public education is by necessity an extension of our political system, resulting in schools being reduced to vehicles for implementing political mandates. For instance, during the past thirty years, education has become federalized through dynamics both indirect and direct.

As government policy and practice, bureaucracy is unavoidable, of course. But the central flaw in the need for structure and hierarchy is that politics prefers leadership characteristics above expertise. As noted by Blasé & Blasé (2002) no politician can possibly have the expertise and experience needed in all the many areas a leader must address (notably in roles such as governor and president). But during the accountability era in education of the past three decades, the direct role of governors and presidents as related to education has increased dramatically – often with education as a central plan in their campaigns. One distinct flaw in that development according to Scribner, Aleman & Maxcy (2003) and Ijaduola, Odumade & Agbajeola (2009) has been a trickle – down effect reaching from presidents and governors to state superintendents of education and school board chairs and members; people who have no or very little experience or expertise as educators or scholars attain leadership positions responsible for forming and implementing education policy. In other words, the faces and voices currently leading the education reform movement in Nigeria are appointees and self-proclaimed reformers who, while often well-meaning, lack significant expertise or experience in education.

Bureaucracy bestows authority and a hierarchy on education that allows and perpetuates leadership without expertise or experience. The consequences include the two most vivid examples of why education reform has failed and will continue to fail.

1. Inexpert leadership is ideologically committed to solutions and thus implements solutions without identifying and clarifying the problems, first, and
2. Inexpert leadership that is in constant flux with the perpetual changes in administrations, is apt to implement the same solutions over and over with different outcomes expected. Inexpert political leaders believe in act upon a faith in the effectiveness of their cult of personality.

Furthermore, bureaucracy is failing education reform because it does not acknowledge or address two central realities: Nigeria remains corrosively inequitable, especially in terms of tribe, class and gender; and education tends to perpetuate those inequalities through commitments to tracking, testing and ranking. Bureaucracy cannot teach as Obanya (2002) opines but educators and researchers can lead schools if will commit ourselves to genuine social reform that addresses poverty, and to education reform that allows teachers to do that which they know how to do. From the preceding discussion, it seems as it politics has taken much tolls on education via bureaucracy. Let us therefore probe further into this 'monster', perhaps there are other side of it that could be advantageous to education; most especially within the Nigerian context.

3. The positive role of bureaucracy

It has been established that school is a formal organization that is made up of learners and interacting together (within a community) to perform coordinated teaching, learning and knowledge-creating activities. The character of school as a bureaucratic organization within a society determines the nature of educational management. Max Weber (1946), the German sociologists, developed the principles of rational administrative organization based on rules, procedures, competence, contract agreements and objectivity so that bureaucrats could deal with stable and routine tasks which are the bases of organizational efficiency. Efficient goal attainment, however, depends upon programming and integration of institutional activities to incorporate the following six key elements:

(i) Hierarchical structure that systematically orders communication and authority among formally established positions. To this end, most educational institutions have organization chart, pyramidal with vertical interconnection of formal authority. At the apex of the pyramid, there is the top-most authority with the most discretionary power while the base of pyramid comprises the staff with the least

discretionary authority. At the middle, we have the supervisors serving as the link between the top management and the bottom staff.

(ii)   Division of labour based on functional specialization such as units, departments, centres, colleges or faculties. Educational institutions adopt the two-tier system of management that depends on academic experts (educationists) as well as on the contribution of few professional administrations like accountants. In most cases, educational institutions group their academic tasks into departments, units, faculties and centres coordinated by appointed specialists.

(iii) A system of transparent procedures, rules and regulations covering the rights and responsibilities, which staff and students should follow. A vital part of rights in management authority or the right to command and have control over responsibilities of others, their resources and rewards. Institutions of learning usually have laws, rules, regulations and manuals to control the behaviours of and command subordinates such as staff and students. This is to standardize and reutinize peoples activities as much as possible to enhance efficiency or to reduce wastage.

(iv)   Impersonality of interpersonal relations. This is to maintain a balance between the attainment of organizational goals (institutional dimension) and meeting of individual needs (idiographic dimension) by being objective in recruitment, promotion, disciplining and firing of students and staff. With interpersonal structure, staff and students do what they are told to do, use the resources given to them and are rewarded for their responsiveness to their responsibilities without undue consideration for the idiographic dimension such as age.

(v)   Selection, promotion and attrition based on objectivity and technical competence of students and staff. This is to ensure objectivity and avoid favouritism in personnel and student matters.

(vi)   Rational, systematic and goal-oriented processes and behaviours. This assumes that individuals problem-solving and goal attainment are rational provided there is requisite information about problems, possible solutions and their consequences that would help institutional members to follow the most beneficial course of action. To achieve this, each institution of learning engages in strategic planning by establishing a vision statement, providing a mission statement to achieve the vision, generating goals and objectives based on market-driven programmes, courses and services, implementing the programmes/services, conducting formative and summative evaluations to revise and/or improve programmes/services, conducting impact study, and improving institutional vision, goals and objectives accordingly.

However, it is pertinent to assert that the tenets of the Weberian bureaucracy have long ruled the study of educational organization and the training of educational administrators. Characteristically, the society, as noted by Obi (2003) and Thainkachalam (2005), expects that schools should be planned, rational, stable, job performance oriented, consumer (learner) focused, authority based, controlled through procedures, rules and regulations as well as division of labour; and hierarchically structured as contained in Weberian bureaucracy. Having considered so far the subtle and glaring interplays of education and politics via the instrumentation of bureaucracy, the germane question is: Could there by any mutually beneficial relationship between politics and education? The answer to this fundamental question is that it is only change that can bring about the desirable compatibility between politics and education and this will constitute the focus of our next treatise.

4. Change as a panacea

Researchers Adeyemi, (2001); Fabunmi, Akinwumiju & Uyanwa (2002), Ijaduola (2008a) have drawn a distinction between two types of politics in schools. The term micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. Cooperative and conflictive processes are integral components of micropolitics. Conversely, macropolitics refers to how power is used and decision making is conducted at district, state and federal levels. Macropolitics is generally considered to have noted that micro and macropolitics may exist at any level of school systems depending on circumstance.

The Nigerian educational system, like any other country's educational system, has, in recent times, experienced series of scientific, technological, economic, political and social upheavals such as the introduction of computer education, literacy education, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education and modern economic theories, ideas, techniques and methods – MBO, PERT, Economic order PPBS etc into the school curriculum. The rationale behind the involvement of Nigeria educational system in change programme is an indication of a major force in shaping the objectives and methods of the programme.

The most common reasons or needs for introducing reform and innovation or a change programme into the Nigerian educational structure, curriculum and methods, according to Adepoju (1998), include the following:

- Need to improve on the standard: This is perhaps, one of the most discussed issues in the Nigerian educational system today. The standard of the system has been generally criticized by some experts' usual state and flavour. Since educational change is found useful where the standard of the system is declining or where its existing state is generating public outcry or conflict, its introduction is found to be relevant in the Nigerian setting.
- Future expectation: Change may be desired if there is a clear indication about the future trend or expectation of the system. In Nigeria, education is said to be performing different roles which may be expressed in terms of nation building and national promotion. Therefore, in order to cope with such future demands, educational change may be desirable.
- Exogemous factors: The presence of some exogenous factors may influence the system, and which may also be the sources of educational change may justify educational change. For instance, in Nigeria, government may introduce a new function or method of operation such as deployment of military officers to inculcate disciple in the schools while the public may advocate for a course that they believe will benefit their children and the society at large. If they therefore, demand a change such change will be incorporated into the system.
- Achievement-inclined would always allow a positive change to take place wherever he finds himself. In other words, an educational administrator would always like new programmes that will improve teaching-learning situation to be introduced in the school.
- Creativity: An educational change may be precipitated by the desire of the members of staff to be more creative by introducing new ideas which may lead to the realization of the school objectives and their own individual goal.

From the discussion above, we have seen how 'hange' could be a force to be rekoned with in making politics and education compatible. We shall now elucidate on how more mutually beneficial relationship can be forged between politics and education.

5. Towards establishing more symbiotic relationship between politics and education

As earlier projected, education, to accomplish its required purpose, must be tailored towards the needs and aspirations of the community or environment. This is in agreement with the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) which states inter-alia in section 1 sub-section 9 (f), "efforts shall be made to relate education to overall community needs.

By implication, therefore embarking on forging a mutual relationship between politics and education according to Ijaduola (2008b) requires that such exercise must be precipitated by the need to yield to the demand of the community on environment where such reform is taking place. This is to say in essence that the culture of the community will determine whatever form the reform should take. In other words, a community that is inherently conservative would make reform a difficult task to achieve compared to a dynamic community.

Similarly, if development via a positive romance of politics and education is conceptualized in terms of material and human advancement then one tends to agree with Sanders (1958:3) who conceptualized community development as:

> *A way of making the intangible value of the social*
> *heritage concrete in the daily experience of translating*

into action what most members of the community
profess are noble segments of using a greater measure
of reason and less of prejudice in looking towards the future
and of involving more and more interested and better
informed in decision affecting their own welfare.

The greater participation and interaction between politics and education in the life of any nation is thus, what constitutes the major objective of community development. Technology (no matter how modest) alone does not solve problems nor does it even create friends. There is an increasing awakening that people are more important than techniques. People should have some voice in and understanding of what is being done. This is the basis of mutual benefit the world over. Symbiotic relationship between politics and education as earlier posited, comprises the people plotting their graph, the direction of their values, identifying way of catching up with the graph so plotted and working meticulously towards the realization of set goals and objectives.

This implies that a mutual relationship between politics and education requires that people themselves exhert their own efforts, joining with government to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions. it is concerned with total community life and needs. It should involve the entire community participation in decision-making.

In another dimension Obanya (2002) perceived politics and education as interaction in the fullest and best sense for stimulation of the desire for better things and the urge to attain such better things. To her, mutual interaction of politics and education strive to educate and motivate people to self-help with a view to developing responsible local leadership among them, as well as inculcating in them a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness. Besides, to ensure a lasting mutual relationship between politics and education, new ideas, researches and approaches must be injected into the education system. For example, Akintoye (2004) argues: Most studies of educational change have been concerned primarily with the adoption of specific education innovations. They have been conducted where research has largely focused on the diffusion concept, namely, the spread or permeation of an innovation from system to system or from school to school. As highlighted by Igwe (2004) the adoption of new ideas or techniques in education is hinged upon the following: consideration of cost; consideration of technological factors; availability of associated support materials; simplicity of implementation; and innovation system congruence.

Moreover, the purpose of learning is freedom and freedom is another word for what we refer to as self-reliance. It is expected therefore that any symbiotic relationship between politics and education must bring about self-reliance. Self-reliance means freedom from dependence on others, or any external support. A man who has true learning is truly free and independent. The first and least part of this self-sufficiency is that the person must be educated and made skilled in a craft.

A second and very important part of self-reliance is the ability to acquire new knowledge for oneself. There is a third essential element in freedom and this also is a part of education. Freedom implies not only being independent of other people but also independent of one's own moods and impulses. The man who is a slave to his senses and cannot keep his impulses under control is neither free nor self-sufficient. Temperament, vows and service (ingredients of politics) therefore, have their place in education, for it is by these means according to Ijaduola & Adenaike (1999) that this third aspect of freedom can be learned.

6. **Conclusion**

It seems clear that our educational system has not been well adapted to Nigerian and development needs. At presents our school system has goals similar to those of metropolitan countries. With a few modifications to structure content and teaching methods, our educational system follows closely those of developed nations of the world in spite of the marked cultural political, economic and technological differences that exist. This trend is not unconnected with the dictates from the uniformed Nigerian political office holders who copy ideas verbatim from other countries without injecting into the system all that could make it work successfully. The present system tends to produce job-seekers,

not creators. As earlier indicated in this write-up, our educational system needs a radical re-thinking of current attitudes to education and a basic revision of curriculum to meet the demands of human resource development for our local communities. A review that will be devoid of undue and unnecessary interruption from politics save for symbiotic relationship between it and education. However, power over funding can broad performance benchmarks can remain vested in political leaders. But granular operational details should be left to education and local administrators, the people best suited to achieve these goals in their schools and classrooms.

References

Abdu, P. S. (2003). The cost and finance of education in Nigeria. *Education Today Quarterly*, 10(1), 12-16.

Adeyemi, B. G. (001). Strategic manpower development in Nigeria: New challenges and directions *Education and Society*, 17 (3), 64.

Adeyemo, B. (2000). Public school funding. The case of community mobilization and effective management. *Journal of Educational Development*, 1 (2), 27-38.

Akintoye, S. (2004, December 2). Saving varsity education from collapse. *The Punch*, p.5.

Axinn, J. & Mark, J. S. (2008). *Social welfare: A history of the American response to need* (7th ed). Boston: M. A. Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Blasé, J. & Blasé, J. (2002). The micropolitics of instructional supervision: a call for research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38.

Fabunn, M., Akinwumiju, A. Uyanwa, C. N. (2002). Planning universal basic education for national development, in Mansaray, A. & Osokoya, I. O. (Eds). *Curriculum development at the turn of the century: the Nigerian experience*. Ibadan: Department of Teacher education University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education*, Lagos: NERDC.

Igwe, S. O. (2004). The universal basic education programme in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. In E. O. Fagbamiye, J. B. Babalola, Mr. Fabunmi & A. O. Ayeni (Eds). *Management of primary and secondary education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NAEAP publications.

Ijaduola, K. O. & Adenaike, F. A. (1999). Science and technology: Siamese twins for national development in 21st century. *Nigerian Journal of Development Issues*, 3 (1), 62-77.

Ijaduola, K. O. (2008a). Non-governmental organizations and the financing of secondary education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Investment and Finance*, 1 (1 & 2), 65-73.

Ijaduola, K. O. (2008b). Resource use efficiency as a predictor of effective planning in Nigerian secondary schools. *Ghana Journal of Education and Teaching* 1 (6), 54-59.

Ijaduola, K. O., Odumade, A. s. & Agbajeola, r. O. (2009) correlation of political incursion and school management in Nigeria. EDUCERE: *Journal of Educational Research*, 5, 212-217.

Obanya, P. A. I. (2002). *Revitalizing education in Africa*. Ibadan: Sterling Horden publishers.

Obi, E. (2003). Educational & Management theory and practices. Enugu: Jamoe Enterprise.

Scribner, J., Aleman, E., & Maxcy, B. (2003). Emergence of the politics of education field: making sense of a messy centre. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39, 10-40.

Thamkachalam, V. (2005). Needs for changes in models of educational organizations in higher education in India. *Perspectives in Education*, 21 (4), 38.

UNESCO (2006). The Dakar framework for action. *Education for All*. Meeting our collective commitments. Paris: UNESCO..

Others

http://www.uneso.org/education/efa/monitoring/rep-status.shtral.
http://www.aed.org/projects/ys/-nigeria.cfm
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/grudenss
http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/grudeness.chucken.1-web.htm

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:**
http://www.iiste.org/Journals/

The IISTE editorial team promises to the review and publish all the qualified submissions in a fast manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar