

Implementation of Educational Reforms and Human Capital Development in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which the implementation of educational reforms could influence human capital development in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The design used was the descriptive survey. The sample for the study consisted of 376 University academic staff, using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. The research questions were personally administered by the researchers. To guide the study, one question was posed and answered and one hypothesis formulated and accepted at 0.05 level of significance. The statistical tools used to analyze the data were simple percentage, mean and t-test respectively. It was found that poor commitment to implementation; lack of public involvement and support; and lack of stability, continually, work tools and understanding of policies among others dominated the factors inhibiting the effective implantation of educational reforms and human capital development policies in Nigeria. The study suggests the need to review reforms with recourse to existing legislations, provision of adequate funding and wide consultations with experts and stakeholders to arrive at consensus on best possible ways of implementing reforms among others.

Key Words: Educational Reforms, Human Capital Development, Universal Basic Education, Universal Primary Education, Sustainable Staff Development, National Policy on Education.

1. Introduction

It is no longer a fallacy that education in terms of reform for human capital development is of topmost priority the world over including Nigeria. Over the years, there has been this phenomenon of high school dropout and repetition rate at all levels of our school strata, coupled with the failure of secondary and tertiary education to accommodate the teeming population of primary, secondary and tertiary school leavers respectively. These are clearly indications that the school system suffers deficiency as such, requires a total overhauling. It is therefore necessary that a vibrant and an enduring educational reform mechanism that will focus on building the desired human capacities is put in place in Nigerian institution and individuals in all the areas of teacher education, curriculum development and innovation across the nation with all stakeholders such as teachers unions; civil society; Federal, State and local Governments; as well as individual donors/organizations fully participating in the reform agenda. According to Haddad (1994), the analysis of such growth and functioning should cut across five areas of education namely; the structure of education, the objectives, the choice available in the formal education sector; the causal relationship within the system as well as and types of education and the rationalities of the decision makers such as consumers and provider of education.

Experience has shown that Nigeria as a nation has never been oblivious of the special importance of education in her development efforts, hence she, even before independent set-up commissions (the Ashby Commission, 1960) to look at the sector and recommend the way forward. However, these recommendations later became incapacitated because of political instability and lack of the necessary political wills hence they remained declarations of mere intent without commensurate progress in implementation. Nigeria also developed and revised National Policy on Education (NPE) and wrote into law the setting up of distance learning of higher education since 1982.

The inherited educational tradition from colonial government and the missions continued even after political independence in 1960 and beyond. The missions, voluntary agencies, and governments were in education management partnership till the 1973 when the turnover of schools from them was completed. In 1976, free Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced nationwide and later collapsed into an empty centre largely because of poor planning, inadequate resources and weak implementation.

The education being provided was not work based. Consequently, unemployment of the educated became widespread. The curriculum was implicated for this dilemma of compulsory mis-education amplified at the 1969 Curriculum National Conference. The outcome was the evolution of the 6-3-3-4 education reform in 1977 with vocational orientation. It does not appear that the main goal has been abandoned in the process of implementation. This reform only succeeded in elongating schooling from the old education order.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is another reform aimed at compulsorily educating the learners for nine years. This reform is not limited to formal schooling alone rather, non-formal and informal approaches are

incorporated for all round development of the learner. According to Obanyani, (2002), the broad aim is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning-to learn, self-awareness, citizenship and life skills” UBE as a reform was launched in 1999 when it is said to have politically taken off. Many educators are not very convinced that the reform has actually started. If it is said to be compulsory, yet, very many children of school age are not in school. Many are in the market and along major streets in Nigerian cities hawking all manner of commodities.

It suffices to observe here that since the inception of the Obasanjo-led administration in May 29, 1999 to date, the administration had beefed-up efforts with the zeal to address the several ills of the nation hence, it decided to employ education as an enabling instrument. It is in the bid to succeed in the efforts the administration felt the dire need to reform the education sector. Among the key reforms in the education sector that were introduced by the Obasanjo administration included:

1. Consolidation of tertiary institutions under which Federal Colleges of Education and Federal Polytechnics were merged with proximate Federal Universities and the upgrading of a Kaduna Polytechnic and Yaba College of Technology to City Universities.
2. The Federal Scholarship Board was merged with Education Trust Fund (ETF)
3. The inspectorate Division of the Federal Ministry of Education was merged with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).
4. The National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) were merged to form what is today known as the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).
5. The Unity School franchising Programme (USFP) under the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) initiative (Wokocha, 2007).

Further determined in its efforts to achieve the reform objectives, the Obasanjo Administration enunciated numerous reform strategies including Operation Reach All Secondary School (ORASS); Read to be Educated, Advance and Develop (READ); Trucking Assets for Progress (TAP); Universal Basic Education Curriculum Reform (UBECR); and Unity Schools Franchising Programme (USFP). Other strategies are Innovative Enterprise Institutions (IEI); Teacher Quality Development and Teacher Celebration (TQDTC); Community Accountability and Transparency initiative (CATI) and Fight Against Cultism and Examination Malpractice (FACEM) among others (Wokocha, 2007).

However, in order to match its suspension decision action, the Yar’Adua administration in yeanning to the voice of protests cancelled some of the education reforms administration. Key among the reforms that have been cancelled are:

1 The consolidation of Federal Colleges of Education and Polytechnics with proximate Federal Universities.

2 The Scholarship Board which was moved to the Education Trust Fund (ETF) by the Obasanjo regime has reverted to Federal Ministry of Education because ETF Act did not cover the Scholarship Board.

The Inspectorate Division of Federal Ministry of Education, which was merged with Universal Basic Education Commission, has been returned to the Federal Ministry of Education (Wokocha, 2007). However, Schooling in the context of this study refers to the learners’ effort for the purpose of acquiring education and the teacher’s effort to aid the learner to learn and to acquire more knowledge. A child gets schooled by attending a school. While a teacher schools a child by teaching him, and that he is expected to learn. Schooling is therefore the process of the learner to get educated. No wonder, Dewey (1900) refers to school as a miniature society. The reason according to Dewey is a direct creation of the society it manifests most if not all through the characteristic of the society, social group or community in which it resides (Ubulom, Obuah & Nwokocha, 2007).

Implementation of educational reforms in Nigeria seems not to succeed due to certain factors. Nwadiani (2007) stated that most educational reforms fail in different countries because of factors peculiar to them. According to, him, some of the reforms never leave the planning stage. For those that are implemented, they never have their expected effects. According to Inbar (1981) in Nwadiani (2007) that reform implementation as in Jerusalem Universities is that of Archilles heels of educational policy planning and educational reforms in Africa and possibly elsewhere. Psacharopoulos (1990) identified three main reasons why an intention of a reform may not materialize or be seen as failure. The reasons according him are that:

- a) The intended reform was never implemented in the first place
- b) Even if an attempt an implementation was made it failed to be completed or achieve a minimum critical mass acceptance so as to have an impact.
- c) Although, the reform was implemented, it did not have the intended effect.

Other reform studies conducted by Ukeje, Nduka & Ocho (1992) revealed that lack of stability, continuity, working tools, lack of understanding of the policies and political will are responsible for the failure of educational reforms. The execution of education reforms has been marred by controversies (Wokocha, 2006;

Omokhdion, 2007; Omolewa, 2007). Wokocha (2006) quoted in Nwadiani (2007:8) cautioned against the hasty nature education reforms had taken; noting that the engagement of consultants to that effect whose credentials in relation to the education discipline are suspect and complete disregard to the laws establishing the Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

In recent times, it has been observed that the conventional education system seems to have failed to reflect the vast range of ideas, expressions, expectations and understanding from the vast variety of disciplines that relate to the current processes of learning in the face of the ongoing information and communication technology (ICT) age. This is more or less because the conventional education systems in respect of curriculum are poorly planned, equipped, implemented and prepared to deal with the current challenges and opportunities inherent in the emerging ICT, particularly in the areas of internet and in the predicted information society.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which implementation of educational reforms could affect human capital development in Niger Delta Region. Consequently, a research question raised and answered in this study is: What are the factors inhibiting the implementation of education reforms in Nigeria?

A single hypothesis formulated and tested for the study is: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of the federal and state universities academic staffs in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria on the factors inhibiting the implementation of educational reforms.

2. Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design to address issues that will make subsequent education reforms to be meaningful and positively impact the people's education in Nigeria. The choice of this design was because the study was aimed at assessing the opinions of respondents in the tertiary institutions in Delta State as it relates to educational reforms, human capital development and schooling in Nigeria.

The population of the study comprised of all the academic staff of the ninety-four Federal and State Universities in Nigeria with particular reference to 6 out of the 10 Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria with estimated staff strength of 3,758. A total sample of 376 academic, staff made up of 192 Federal and 184 State Universities staff were randomly sampled from the captive population for the study, using the simple random sampling techniques. A self-structured research instrument known as Implementation of Educational Reforms for Human Capital Development Inventory (IERHCDI) was used to generate data for the study. The instrument is made up of 30 items with response options of Strongly Agree (4 points) Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The instrument was validated by three (3) experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, University of Port Harcourt. Split-half method was used to establish the reliability coefficient of the instrument, thereby arrived at the computation of 0.78, thus showing that the instrument is reliable and can measure what it intends to measure. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire. Although, a total of 400 questionnaire forms were distributed a total of 376 were collected and used. This indicates a 94% return rate. The statistical tool used to analyze the responses were mean, standard deviation to answer the research question and t-test statistics used to test the only hypothesis formulated for the study.

3. Results

(a) Research Question

What are the factors that inhibit the successful implementation of educational reforms in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria?

Results in Table 1 show respondents views of the 10 major factors inhibiting the implementation of education reforms in Nigeria. On the whole, the respondents positively perceived all 10 variables as truly imbibing reforms in the education sector. The respondents variable by variable mean, standard deviation scores and rand order rations are as presented thus: Experience poor commitment of implementation which leads to not achieving the desired or intended effect with mean (3.61) and standard deviation score (0.949) ranked 1st followed by experience lack of public understanding, involvement and support 3.59 (0.949), 2nd, lack of stability, continuity, work tools and understanding by implementers, 3.57(0.945), 3rd, suffer from inexperience administrative personnel and unprogressive administrative tradition 3.53 (0.939), 4th; reform goals not matching with reality on the ground, 3.42 (0.924),5th; and hasty implementation and engagement of consultants with poor credentials in relation to education discipline, 3.36 (0.916), similar factors are lack of provision of adequate cent before the horse syndrome, 3.26 (0.903) 8th; politicking and weak political will to implement reforms, 3.26 (0.902) and poor functional differentiation and weak data base, 3.25 (0.901).

(b) Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of the federal and state universities academic staff in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria on the factors inhibiting the implementation of educational reforms.

The mean and standard deviation scores of the respondents from the federal and state universities on the extent to which implementation as a factor could influence the educational reforms for the human capital development is presented in Tale 2. With $N = 376$, $df = 374$, the calculated t-test was 0.158 and the critical value of t-test was 1.960. Consequently, the calculated t-test is not statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level since it is less than the critical value of t-test. The hypothesis is thus accepted and the conclusion is that no significant difference existed in the mean response scores of the federal and state universities academic staffs in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria on the factors inhibiting the implementation of educational reforms. The implication of the result is that all the 10 identified variables qualified as potential factors and/or challenges inhibiting the successful implementation of educational reforms in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

4. Discussion

The result in Table 1 reveals from the data obtained that all the 10 variables received a nod of the respondents as potential challenges and/or factors the proper and successful implementation education reforms in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria paramount among them were those of poor commitment of implantation by government and other implementers; lack of public understanding and involvement in the planning and implementation; lack of stability, continuity, word tools and understanding by implementers services of inexperienced administrator and unprogressive administrative traditions and the Idea of including reform goals that do not match with reality on the ground. These results agree with earlier reports of Inbar (1981) in Nwadiani (2007) that reform implementation as in Jerusalem Universities is that Achilles heels of educational policy planning; Psacharopolos (1990) identified intended reforms that have never being implemented failure being attributed to incomplete or inability to achieve a minimum critical mass acceptance and reforms never attaining desired effect as major causes of implementation failure generally. Other reform reports in support finding in this study those of Ukeje (1992) and Ocho (1992) that among other things, lack of stability, continuity, work tools as well as lack of understanding of the policies and political will are responsible for the failure of educational reforms. The variable on hasty implementation also agree with earlier report of Wokocha (2006), Omokhodion (2007) and Omloewa (2007) when they cautioned against the hasty nature education reforms had taken as well as noting that the engagement of consultants to that effect whose credentials in relation to the education discipline are suspicious and complete disregard to the laws establishing some Federal institution in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to identify factors inhibiting the implantation of educational reforms in Nigeria with particular reference to the Niger Delta Region. The study revealed a higher mean score for state University staff agreeing to the assertion that certain factor inhibits the smooth and successful implementation of reforms in the country. That notwithstanding, there is need for all hands to be on deck as to review and implement the existing reforms concerning the tertiary education sector to ensure sustain ability of the institutions. For reforms all such issues that breed unrest and delay in institutions' infrastructure ensure collaborative and consultation-based approach to reform as well as ensure accelerated facility upgrading which can place graduating students among equals and to compete favorably and effectively in the 21st century knowledge-driven and knowledge-based global economy.

6. Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the researchers herby make the following recommendations:

1. In as much as the decisions by Government to review existing education reforms are welcome, there is the need to review the reforms based on the act that are adopted with recourse to existing laws and legislation.
2. Prior to adoption and implementation of any reform whatsoever, each of the educational sub-sectors be given and allowed a reasonable spate of time and contributions that will enable them upgrade their infrastructure, provide adequate funding and sustainable staff development programmes in meeting the 21st educational challenges at hand rather than compound their problem by merging them abruptly and through imposed policies.
3. The researchers would also like to see that the Government and its agencies provide ample opportunity for it to have wide consultation with experts in the field of education and other stake holders to arrive at adequate consensus the modus operandus before implementation of reforms.
4. For reforms particularly in the tertiary education sector to be sustainable and enduring, there is need to address all such issues that breed unrest and delay in institutions infrastructure, provide adequate funding and sustainable staff development programmes in meeting the 21st educational challenges at hand, rather than compound their problem by merging them abruptly through imposed policies.

5 The researchers would also recommend that the government and its agencies should provide ample opportunity for it to have wide consultation with experts in the field of education and other stakeholders to arrive at reasonable consensus on the modus operandus before implementation of reforms

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Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order on factors that inhibit the successful

implementation of education reforms in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

N=376

Statement	Total Response	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D σ	Ranking Order	Remarks
The Nigerian based factors inhibiting the implementation of educational reforms are that Reforms					
Experience poor commitment to implementation which does not achieve the desire/intended effect.	1357.36	3.61	0.949	1 st	Agree
Experience lack of public understanding, involvement and support	1349.84	3.59	0.947	2 nd	Agree
Do not match reality on the ground	1285.92	3.42	0.924	5 th	Agree
Suffer from services inexperienced administrators/ unprogressive administrative tradition.	1327.28	3.53	0.939	4 th	Agree
Lack provision of implementation resources	1248.32	3.32	0.911	7 th	Agree
Suffer from politicking and weak political will	1225.76	3.26	0.902	9 th	Agree
Lack of stability, continuity, working tools, understanding by implementers	1342.32	3.57	0.945	3 rd	Agree
Putting the cart before the horse syntome	1225.76	3.26	0.903	8 th	Agree
Poor functional differential and weak data base	1222.00	3.25	0.901	10 th	Agree
Suffer hasty implementation and engagement of consultants with poor credentials in relation to education discipline	1263.36	3.36	0.916	6 th	Agree

Table 2: Summary table of t-test analysis showing responses of educators of federal and state universities academic staffs in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria on the factors inhibiting the implementation of educational reforms

Group	Total Response	Mean (X)	Std. Dev.	SE	t-call	t-crit
State Universities (n= 92)	683.52	3.56	0.321	81.68	0.158*	±1.960
Federal Universities (n=184)	677.12	3.68	0.342			

N = 376 df = 374

P = 0.05 * = Significant

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