National Policy On Education and Performance of Secondary Schools Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the performance of students in Nigeria in West African Examination Council and National Examination Council examinations (2009 - 2013) in the present 6-3-3-4 implementation using secondary data. The study revealed that there has been poor budgetary allocation to education sector and there are inadequate educational facilities in secondary schools. The performance of students in WAEC and NECO examinations has been poor. Increase in budgetary allocation to education sector, provision of adequate educational facilities in public schools, enhanced welfare packages for teachers and recruitment of teachers based on merit were recommended.

Keywords: National policy on education, budgetary, performance

Introduction

Nigeria was colonized in 1900 by Great Britain. Britain bequeathed to Nigeria an educational policy known as 8-5-2-3. The policy involved eight
years in primary school, five years in secondary school, two years in higher institution and three years in university. The policy was criticised for being theoretically based. Federalism was introduced in Nigeria in 1954 by the then colonial Governor, Oliver Lyttleton. By the provision of 1954 constitution, political powers were constitutionally shared between the Federal Government and the component units. Education became one of the issues on the concurrent lists where the federal and component units have legislative competency. In September, 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched Universal Primary Education (UPE) which made primary education free for all Nigerians within the school age. According to Nwangwu (2003:48), “the collapse of UPE led to the emergency of 6-3-3-4 system of education in the country in 1977. This is generally known as National Policy on Education.

The current National Policy on Education (6-3-3-4) emerged as a result of 1969 National Curriculum Conference which was attended by a cross section of Nigerians. The conference was a culmination of expression of general dissatisfaction with the system of education bequeathed to Nigeria by British which was irrelevant to the goals and aspirations of Nigeria as a country. After the National Curriculum Conference, a seminar of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was again convened in 1973. The seminar which included voluntary agencies and external bodies deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be. The outcome of this was a draft document which after due consideration of the observations and comment from the states and various interest groups gave birth to what we now refer to as the National Policy on Education, first published in 1977”. (Nwangwu, 2003: 54).
The National Policy on Education (2004:7) listed four major objectives of Nigerian education. They include:

a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of individuals and the Nigerian society.
c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

The National Policy on Education (6-3-3-4) is structured into; primary school, secondary school and tertiary institution. The National Policy on Education provides for 6 years in primary school, three years in junior secondary school, three years in senior secondary school and four years in university. It is the 6-3-3-4 and UBE (9-3-4) that constitute the present National Policy on Education. These educational policies (6-3-3-4 and 9-3-4) are provisions within the National Policy on Education introduced from time to time. The major concern in this study is the secondary school education.

Secondary school
Secondary school is the education children receives after primary education. Secondary school is divided into two stages as provided by the National Policy on Education.

a. **Junior Secondary School**: It is part of free and compulsory education. The junior secondary school is both pre-vocational and academic. It shall teach basic Subjects which will enable pupils to acquire skills and further knowledge which is provided within the duration of three years.
b. **Senior secondary school**: The duration for senior secondary school is three years. It is comprehensive and designed to broaden pupils’ knowledge and outlook. According to National Policy on Education, the teacher – student ratio is 1:40 in Nigeria. At the end of the three years’ course, students are expected to write West African Senior Secondary School Certificate examination conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and Senior Secondary Certificate Examination conducted by National Examination Council (NECO). The summative evaluation of students in Secondary schools are conducted by WAEC and NECO.

**Conceptual Analysis of Education Policy**

According to Nwangwu (2003:1), “Policy can be defined as official statement by the Government on the chosen course of action and the procedures for achieving it. When considered on the platform of education, a nation’s policy on education could be defined as the government official statement on the national goals and the procedure for achieving the same using education as an instrument”. Hoy and Miskel (1991: 304), defined educational policy as a statement of those objectives that guide the actions of a substantial portion of the educational organization. Policy may be summarised as a plan of action, statement of ideas, proposed or adopted by a policy in its simplest form, is a series of decision or guidelines stated over a period of time to shape the activities of the schooling of a state for the welfare of its citizens”. This paper therefore aimed at identifying the factors militating against the National Policy on Education, students’ performance and recommend measures necessary for attainment of the goals/objectives of the policy. Educational policy aim at achieving certain objectives.
Challenges in Implementing Educational Policy

Sani (1999: 182), commented on the 6-3-3-4 educational policy in this way, “it is at the implementation stage that the policy experienced intractable problems. Teachers, equipment and facilities needed for the implementation of the policy were not on the ground even many years after the policy had commenced”. Adesina (1992: 3-4), opined that policy implementation in the education field has been very ineffective in Nigeria because of the following:

1. Lack of trained and experienced system manager.
2. Politicization of educational decision making alienates faithful implementation of the policies.
3. Intra and inter-organisation and personality conflicts.
4. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation.
5. Under-estimation of human and material resources for implementation of educational plans and policies.
6. Political and societal instability which failed to provide a conducive atmosphere for policy implementation.
7. Political patronage and indiscipline in the management of public institutions taking the form of ethnicity, nepotism and tribalism.
8. Financial indiscipline in the management of financial resources in the public system, otherwise called corruption and fraud.
9. Lack of exemplary leadership style.

Okoroma (1988: 41), identified two important sources of financial constraints that militate against successful implementation of educational programs in Nigeria. They are;

i. Under-estimation of the cost of educational programme and over estimation of anticipated financial resources to fund the programs.
ii. Over-reliance on and over optimism about external assistance.

He further stressed that these two constraints have affected adversely the effective implementation of all educational programs in Nigeria since independence. He noted that in some cases, the little money available was never carefully utilized. In other cases, part of the fund voted for and realized by the various governments never reach its destination. According to Adeyemi (2001: 221), “the problem of grossly inadequate facilities such as dilapidated buildings and poor or nonfunctional equipment, libraries, workshops and laboratories which were the main features of secondary schools, were even worst at university level”. “The funding of education in Nigeria has been on a very low ebb. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommendation on budgetary allocation on education is that, 26% of the country’s annual budget should be allocated to education, also vision 2010 committee recommended that the country should spend at least 26% of annual budget on education. Ironically, no administration in Nigeria had got near to these recommendations of both UNESCO and vision 2010 in respect of budgetary allocation to education. Statistical data on budgetary allocation on education showed the following at Federal Government level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of poor funding, educational facilities are dilapidated” (Nwangwu, 2003: 100). Statistical data on budgetary allocation to education (2007 – 2012) showed the following at Federal Government level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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</tbody>
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*Source: Appropriation Act (2007 – 2012).*

According to the above figures, it could be revealed that the budgetary allocation to education sector seems to be poor. That may be the reason why educational facilities are inadequate in our secondary schools. Teachers cannot effectively teach without the desired education facilities. Dearth of educational facilities in schools may be responsible for the poor performance of students in WAEC and NECO examinations.

Nwangwu (2003: 98), argued that “in order to make UBE a success, the following points are to be given adequate attention, political will, funding, financial discipline, teacher factors, facilities, enrolment drives and mobilization”. For the attainment of the goals of National Policy on Education in Secondary schools, proper funding of schools is necessary. Teachers cannot effectively discharge their teaching service without the desired educational facilities. Teachers need to be trained and retrained so as to meet the cognitive need of the students. Teachers need to be favourably treated by all tiers of the Government. Poor motivation of
teachers leads to strike action. Strike actions by the pressure groups in educational sector disrupt academic activities in schools.

Recruitment of teachers is an important aspect of educational policy (6-3-3-4) implementation. Qualified and competent teachers should be recruited so as to ensure effective service delivery in classrooms. Emmanuel (2010: 1), further stated that, “the failure witnessed in education sector was as a result of neglect of training and retraining of teachers, saying that abuse of teachers through poor remuneration, stigmatization of the profession as calling of the poor had left the country’s education sector in total disarray. According to Joel (2010: 12), “what should worry everybody in the country especially those charged statutorily with the management of education sector, is how a country with 63 colleges of Education, made up of 4 privately owned, 38 state owned, and 21 Federally owned as well as about 100 universities could be experiencing dearth of qualified teachers”. Qualified and competent persons should be recruited as teachers. Recruitment based on merit ensures efficient service delivery in classrooms. Prospective applicants should be tested and those who proved superior to others in qualification and ability should be recruited as teachers.

The Performance of Nigerian Students in WAEC and NECO Examinations from 2009 to 2013.

According to Ikelegbe (1996: 125), “the final output of educational system is the students’ possession of the required cognitive ability, knowledge or educational system. The acid test of this is their performance in standardized test”. “The 2008 World Bank Report stated that there are concern across Nigeria about the overall level of teachers’ competence, with the perception being that teaching standards are getting worst. The resultant effect is that in 2009 May/June Senior School Certificate Examination
results released by WAEC, about 356,981 of the 1,373,009 candidates, representing only 25.99 percent that sat for the examination, had 5 credits including English language and Mathematics. Put differently, 75 percent of the candidates failed. The poor performance turned out to be a child play when NECO released its own SSCE results later which showed that only 126,500 of the 1,260,765 candidates just 10 percent of those who registered for NECO exams, passed 5 subjects including English and Mathematics. That has been the trend ever since.

The 2009 November /December result, released by NECO were more of a national embarrassment as 98 percent of the candidates who sat for the examination failed woefully. Statistics showed that only 4,223 out of 234,682 candidates who sat for the exams made credits in 5 core subject, the minimum requirements for university admission in Nigeria. That means only 2 percent passed the exams with 5 credits, including English and Mathematics”. (Joel, 2010: 12).

Going by the results of the November/December 2010, West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) released last year by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), only 20.4 percent of candidates who sat for that examination were eligible for admission into any institution of higher learning in the country. The 20.4 percent represent candidates who obtained credit in English, mathematics and at least 3 other subjects. The results of about 51,876 (representing 16.73 percent) are currently being withheld for various reasons including alleged involvement in examination malpractices. Only 42 percent of students which represent 677,007 candidates of the 1,351,557 candidates that sat for the May/June 2010 WASSCE obtained 5 credits and above. However, about 534,841 candidates obtained six credits and above in the examination, while 337,071
candidates obtained credit in English language, Mathematics and at least three other subjects. A total of 77,168 candidates who sat for the May/June 2010 (SSCE) results were withheld owing to alleged involvement of candidates in examination malpractice”. (Dayo, 2011: 37)

From Gabriel and Moshood (2011: 8), “one million students failed WAEC exam, 31% passed with 5 credit including English and Mathematics, 81,573 results withheld. Candidates who wrote the May/June 2011 West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) recorded mass failure as only 31 percent made five credits including English language and Mathematics. The Head of the National Office (HNO) Dr. Iyi Uwadiae disclosed the figure in Abeokuta, Ogun state while announcing the release of the school examination taken by 1,540,250 candidates nationwide. According to him, out of 1.5 million candidates who sat for the May/June 2011 WASSCE, only 472,906 candidates obtained five credits and above in subjects including English language and Mathematics. The implication of those results, he revealed was that only 31 percent would be eligible for admission into tertiary institutions.

This year like other years the candidates have not done well. Speaking on the efforts of the council to check examination malpractice, the WAEC boss said “one of our priorities over the years, is stemming the unfortunate scourge of examination malpractice to protect the sanctity of our certificate. While further disclosing that the council had expended so much resources and energy in the campaign, he appealed to the media and stakeholders in the education sector to assist WAEC in waging war against examination fraud”. Inadequate educational facilities in schools and strike actions by teachers may have contributed to the mass failure of students.
According to Dike (2013: 5), “out of 1,695,878 candidates that sat for the May/June 2012 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), only 38.81 percent (649,156) of the total candidates that sat for the May/June 2012 WASSCE obtained five credits in English language, Mathematics and three other subjects, thus were qualified for admission into universities and polytechnics. The Nigeria Examination Committee, (NEC) of the council took the far-reaching decision in Lagos after it deliberated on evidences (exhibits) produced by the council, which were seized from some candidates involved in examination malpractice. Other decisions taken by NEC include recommendation for sanction against 97 supervisors/principals/other examination personnel identified and reported to their various state ministries of education, while 21 supervisors also indicted were blacklisted.

The WAEC committee also recommended that 465 secondary schools be warned for aiding and abetting examination malpractice during the 2012 May/June WASSCE. The NEC which was chaired by the Director of Basic and Secondary Education, Ministry of Education, Abuja, directed that the allegation against 930 candidates be further investigated, while their results are withheld. Also the council withdrew the recognition of 6 schools and commended one staff. A breakdown of schools sanctioned nationwide revealed that majority came from south-south, followed by those from the North, South East and South west. Government-owned schools top the list of those involved in exam fraud”. According to ThisDay (December 24, 2013: 15), editorial “the West African Examination Council (WAEC) last week released its November/December results which recorded over eighty percent decline in candidates’ performance from the previous years. Only 86,612 candidates, representing 29% of the total number of candidates who
sat the examination obtained credits in 5 subjects and above including English language and Mathematics. The implication is that 71 percent of the candidates cannot be said to have done well in the examination.

Head of National office, Mr. Charles Eguridu, who announced the result, said that when compared to the November/December 2011 and 2012 WASSCE (Private) results, there is a marked decline in candidates’ performance. In 2011, a total of 139,827 candidates representing 36.07% obtained credits in five subjects and above including English language and mathematics. Also in 2012, a total of 150,615 candidates representing 37.97% obtained credits in five subjects including English language and Mathematics, said Eguridu who lamented that the results this year were poorer than in recent past. Against the background that over five years, Nigeria has consistently recorded an annual less than 40 percent success rate in these examinations, such consistence in mass failures shows that something is dangerously wrong with the educational system and /or the environment that churns out annually a generation of illiterate boys and girls”.

The truth of the matter is that policy (6-3-3-4) implementation and non-challant attitude of students towards their studies adversely affect the performance of students in WAEC and NECO examinations. Many students involve themselves in examination malpractice. Availability of educational facilities and recruitment of competent and well-motivated teachers can enhance the performance of students in WAEC and NECO Examinations. According to Musa, and Ibrahim (2014: 16) of Daily Trust Newspaper, “those involved in malpractices at the ordinary level examinations will now face a fine of N200,000 according to the amendment on the West African Examination Council Offences.
Conclusion
The implementation of the National Policy on Education in secondary schools has not yielded the desired results. There has been poor budgetary allocation to educational sector and educational facilities are inadequate in secondary schools. The performance of students in WAEC and NECO examinations has been poor.

Recommendations
In view of the findings, this study therefore makes the following recommendations.

i. All tiers of government in Nigeria should increase their budgetary allocation to education sector.

ii. Adequate educational facilities should be provided in all public schools.

iii. There should be enhanced welfare packages for teachers.

iv. Recruitment of teachers should be based on merit so as to ensure efficient service delivery in classrooms.

v. The use of mobile phone should not be allowed among secondary school students so as to enable them concentrate on their studies.

vi. School authorities should discourage examination malpractice among students.

vii. Teachers need to be trained and retrained so as to meet the cognitive needs of their students.

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