



Historical Analysis of Educational Policies in Nigeria: Trends and Implications

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Abstract

After a critical review of relevant literature, examination of education ordinances and codes, National Policy documents and relevant documents of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the paper showed that different educational policies have been formulated since the colonial era to date. The paper reviewed the different literature and presented the education ordinances, codes and policies under three (3) eras which are; the pre-amalgamation era (1848 -1908), post-amalgamation to Independence (1914-1960) era and post-independence (1961) to 2013. In all, the paper observed frequency in the change of the educational policy thrust of the nation and showed that three (3) ordinances were enacted in the pre-amalgamation era, ten (10) in the post-amalgamation to Independence era and ten (10) from Independence to 2013. The paper showed that most of the educational policies and amendments were centered more on reviewing the existing policies even after Independence. No attempt was made on formulating an educational policy that is original and indigenous to Nigeria. The paper highlighted different trends and specific issues on the disparity between the educational policies and its implementation in the context of the wider national development processes. Finally, the paper also made some conclusions and recommended an adoption of a holistic and systematic approach to the formulation of future policies. It also suggested a paradigm shift from overlooking the nursery education to paying more critical attention to that stage of education as it represents the beginning of the developmental stages of human development. This is to reflect the current realities of our time.

Keywords: Educational Policy, Historical Analysis, Ordinances and Codes, Amalgamation era, Pre-independence, and Post-independence.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding history and trends are essential ingredients for effective policymaking. When the past is clearly understood and the present is well defined, then planning for the future and making policy become more functional. What history does is that it gives policymakers a deeper sense of perspective, an appreciation of past patterns and the wisdom to develop and implement more effective policies for the future. A historical analysis of educational policy in Nigeria reveals past trends and its consequences on national development and guides policy makers appropriately. In considering the origin of the present educational pattern in Nigeria certain aspects of the educational history are significant.

Educational policy in Nigeria has passed through three significant phases, before amalgamation, pre-independence and post-independence eras. Before the colonization of the territories by Britain, the pluralistic territory (now called Nigeria) had various forms of traditional and religious leaders. The different parts of the country had their unique structures which they operated. The Northern parts had people whose religious belief was Islam and were deeply entrenched both in the religious belief and educational orientation of a uniform Qu'ranic education policy (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981). While in the Southern and Western parts the ethnic groups each had its own traditional form of education based on its own culture and tradition, whose aims and objectives were similar (Taiwo, 1980). This was the scenario in 1842 when the Christian missionaries arrived the South and introduced Western education. As stated by Hauwa (2012) the "aims of education as given by the missionaries were just to enable recipients to learn to read the Bible in English and the local language, gardening and agriculture as well as train local schoolmasters, catechists and clergymen". It was noted by Ozigi and Ocho (1981) that even though the missionaries major objectives of establishing schools were the propagation of Christianity, their greatest legacy was their educational works and development of indigenous languages into writing.

Nigerians together with the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra Leone and Gambia were colonized by the British Government and they administered education through the use of certain education ordinances and codes such as the 1882, 1887, 1916, 1926, 1946 education codes (Ijaduola (1998) and Ogunu (2000) before and after the amalgamation of the southern and Northern protectorate in 1914 and the emergence of Nigeria as a country by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard. These codes and ordinances were the guidelines used to administer education and they served as the basis for the modern day educational policies, laws and techniques of educational administration in Nigeria.

However, though the North and South were amalgamated, the administrative systems of an indirect rule adopted by the administrators restricted Christianity and western education in the Northern part of Nigeria. This restrictive rule is the reason for the educational gap in the country between the south and the north. After the amalgamation, the gap in the educational achievement became very obvious and Lord Lugard felt the need to bring about improvement and the 1916 education ordinance was signed as an instrument of building good character and usefulness of individuals to themselves and community. This ordinance was further amended in 1919. Each of these ordinances and codes came with peculiarities and changes to reflect the challenges of the time. The changes continued until when the first attempt at planning education was made in 1944 and when the regional education law was also enacted in 1954 and Nigeria became a Federation of three (i.e Eastern, Western and Northern) regions. The law gave powers to each of the regions to make laws for its territory and people (Fabunmi, 2005).

In 1959 the Federal Government constituted the Ashby commission to investigate and report Nigeria's manpower needs for a period of twenty years. The laudable report and recommendations of the commission proceeded the year of the independence of Nigeria. After independence, the country has witnessed several other education edicts, policies and laws. These historical antecedents have impacted on how educational policies were formulated and implemented in Nigeria. A national policy on education was promulgated in 1977 to facilitate the developmental needs of the nation. This policy was formulated after the military government era. And the universal primary education was introduced to accelerate school enrolment and national growth. From 1977 to date the National Policy on Education (NPE) has been reviewed several times to reflect the changes in society. The 6th edition of this policy was in 2013. It is therefore pertinent to know why there is a constant change in our education policy and to find out from analysis of existing data if the different policies achieved the purposes for which they were formulated or not.

Educational Policy in Nigeria before Amalgamation (1841 -1908)

Before the introduction of western education in Nigeria, various communities were engaged in informal educational processes. The African culture consciously engaged in training the young men and women in various traditional ways. This they did by transferring various skills knowledge to the members of their families even though there were no physical classrooms. As stated by Adiele, Obasi and Ohia (2017), there were no physical classrooms, education was organized along well –defined lines. Women were educated in the art of managing the homes, hence they were trained in pottery, cookery, spinning, weaving as the case may be. The men were trained in tasks that required physical stamina such as farming, hunting, fishing etcetera.

This explains the high sense of responsibility on the part of the women as the homemakers and the men as the breadwinners of their families. Families identified certain areas of interest, specialized in different skill areas and ensured continuity in their chosen trades. This, Adiele et al. (2017) agreed to when he stated that there were specializations among the families, villages and communities in certain skills and trades, hence it was possible to find the act of traditional healing in specific ailments being an exclusive preserve of certain families.

To the African men, all the skill areas they developed were critical to their survival and the development of the society. The development of men and women with skills they can use for survival, live harmoniously among themselves and engender general development was critical to them. The informal education practiced by the traditional Nigerian before the colonization of the country was geared towards developing critical skills, character, culture etc. In the Northern part of the country, Islam was the religious belief and a traditional education orientation of the people. They had the Quranic education policy (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981). In the Southern parts, each ethnic group had its own traditional form of education based on its own culture and tradition. The curricula which were informally comprised of developing the child's physical skill, character, intellectual skills and sense of belonging to the community as well as including respect for elders, and giving specific vocational training and the understanding and appreciation of the community's cultural heritage (Fafunwa, 2004).

The Nigerian communities administered traditional leadership of their various communities to ensure the development of their kingdom before the Christian Missionaries led by Thomas Birch Freeman of the Methodist Church came to Southern Nigeria in 1842 (Hauwa, 2012). They introduced Western education which is generally considered as the formal

education. The Christian missionaries introduced western education so as to gain access and to enable the people to learn to read the Bible in English and the local language. Gardening and agriculture, as well as training local schoolmasters, catechists and clergymen were part of the activities of the missionaries. The main purpose of introducing western education through the establishment of missionary schools was basically to propagate Christianity. This purpose was successfully achieved.

It is remarkable to note that these missionary schools were devoid of standard and uniform curricula. Each missionary body established schools to suit their specific needs. The practice of the missionary bodies establishing and managing schools continued for about four (4) decades after which the colonial government according to Ajayi (1965) became critical of the small denominational schools that were not able to produce the clerks needed for the growing administrative requirement and expanding commercial enterprises in Nigeria.

So precisely, in 1872 the British colonial government started to intervene in the educational system by giving donations to the missionary societies to support education. In 1877, the grant was increased and it remained so until 1882 when the government felt the running of the schools should not be totally left in the hands of the missionary bodies. This decision led to the laying of the conditions for the grant-in-aid and subsequently the ordinances.

In 1882, education legislation began with the 1882 Education Ordinance for British West African territories that is, Lagos, Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone, and Gambia (Fafunwa, 2005). The 1882 Education Ordinance aimed at having control on education. This was the first formal pronouncement on education in Nigeria by the colonial government. Schools were thereafter classified into government and private schools. The government schools were totally financed through public funds, but the private schools only received little aid from the public fund. According to Fabunmi (2005) the ordinance prescribed the award of grants for organization and discipline, with special grants for schools which obtained a high percentage of passes and thus obtained a high standard of general excellence. A capitation grant in proportion to the average attendance at school was also given (Fabunmi, 2005). The ordinance also provided for annual evaluation of pupils, methods of granting teachers certificates, a system of the grant – in – aid and the establishment of a General Board of Education with the power to establish local boards. More foreign teachers were employed, more schools were established and financial encouragements were given to the missions, voluntary agencies and private individuals to establish more schools.

According to Adiele et al. (2017), the landmark achievement of this ordinance in terms of educational planning was the establishment of a General Board of Education which had the power to establish local boards of education that performed advisory roles in the following issues:

- Establishment of Schools;
- Certification of Teachers;
- Eligibility or Qualification for government support in terms of the grant-in-aid to schools.

The 1882 ordinance was intended to address the shortcomings of the educational system ran by the missionary body and to establish substantial control over their activities. Sulaiman (2012) also reported that the ordinance provided for the constitution of a General Board of Education, Local Board of Education:

- Classification of schools into government schools and assisted schools;
- The freedom of parents to choose the religious instruction of their children;
- School buildings and teacher's salaries to be financed by the grants;
- Appointment of inspectors of school for all British West Africa;
- Grants to be made available to individual schools;
- Defining the school curriculum to include Reading, Writing, English language, Arithmetic and Needlework for girls; and
- Admission of pauper children into government and assisted schools.

This ordinance was adopted by the British school and not tailored for the Nigerian child. Laudable as it seems, this educational policy did not achieve much as its goals were closely related to those of the missionary bodies and much consideration was not given to learning capacities and peculiarities of the Nigerian children in applying the education policy of the British school system. This ordinance was cumbersome to implement in Nigeria because the curriculum, the method and the medium of communication were too foreign for a Nigerian child. So the missionary schools started facing a lot of challenges as they grew in number. There was therefore, need to review the 1882 education ordinance to make it environmentally relevant. This gave rise to the 1887 Education Ordinance.

In 1886 the colonial government separated Lagos colony from the Gold Coast (Ghana) colony. Consequent upon this separation it became expedient to have a purely Nigerian education ordinance to be enacted. This and other issues raised above gave rise to the enactment of the 1887 Education Ordinance.

According to Adiele et al. (2017) the ordinance outlined the principle of partnership in educational provision between the government and the missionary agencies. The ordinance provided for:

- Constitution of a Board of Education which was made up of the Governor who was the chairman, members of the Legislative council, four nominees of the governor and the inspector of schools;
- Appointment of an inspector of schools and a sub – inspector of schools and other education officers;
- Extension of grants-in-aid to teacher training colleges;
- Empowerment of the governor to open up and maintain schools;
- Assessment of the conditions of grants-in-aid to infant schools, primary schools, secondary schools, industrial schools, based partly on the subjects taught as well as the degree of excellence in the school and safeguarding of religious and racial freedom;
- Issuance of certificate to teachers;
- Admission of pauper and alien children into schools; and
- Establishing of scholarships for secondary and technical education.

Adenokun, (2004) observed while appraising the 1887 education ordinance that Rev Henry Carr and his team pursued the ordinance vigorously and proceeded to stand off government schools to show examples. He also stated that the 1887 education ordinance brought improvement to the educational standard

The Christian missions were no longer able to easily satisfy the required standards/conditions of qualifying for grants-in-aid, they were therefore forced to improve the standards of their existing schools. Missionary bodies were no longer able to easily establish new schools due to the high standards required, this affected the opening of new schools and resulted in creating a further gap between the government schools and assisted (private) schools.

The 1887 education ordinance continued to be functional until 1908. As reported by Adiele et al. (2017) Lagos and other Southern parts of Nigeria were administered separately as different colonies before 1906 when they were merged to be known as the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. This merger gave rise to the 1908 Education Ordinance for the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The 1908 ordinance focused on the Southern protectorate and also provided that there should be Director of Education to head the Department of Education who would be responsible to the Governor on education matters. The establishment of a separate department for education in the Southern protectorate was a major development in the history of Nigeria education because prior to this time education had been administered by the governor's office. With this new development, training was organized for some officers who were responsible to plan, coordinate, control and supervise the educational development in the Southern protectorate. The head gave the account of scholarship in the Ministry to the Governor. This resulted in greater efficiency and accountability. One thing that made the 1908 education ordinance different from the 1887 ordinance was the creation of the department of education which replaced the education board in 1887.

From the literature review, besides the traditional education which existed and predates the establishment of the colonial government in Nigeria, there were three (3) educational ordinances in Nigeria before the amalgamation of Nigeria by Sir Frederick Lord Lugard.

Historical Analysis of Educational Policy from Amalgamation to before Independence (1914 – 1960)

Sir Lord Lugard who was a strong advocate of amalgamation even before he became the Governor General of the territory in 1912, continued to press for the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorate. Sir William Macgregor (Governor of Lagos) and Sir Ralph Moore (High commissioner of Southern Nigeria) were in agreement with Lord Lugard as they felt the amalgamation will make governance more efficient and rescue the country from eminent collapse as a result of tribal acrimony.

So, after deliberations with relevant officers like Mr. Lewis Harcourt the then Secretary of the State for the colonies, the fieldwork and the proposal written in 1913, the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 and the wife of Lord Lugard named the region Nigeria. Two (2) years after the amalgamation, that is precisely in 1916 Lord Lugard the Governor-General promulgated the 1916 Education Code for Nigeria. This code was the first education code in the united/amalgamated Nigeria. According to Adiele et al. (2017) the major policy thrust of the code was to ensure:

- Increased government participation in the educational provision;
- Equitable distribution of educational institutions and facilities;
- Increased financial support for education;
- Secularism in educational provisions;
- More relevant education;

- Higher standards and cooperation among the various educational agencies;
- Provision of diversified curriculum;
- Encouragement of communities and voluntary agencies in the building of schools; and
- Provision for quality teacher training.

The ordinance and the code which were Lugard's effort to cater for the education of the whole country were approved on the 21 and 24 December 1916 respectively. (Fabunmi 2005).

The ordinance was based on usefulness to both the individual and community and it tried to recognize the school system in Nigeria. The ordinance recommended that grant-in-aid be offered in the following percentages:

- Time of the school, discipline, organization and moral instruction – 30 percent;
- Adequate and efficiency of the teaching staff – 20 percent;
- Periodical examination and general progress – 40 percent;
- Buildings, equipment, sanitation – 10 percent. (Fabunmi 2015)

The ordinance asserted strong government control. This ordinance was slightly changed with the amended ordinance No 8 of 1919 just to give more powers to inspectors. By this amended ordinance, inspectors were free to inspect all schools both the assisted and non- assisted schools. It also empowers the department of education to close non-performing schools upon the recommendation of the inspector.

Closely following the amended ordinance of 1919 was the memorandum of education policy in British Tropical Africa dispatched in March 1925 to the colonies for the British colonial education. This led to the enactment of the 1926 Education Ordinance after the Phelps - Stroke Commission on Education in British Africa was set up in 1920 to address the need to close down mushroom schools. This memorandum was necessitated by the need to stop the mushroom primary schools from operating in Southern Nigeria. So the British government adopted a new education policy for its British West African colonies in 1926.

The policy called for greater investment in education in order to raise the efficiency of Nigerians. The memorandum stated the guidelines for operation in the colonial educational system clearly. According to Osokoya, (2002) and Fabunmi (2003) the 1926 Education Ordinance consisted mainly of the recommendations of the Phelps-Stoke Commission which included the following:

- Establishment of advisory boards of education that will assist in the supervision of educational institutions;
- Adaptation of formal education to local conditions;
- Study of vernaculars in schools;
- Thorough supervision and inspection of schools;
- Education of women and girls;
- Emphasis on religious training and moral instructions (Osokoya, 2002).

These resulted in the provisions of the 1926 Education Ordinance which included:

- Making registration of teachers a pre-condition for teaching in any school in Southern Nigeria;

- Disallowing the opening of schools without the approval of the Director of Education and the Board of Education;
- Authorizing the closure of any school, which was conducted in a way that was in conflict with the interest of the people or the host community;
- Specifying the functions and duties of supervisors or mission school inspectors;
- Expanding and strengthening the existing Board of Education by including the Director and the Deputy Director of Education, the Assistant Director, ten representatives of the mission and other educational agencies;
- Regulating the minimum pay for teachers who were employed in an assisted school (Osokoya, 2002; Fabunmi, 2003).

This policy was a landmark in the development of education in Nigeria because it was the first policy document to be issued on African education with consideration for local content. This policy guided Nigerian Education policy and development between 1926 and 1945. The first attempt at educational planning was done in 1944 when the Ten (10) year Education Plan was developed. As pointed out by Adesina (1981) the plan 'was more of a catalog of small interrelated proposals with vaguely defined goals and seemingly incoherent statements of policy'. This plan was revised and incorporated into the National Development Plan of 1945 -1951. This plan was however further revised and incorporated into the Ten (10) year Plan of Development and Welfare for Nigeria in 1946. A significant feature of the plan was the inclusion of educational plan into a broad national development plan specifying educational programmes to be executed to achieve specified economic and social goals for the government (Adiele et al., 2017). Within this period, different education schemes were also set up for the Northern Protectorate. The North became divided into Islamic and Pagan North with four types of schools namely:

- Schools where Moslems should be taught the Roman Character;
- Schools where the sons of chiefs would be taught as boarders in a school or college;
- General primary schools for children on a secular basis; and
- Cantonment schools for children of native clerks who are mostly Christians.

In this setup, three forms of education: Qur'anic, traditional and western education co-existed side by side with the North and South each having a different pace of development in terms of western educational attainment.

The 1948 Education Ordinance

Sir Arthur Richard, who was the Governor of Nigeria as at this period, enacted the 1948 Education Ordinance. The educational plan of 1946, the report of the Director of Education who was appointed in 1944 to review the ten years plan and the report of Sir Sidney Phillipson on the procedure for assessing grants-in-aid for 1948 were the basis for the enactment of the 1948 Education Ordinance. The 1948 Act clearly spelt out directives on all aspects of an educational organization, administration and control. The Act also decentralized educational administration in the country as well as mapped out a clear-cut procedure for assessing grants-in-aid by mission schools (Fabunmi, 2005). It created a Central Board of Education and four Regional Boards, that

is, those of East, West, Lagos and North and recommended the establishment of Local Education Committees and Local Education Authorities.

The educational system of the Southern part of Nigeria at that time comprised of a four (4) year junior primary education, four (4) year senior primary education and a six (6) year secondary education. The School Certificate examination was however taken in Class five (5) for the more established schools (Taiwo, 1980). This was different in the North where the school system comprised of four (4) year junior primary school, three (3) year middle school and secondary classes one (1) to six (6) and in some places middle school classes 1 to 6. The educational system was not uniform throughout the country (Fafunwa, 2004). One unique feature of this law was the inclusion of Arabic studies into the curriculum of both the Northern and Southern parts of the country (Adiele et al., 2017).

The 1952 Education Ordinance:

Having had the colonial government for over seventy (70) years, and slightly understanding the British system, the Nigerian leaders began the clamour for self- governance. This action resulted in two constitutional conferences. These conferences gave rise to the Mcpherson Constitution of 1951. This constitution consolidated the division of the country into three regions of North, East and West. This act led to the promulgation of the 1952 Education Ordinance which empowered each of the regions to develop its educational policies and systems (Taiwo, 1980; Fafunwa, 2004) and the Colonial Education Board was abolished. The membership of the central board and the regional boards were modified. A new provision was made in the constitution which made all schools, whether public or private, to be subjected to inspection by the Regional Director or his representatives and the Inspector General or his representatives. The 1952 Education Ordinance was introduced so as to enable each of the three newly created regions to develop its educational policies and systems. The ordinance became an education law for the country.

The Regional Education Laws of 1955, 1956 and 1957

A new Federal Constitution which made Nigeria a Federation of three regions of West, East and North with Lagos acting as the Federal Capital was further promulgated in 1954 (Dike, 1980). The constitution gave each region the power of making laws for its territory and citizens as well as its own educational policies. The constitution contained three lists. These are: (i) Exclusive legislative list, which contained items upon which only the federal legislature or parliament could legislate, i.e. make laws, (ii) Concurrent legislative list, which consisted of items upon which both the federal and regional legislatures could make laws and (iii) Residual legislative list, which comprised items which were within the exclusive legislative competence of the regions. The regions quickly exploited this constitutional provision and made regional laws (Fabunmi, 2005). The outcome was the promulgation of the Education Law of 1955 in the Western Region, the Education Laws of 1956 in the Eastern and Northern Regions and the Lagos Education Ordinance in 1957 (Taiwo, 1980; Fabunmi, 2005). Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was in charge of the Western Regional Government believed in the importance of education as an instrument for change and therefore adopted education 'as a national emergency, second only to war which must move with the momentum of a revolution (Abernathy cited in Agi & Adiele, 2009).

The NCNC party which was in charge of the Eastern Regional Government was challenged by the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the Western region and the predominant control of the educational system by the Catholic in the East. This was what led to the enactment of the 1956 education law of the Eastern region. The Eastern region education law was reviewed in 1958 and later abandoned because it was poorly planned. Though the components of the educational systems of the regions differed, there were some common administrative and statutory features which are the three stages of education -primary, post-primary and further education. The duration of primary education varied from region to region while the secondary components were similar (Sasnett & Sepmeyer, 1967). Considerable efforts were made to develop and expand educational facilities in the North (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981). Pupils did not pay fees in the government schools, the colonial government had to encourage people to send their children to schools in the North. There was a general apathy towards western education by the people who mostly preferred to send their children to the Quranic school and viewed western education with suspicion. This problem was a fall out of the colonial governments' policy restricting the activities of the missionaries in the area thereby, curtailing the spread of Christianity and western education in the predominately Muslim Northern protectorate (Fagbumi, 2005).

The Ashby Report of 1959

In April, 1959, the Federal Government of Nigeria constituted the Ashby Commission led by Sir Eric Ashby, to investigate and report Nigeria's manpower needs for a period of twenty years (1960-1980). According to Aliu, (1997), the Commission comprised of three Nigerians, three Americans and three Britons. The commission also examined higher educational structure in terms of the needs of the country and was the first official comprehensive review of higher education in the country. The Ashby Report prescribed that education was indeed the tool for achieving national economic expansion and the social emancipation of the individual. He further stated that the report gave Nigerians opportunity for participation in the deliberations that culminated in the report and reported:

- The imbalance between one level of education and the other
- Limited admission opportunities for primary school leavers
- Few school teachers were qualified and certificated
- That the Nigerian education was parochial and literary
- Imbalance in the development of education between the North and South.

The commission recommended the expansion and improvement of primary and secondary education, the upgrading of the University College at Ibadan to a full-fledged university and the establishment of three other universities at Nsukka, Ife and Zaria. It also recommended the establishment of University Commission in Nigeria so that the universities will maintain a uniform academic standard. The post-secondary school system was to produce the post-independence high-level manpower needs of the country. However, the policy of decentralization remained in force until Independence in 1960, with an unbalanced Federation made up of a Northern region which was bigger than the Western and Eastern regions (Fabunmi, 2012).

The National Educational Policy of Independence (1960) to 2013

The nationalists of Nigeria continued to press for self-actualization, and finally gained independence in 1960. The Federation of Nigeria was granted full independence from the United Kingdom on the 1st of October 1960 under a constitution that provided for a Parliamentary government and a substantial measure of self-government for the country's three regions. An executive Council made up entirely Nigerians was led by a Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Wikipedia 2015). At independence, educational policy in Nigeria was mostly concerned about using schools to develop manpower for economic development and Africanisation of the civil service (Woolman, 2001). The educational policy on the ground was narrow in scope and did not meet the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians. Criticisms of the educational policy included irrelevant curricula, obsolete methods, high drop-out and repetition rates, and the fact that many graduates were dependent, and low on initiative (Rwomire, 1998).

Similarly, Uchendu, (1979) identified problems that included inequality of access, rural-urban disparities, the educational gap between ethnic groups and differences in the curriculum of mission and non-mission based education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria was also faced with the challenges of post colonization and nation building. The foundation of Nigeria's young democracy was shaking. This eventually resulted in the first military coup in 1966 and three counter coups during the period in focus.

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria enacted Decree No. 14 of 1967, with which it created twelve states out of the existing four regions (West, Mid-West, North and East). Lagos remained the federal capital. In 1969 the National Curriculum Conference was convened which reviewed the educational system and its goals, and identified new national goals for Nigeria which would determine the future and direction of education in the country (Nigerian Educational Research Council, 1972). The conference was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and promote national consciousness and self-reliance through the education process. In 1973, the Federal Government of Nigeria (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1973) instituted a Seminar of distinguished experts to deliberate on a truly Nigerian national educational policy in order to consolidate on the gains of the curriculum conference. This body also included representatives of Muslim and Christian organizations in Nigeria. The report of the outcomes of the seminar was presented as the draft National Policy on Education after due consideration by the States of the Federation and other interest groups.

In 1976, the states were increased to nineteen, thus making the legislative bodies to be twenty. Each state promulgated an edict for the regulation of education, and its provision and management (Fabunmi, 2012). Some of the edicts passed included the East Central States Public Education Edict No. 5 of 1970, Lagos State's Education Law (Amendment) Edict/No. 11 of 1970, South Eastern State's Education (School's Board) Edict/No. 20 of 1971 and Mid-Western State's Education Edict, No. 5 of 1973. Each state amended its education law when necessary. All the edicts had common features, such as state take-over of schools from individuals and voluntary agencies, the establishment of school management boards and a unified teaching service.

Education as a social service and investment in manpower was given top priority by the government (Taiwo, 1980). In 1976, due to the tremendous increase in revenue as a result of the oil boom, the Federal Government of Nigeria, embarked on the 'over ambitious' Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) programme, expanded access into tertiary education and increased the number of unity schools in the country. The essence of the free UPE was to give all children

between age six to twelve, free primary education, in order to bridge the educational gap and reduce the rising levels of illiteracy in the country. However, this laudable programme failed to achieve its goals due to inadequate planning.

The most significant change of the period was the takeover of schools from the missionaries by the government resulting in a unified educational system based on the 7-5-2-3 educational policy: 7 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary school, 2 years Higher School Certificate Levels, and 3 years of university education. This replaced the 8-5-2-3 educational policy: 8 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary school, 2 years Higher School Certificate Levels, and 3 years of university education. At terminal stages, candidates sat for external examinations and were certificated based on their performances. In addition, the large-scale government financing of education included tuition free university education and the setting of the stage for a national policy on education that was relevant and suited to the needs of the people (Hauwa, 2012).

Since independence the demand for a well- defined national policy on education has generated much debate. This debate has led to many Federal and State commissions, all of which have made recommendations that would help to eliminate the strong bias toward the traditional literary and academic subjects. In January, 1977, the Nigerian government issued a policy statement on education which contained the government's views on the philosophy of Nigerian education from preschool through the university levels. The specific national aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are: (1) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; (2) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; (3) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world; and (4) the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

The 1977 National Policy on Education

This was the first policy on education formulated by Nigeria's indigenous government. The policy was geared towards addressing the needs and aspirations of Nigerians as well as promoting national unity and laying the foundation for national integration through education. The policy also aimed at meeting the developmental needs of the nation and realising self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In order to ensure these objectives are achieved, the policy made education the Federal Government's responsibility. Education was therefore funded and controlled by the Federal government. This practice was a departure from what obtained during the colonial government when the financing of education was based on cost sharing between the proprietary bodies, local community, parents/guardians and the government (Ibadin, 2004).

The Education Laws of the School Republic (1979-1999)

The first era of military rule which lasted for thirteen (13) years (1966-1979) in Nigeria was followed by the second republic. The second republic had a presidential system of government. In 1979, under the leadership of President Shehu Shagari, a new Constitution (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979) ushered in Nigeria's second attempt at democratic governance. The 1979 constitution was the legal basis of education in the period. The objectives of education as provided in the constitution were:

- To direct government policy towards ensuring equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels;
- To promote science and technology;
- To strive as and when practicable providing;
- Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
- Free secondary education; and
- Free adult literacy programme (Fabunmi, 2005).

The constitution distributed the responsibility for education to the three tiers of government (Federal, State and Local Government) and placed it on the concurrent legislative list. The constitution vested power in the Federal Government than the States and Local Governments particularly in the areas of post-primary, professional, technological and university education under its control. The States had total control of primary; post primary, technical, technological, university and other forms of education within their territories. This was demonstrated in Ogun and Bendel States where the organization and administration of primary education were transferred to their respective Local Government Councils.

Primary education was to be a joint venture between the states and local governments, with the local governments responsible for teachers' salaries. This provision for education in the 1979 Constitution gave rise to the revision of the 1977 National Policy on Education the second (2nd) time in 1981 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1981). In the revised educational policy of 1981, it was yet again proposed that the government would make the UPE compulsory as soon as possible.

The UPE policy which eliminated school fees in 1976 so as to encourage school enrolment especially in the educationally disadvantaged states was reintroduced. In the northern part of the country, the Qur'anic school system with its attendant problems of itinerant pupils continued to thrive and ran parallel with the national educational system because even though the UPE made primary education free and universal, no attempt was made to make it compulsory for all children (Imam, 2003). On the other hand, in the states of the south, where there was already in place a policy of universal primary education since the 1950s, pupils' enrolment in school was the norm and so classroom construction at the primary-school and teacher-training levels was less prevalent in these states (Osili, 2005).

Sadly, the UPE ended in September 1981. The reason was that the Federal Government in the revised policy shed the responsibility it undertook in the 1977 policy to finance primary education by transferring it to the States and Local Governments. This action by the government was as a result of the sudden decline in Nigeria's revenue (Nwagwu, 2011). The result was unpaid teacher salaries, degradation of education facilities at all levels and strikes in universities and schools resulting in declining literacy rates in the country (Odukoya, 2009). The automatic promotion policy of the UPE was also affected and a combined method of evaluation of pupils/students' performance and certification through continuous assessments and examinations was introduced. There was also, recognition of the importance of language as a means of preserving the culture of the people and for forging national unity. Consequently, the 1981 revised policy prescribed that each child encouraged to learn one of the three major languages in the country; Hausa Igbo and Yoruba, other than the mother tongue (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981).

Again, the government of President Shehu Shagari was short-lived as the military returned to power in 1983. This saw a litany of decrees that regulated education. Nigeria had decrees that addressed specific issues in 1986 which changed the school calendar from January to December, 1988 and 1999) which prohibited and revoked the prohibition of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

The National Policy on Education was again revised in 1998, 2004 and 2007 to make the policy more relevant to the developmental needs of the country. The 1998 revised National Policy on Education prescribed a Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which is compulsory for all children in the country, given in the form of nine years continued education (six years primary education and three years junior secondary schooling) (Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998)). The 6-3-3-4 education system was introduced in the 1998 NPE review to replace the 6-5-4 system. It was designed to encourage vocational education to make Nigerians more efficient and skillful.

Consequently, in 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria, flagged off the UBE programme as a means of achieving equal educational opportunities and eradicating illiteracy. The UBE replaced the UPE. Though the policy prescribed a compulsory UBE, it was not enforced effectively and efficiently. In an attempt to make the educational system more dynamic, the NBE was again revised in 2004. This revised policy laid a solid foundation for the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria, specified the functions of an adult, non-formal, special, open and distance types of education. It also had a broad curriculum which aimed at creating a learning opportunity for all children, irrespective of their sex, peculiar background or ability. Since after the 2004 revision of the National Policy on Education, the educational policy has witnessed the introduction of several innovative policies. The innovations addressed specific needs and challenges of inclusive education like the National Policy on HIV & AIDS for the Education Sector in Nigeria; the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria 2007; The National Policy on Gender in Basic Education (2007), the Guidelines for the Identification of Gifted Children (2006) and the Implementation Plan for Special Needs Education Strategy (2007). The implementation of the education sector reform began in earnest in 2006 with the three other crucial initiatives. These were (i) signing of the UNESCO (ii) National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) for Nigeria 2006-2015 in May 2006 which was the outcome of the two-day UNESCO-Federal Ministry of Education Stakeholders' Round Table; (iii) the launch of the Community Accountability and Transparency Initiatives (CATI), and, most importantly the publication of the National Action Plan based on the findings of Education Sector Situation Analysis which clearly reveal the serious dysfunctional state of Nigeria education.

In order to address the crisis in the sector, the Federal Government approved a total restructuring of the Federal Ministry of Education and its agencies and parastatals to reposition them for the new vision 2020. This was backed up with the formulation of a National Framework in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders in order to "ensure consistency of direction in line with the national education vision" (FME, 2007).

Following these innovations was yet another revision of the National Policy on Education in 2013. To meet the developmental aspirations of the nation, the educational policy of the nation continues to evolve. Fundamental changes in socio-economic and political structure wholly dictated the need for a change in policy thrust of the education system and vice versa. The National Policy on education was consequently reviewed. The 2013 reviewed policy is the 6th Edition of the NPE. The 2004 NPE was reviewed in 2007 to accommodate changes and reflect

the commitment of the Government to implement international protocols like the Education For All (EFA), the United Nation Millennium Goal (MDGs), the Home Grown Medium-term Development Plan and the National Government Empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS).

In 2011, the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria His Excellency Dr Goodluck Ebere Jonathan initiated a Transformation Agenda to drive the NEEDS as well as consolidate its gains. One of the strategic goals of the Transformation Agenda was Human Capital Development. In other to meet the ideals of Human capital Development, the Federal Ministry of Education had earlier prepared a Roadmap for the development of the Nigerian Education sector in 2009. This was followed by the one year strategy plan for development of education sector (May 2010-April 2011) and the four years strategy plan for the development of the education sector (2011-2015). The 2014 NPE edition was prepared to update the 2007 edition and in the process, accommodate the above stated recent developments in the context of the Transformation Agenda and the ensuing strategy plan in education.

The purpose of the 2014 NPE was to make educate an aggregate tool of empowerment for the poor, and the socially marginalized groups, an effective means of developing the full capabilities and potentials of human resources, as well as the development of competent work force through the acquisition of practical life skills relevant to the world of work as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies, fit and relevant to the 21st century (NPE, 2013). The reviewed policy is focused on developing every Nigerian child by providing access to quality education relevant to the need of the Nigerian economy. The reviewed 2013 NPE made Basic education compulsory for all children of school age in Nigeria. It is provided free in government schools through UBE. It also provides a Home –Grown school Feeding and Health programme (HGSFHP) that provides basic health service and a free balanced meal per day for every child that attends public primary and secondary school.

CONCLUSION

From the extensive review above, it can be opined that prior to the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914, the very foundation for introducing Western education was selfishness. The missions were merely interested in their vision and not the interest of the people. The missionary schools lacked central school laws thereby leading to non-uniform standard. The schools lacked standard qualification for teachers and the focus of the school was religion. The schools also lacked adequate supervision as well as teaching and learning material and necessary facilities. Quality of education was affected as in some cases, some older pupils were used to teach the younger one. Simply put, the education ordinance was cumbersome to implement in Nigeria because the curriculum, the method, and the medium of communication were too foreign for the Nigerian child.

The provisions of the 1887 ordinance were more robust in terms of coverage but nothing much was said about the curricula. The content of education was not clearly spelt out. The British colonial government was not interested in the educational activities of the missionaries until such a time when they noticed a gap in the supply of required trained manpower to run their enterprises. It was precisely about thirty (30) years after the introduction of the Western education by the missionaries, that the colonial government got involved in educating Nigerians and invariably Africans. This further explains the singular purpose of the colonial masters in Africa.

The issue of Board of Education is a common factor to all the ordinances, codes, edicts and laws of education. In terms of education ordinances, codes policies etc, it is important to state that twenty-three (23) policies were cited, of which three (3) were before the amalgamation of the country, ten (10) were after amalgamation and before independence and ten (10) were post-independence to 2013.

The education ordinances and codes continued to improve in quality of delivery under the colonial government as they continued to see more and more reasons to get involved in the process. The provision made for the inclusion of Arabic studies in the education ordinance of 1948 by Sir Arthur Richard and the earlier use of the restrictive rule by the colonial government which prohibited the introduction of Western education in the North have continued to plague the country and negatively effecting the nation. The after effect of these policies continues to threaten the unity of the nation which the constitution of the country is designed to protect. Furthermore, the constitutional provision of the Mcpherson's constitution consolidated the division of Nigeria into 3 regions. The question then is, why was the country amalgamated and divided again into regions barely forty (40) years of amalgamation, and later made a Federation in 1954? It portrays a sense of confusion. These actions of amalgamation, regionalization and Federation at different times and the consequent changes of the educational policy of the nation to meet the needs of these changes, continued to distort the educational system and slows down the wheel of progress of the country.

Recommendations

Several analyses of the educational policies of Nigeria have been made and diverse conclusions and/or recommendation reached. It is however difficult to specifically declare the impact of each policy on the people and the nation with accurate statistical evidence. It is therefore recommended that a crack intellectual working group comprised of core educationist and educational planners, be put together to review all the historical analysis of the Nigerians educational policies in recent past for the purpose of extracting all the recommendations made so far, analyzing and enumerating them in order of priority for quality decision making and achievement of national goals. The purpose of this action shall be to adopt a systematic approach to solving the challenges of our educational system and indeed the nation and, doing so in a well-planned sequence and phases. This process if followed can facilitate the redefining of our National need, identity and goals. It can also facilitate the elimination of the present confusion observed in the amalgamation, regionalization, federation etc.


Also, one of the major reasons for the Phelps – Stokes Commission on Education in 1920 was the need to stop the mushroom primary schools from operating in Southern Nigerian. This means a change of education policies can be drastic and completely re-directional as a result of a change in policy direction. The commission actually recommended the closing down of schools that were not functioning properly. From the analysis of literature, it is observed that National Policy on Education has simply been adding to or removing from the original educational policy imposed by the colonial government on the country. The policy makers have not looked away from the existing policy and developed what is indigenious and contemporary. Emphasis of the policies has been principally on the primary, secondary and tertiary schools without serious consideration of the nursery school which has developed over time. It is opined therefore, that subsequent review of the policy should take the nursery school which handles ages two (2) to five (5) into cognizance. This is because the children of these age bracket are in

their early formative years and society has also evolved in a manner that children of this era learn early and from different sources, unlike the period when the missionaries came to Nigeria. An adage says, it is good to catch them very young. Currently, the early formative age of children are left to be handled mostly by private operators. This should change. The early years of 0-10 are critical years in the development cycle of a child when habits/characters are formed and it should not be left to be managed by the private operators who may not completely understand the policy thrust of Government.

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