

## **Impact of Politics on the Administration of Educational Institutions in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examined the impact of politics on the administration of educational institutions in Nigeria. The political process in the educational policy formulation and implementations, the link between societal concerns and government actions, laws and policies permeate and affect the management functions of schools. Education is an offshoot of the political system; hence it is influenced by political considerations. When political factors such as ethnicity, sectionalism, nepotism take lead in a country, it will consequently lead to varying negative influences in a country. The paper went ahead to x-ray the influence of politics on the appointment of council members and vice chancellors of institutions. It saw that the influence of politics to a high extent is detrimental to the health of education of any country. The paper also revealed several political issues in education. The paper concluded by recommending that the constitutions of the country should be reviewed to empower educational sector to regulate and coordinate the selection and election of their administrators with strict adherence to the principle of meritocracy. The paper went further to suggest that the constitutions of the country should be reviewed to empower educational sector to regulate and coordinate the election of their administrators with strict obedience to education laws.

**Keywords:** Politics, education, issues, appointment, rationale.

### **Introduction**

Public education is by necessity an extension of our political system, resulting in schools being reduced to vehicles for implementing political mandates. For instance, during the past thirty years, education has become federalized through dynamics both indirect and direct. As government policy and practice, bureaucracy is unavoidable, of course. But the central flaw in the need for structure and hierarchy is that politics prefers leadership characteristics above expertise. As noted by Blasé & Blasé (2002) no politician can possibly have the expertise and experience needed in all the many areas a leader must address (notably in roles such as governor and president). But during the accountability era in education of the past three decades, the direct role of governors and presidents as related to education has increased dramatically – often with education as a central plan in their campaigns. One distinct flaw in that development according to Scribner, Aleman & Maxcy (2003) and Ijaduola, Odumade & Agbajeola (2009) has been a trickle – down effect reaching from presidents and governors to state superintendents of education and school board chairs and members; people who have no or very little experience or expertise as educators or scholars attain leadership positions

responsible for forming and implementing education policy. In other words, the faces and voices currently leading the education reform movement in Nigeria are appointees and self-proclaimed reformers who, while often well-meaning, lack significant expertise or experience in education.

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

### **Concept of Education**

Education may be defined as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools, colleges or universities, to improve knowledge and develop skills. In the modern society, education is no longer seen solely as a set of skills, attitudes and values but as a service or a product to be sold by academic institutions that have transformed themselves into service providers (Misha, 2008). Consequently, educational institutions have to be effectively and efficiently managed. The art of good governance in higher institutions, particularly in federal and state universities, therefore calls for the effective balancing and manipulation of the internal and external political factors that tend to influence their management. Politics and education are therefore closely interconnected and this can be seen in the management of education. Marcus (2001) consented to this statement when he said "no one can take education out of politics neither can anyone take politics out of education". In North Central Nigeria, education is regarded as an instrument for social, economic, technical and political development. This perhaps explains why educational agencies, institutions, communities and individuals in the area to a large extent, influence the management of educational institutions. Politics is a struggle over values, power and scarce resources in which the aim of the conflicting interests are to gain the desired values and resources at the expense of other rivals. Politics and education are interrelated. Education is an offshoot of the political system. This explains why education is influenced by political considerations. When political factors such as ethnicity, sectionalism, religion, partisanship, catchment area, quota system and favouritism influence the appointment of council members, vice chancellors and other principal officers of universities, morale of staff and students is dampened, mediocrity is enthroned and productivity is affected. The North Central Zone of Nigeria is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic, thereby making universities in the area more vulnerable to political manipulations and influence.

The stakeholders of education in the area have expressed serious concerns over the likely influence of political factors on appointment in the universities with adverse consequences for standard and productivity. Every day, managers of federal and state universities are confronted with personnel issues and problems which demand that they make and take decisions. As resources are generally scarce to satisfy the competing needs of their

institutions and various interests, educational managers are bound to make choices from available alternatives. Their choices could however be influenced by many political factors from within or outside the institutions that could have implications for appointment of Council members, vice chancellors and other principal officers of universities. Whether from within or from outside, managers of these universities take decisions that discriminate against certain alternatives. Such discriminations or preferences may be borne out of political considerations. Political factors such as ethnicity, partisan political consideration, sectionalism, tribalism, religion, favouritism, catchment area, and quota system, may influence the appointment of external and internal members of the governing councils, vice chancellors and other principal officers. They may have implications for the effectiveness of the university system.

### **Concept of Politics**

Education is a battle for the National development in Nigeria. The relationships between education, development and politics are complex and the dividing lines less sharp when closely examined (Irolu, 2001). Essentially, the decisions about education management are strongly tied up with wealth and power. Irolu (2001) further said that a proper understanding of the policy trends in respect of the provisions and management of education, to illuminate the political and economic issues of the country at any given period. There is no gain-saying the fact that generally, education has tremendous political and economic significance in Nigeria as well as several interests which are focused on it.

Nevertheless, the country's educational problems are more political than legal. In Nigeria, the problem of the national education system provides abundant material for national conflict. Education was planted and was continuously watered with politics (Irolu, 2001). Management of education is not an exception. The national aims of, and positive attempts at massive democratization of secondary education in South-east (Nigeria) readily illustrated the fact that secondary education had remained a necessary function of politics (Osola, 2001). The author, said further that the politics of secondary education, the national aims of making secondary education available for every child, the idea of using secondary education to wipe out hunger, illiteracy, ignorance and disease are on the whole less education than political. Secondary education had been a necessary function of politics. The methods that are to be adopted and the likely solutions to problems that may arise from government attempts to regulate the aspirations of the peoples are related to politics which in turn determines the type of secondary education.

From this point, Aristotle viewed man primarily as "a political animal" and maintained that economic and social relations of man are coordinated by politics. On this premise, politics was broadly defined as a "comprehensive study of man in his moral and social relations. In another aspect, politics connotes making decision by public means, the activity by which issues are settled, an activity that is geared towards ensuring the welfare of the people, an activity that touches the life and determines the future of all aspects dealing with the community. Politics in part involves action and cooperation with others for common ends. Politics presupposes competition among interests, opinions and priorities. Okeke (2007), insists that it is a method of rule that requires settled orderly, conciliation, tolerance,

compromise, and diversity. It is a matter of facts and values, self-interest and loyalties to others, concern and competence. Again, politics is concerned with the rights and duties of citizens in the state, with the rights and duties of individual states towards other states in the great family of the nations, with commerce, industry, social institution, public morality and social order in general. Politics is all embracing. Egoh and Ekpong (2003) viewed politics as a social issue. Social issue can also become a political problem. For instance, marriage as a social issue can become political decision or problem when it goes on to a table for discussion and it is politically settled through political discussion. In developing nations, skilled manpower is a crucial factor for the possibility of politics. The demands on educational resources for scientists, academicians, medical doctor, teachers, engineers, pharmacists, technologists and technicians make politics very important in efficacy of power (Harith, 2006). Politics is unavoidable phenomenon in every society.

### **Politics and Education**

A careful analysis of the organization and administration of education in modern society will show that it is closely interwoven with politics and politicking. Schmidt (2001) posited that the union of politics and education within a common frame of philosophy was uniquely symbolized by the figure of Socrates. According to him, Socrates was the first person who designated politics and education as distinct and above all interrelated subjects of systematic inquiry. Schmidt (2001) and Ogbonnaya (2009) corroborated this opinion when they said that no one can take education out of politics, nor can anyone take politics out of education. This means that education and politics are linked together in all societies. Risecti (2004) remarked that while schools are not themselves political institutions, they are products of the political process. In recognition of the relationship between education and politics, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stated that education is not only the greatest force that can be used to bring about redress, but it is also the greatest instrument that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources.

That education, particularly university education, is highly rated in a country like Nigeria should not come as a surprise because of the upsurge in the awareness of the general public about the prestige, importance and value of education (Okonkwo, 2006). There is therefore a very high demand for university education and the passionate desire of common men and women to give their children better chance in life, gave the demand for education its explosive quality: hence the influence of political factors on appointments in federal and state universities in Nigeria. From the preceding review, it is clear that politics and education are fused together. It is very difficult to separate one from the other in modern times. Politics fashions education and education modifies politics.

### **Undue Political Influences in Education**

Having known that education is an offshoot of politics hence the influence on education is inevitable. However, most times undue political influences are exerted on the educational system to the detrimental of the society, they are discussed under the following headings:

### **Politics and the Appointment of Council Members of the Universities**

According to Ogbonnaya (2009), a “Governing Council” is a statutory body constituted by the federal or state government for the control of policy, finance, personnel and physical resources of a university, polytechnic or college of education. It is also responsible for policy making and regulations. The council is the highest political body of any university and its membership comprises persons from both inside and outside the university community (Williams, 2006). Ogbonnaya agrees that the governing councils of tertiary institutions consist of highly rated individuals drawn from different geo-political zones for federal higher institutions or different Senatorial zones in the case of state institutions. In universities in Nigeria, members of the governing councils of federal and state universities consist of government (governor’s) appointees who represent a variety of interests in the community and the insiders who are invariably staff of the universities and who are normally in the minority. Today in the universities in the area, observers believe that the governor’s power and authority to appoint members of the governing councils, Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts and other heads of universities in the area is considerably influenced by political factors against the dictates of meritocracy.

The governor, who incidentally is the visitor to all the state universities, is alleged to appoint council members and principal officers of the universities mostly from his ethnic or sectional background. Ogbonnaya (2009) corroborated this allegation when he observed that a good number of key offices including the Vice-Chancellors are usually appointed based on religious or ethnic sentiments. He contended that when this happens as is mostly the case in the universities; the council will not succeed in accomplishing its constitutional objectives or functions. Mclendon (2003) reported that: The politicization of the appointment of members of governing councils and heads of higher education by increasingly activist governors, has caused state higher education coordinating boards and system governance structures to take direction from governors rather than from professional educators, again raising questions of exactly what sort of exact balance should exist between politicians and their state’s public higher education.

It is also remarked by Marcus (2001) that recent reports, for instance of the politicization of university governance in New York and elsewhere, raises important questions about the extent to which governors and other elected officials might be using their powers of appointment and budget to control public university governing boards. According to him, in recent years, governors have emerged as visible, active policy makers with significant influence on university education especially in area of staff employment, appointment and promotions. As noted by Schmidt (2001), governors often handpick board members to bring the college campus under partisan control. As has been stated, in most geo-political zones in Nigeria, the governor’s power over budget is the principal instrument of political control that he exerts on the universities. In states where governors exercise their “power of the purse”, their fiscal leadership has the potential of exercising a great deal of influence on the management of their universities and other higher institutions (Tandberg, 2006). He uses this “power of the purse” to appoint some members of the councils and heads of universities particularly from his ethnic and political background. Williams (2006), Johnstone, Arora and Expertion (2008) and Mclendon (2003) observed that the idea is to

foster ethnic domination and loyalty in the management of universities so as to enhance political aspirations.

### **The Problem of Financing Secondary Education**

The greatest problem facing education in Nigeria is inadequate funding of the institution. With the proliferation of secondary schools in the whole of Nigeria, the government of each of the states has come face to face with the difficulties of meeting even the barest needs of this secondary school. There is lack of funds to pay the teachers' salaries, supply equipment, library facilities which aid learning. In Imo State for example, teachers are not paid because the government find it difficult to raise enough funds to pay the teachers. This is peculiar to the state in the south-east. If the secondary sections are to educate our youths effectively the secondary section must be adequately funded to provide all that are contributory to effective learning. Shortage of Teaching Staff: The shortage of qualified, certificated teachers is a big problem facing our secondary schools. With the proliferation of secondary schools, it is becoming increasingly difficult to staff the college with qualified teaching staff that can impart knowledge to the students. The hall mark is that most times the government in power may not like to pay salaries, if it senses that a particular section of workers did not contribute in voting them into power.

### **Problem of Adaptation**

The present goals of Nigerian secondary schools are similar to the goals of secondary education in colonial times. In fact, except for a few minor modifications, the structure, content and teaching methods of secondary schools in Nigeria follow closely those of Britain, our cultural, political and economic differences notwithstanding. The product of our secondary schools' education is not suitable for any specific job. All that the secondary education has done is to train the head with the hands and the legs. It is hard to come by a secondary school leaver who can proudly make a single sentence without error, or return to the land to farm as a hobby. They would not like to soil their hands while their mates are employed in offices as clerks and typist. Based on this, agriculture should be made compulsory in our secondary education, since our country Nigeria is predominantly an agricultural country.

### **Rationale for Politics in Education**

In most developing nations like Nigeria, the success or failure of any political party depends partly on its policy on education (Job, 2006). This is so because education is closely related to politics. Education is also universally accepted as a necessary factor for creating political consensus, maintaining power and socializing individuals for political systems. It is commonly believed that education is the fairest factor in selecting a leader because most people believe that education selects fairly and those it selects could lead the society well. For Nigerian politicians, these facts are well known and that is why they make education the center of their political campaign for political positions. Most of the political parties which came into power have failed the nation as they did not live up to their promises of improving the quality of education. Most times, they allow the education system to be messed up with



long strike, half-baked graduates, and under-staffing, (Nigerian Statesman, May 25, 1983). Because of this, the secondary schools are usually ill-equipped and they suffer because of lack of planning, poor finance and management and lack of commitment on the part of the teachers, principals and even those in the board. The classrooms are not enough and there are neither laboratories libraries. This is an indication of the decay in secondary schools (Anselem, 2010).

### **Influence of Politics on Secondary Education in Nigeria**

An education system is a complex organization of interactions between interdependent bodies, groups and individuals, and all aimed at the achievement of educational goals. The bodies, groups' and individuals are usually the government, religious groups, voluntary bodies, teachers' associations, the parents, the governing boards, the broad members and the public. The educational functionaries are interdependent and a person may often belong to two or more functionaries, which adds to the complexity of the interactions. A teacher may be a parent and a member of political party and of the government (Sanuna, 2003). The public includes employers, some of whom might be parents. The interactions are aimed at achieving educational goals, about which there is usually no complete agreement because of politics.

One nation sees education as a privilege of the growing generation and another sees it as a duty to the children in preparing them for service to the nations. These views are bound to influence the interactions and the activities concerned with the achievement of national educational goals. Education is seen by many as an opportunity to control and direct the thought and destiny of the people within the community. The political, economic and cultural significance of secondary education explain the reasons for the continuing competition for power, influence and authority in the educational enterprise between the educationalists, administrators, economists, politicians parents, the civil servants the businessman ,the churches and religious organizations, the educational interest groups, political parties and other organizations and the governments (Moka,2002).Thus Education has become an arena for struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issue. The system witnessed augment roles of the federal and state government as well as public and private agencies. There were thrust towards increased national influence, on the one hand, and the resultant counter thrust of the resurgence of state and local influence on the other hand, through a great measure of autonomy prevailing at the local level.

The establishment and activities of education commissions, no doubt, enabled one to sense the aspirations, thrust and frustrations at the state level. Those who control the vital resources of power invariably control public policy. Education is seen by many as an opportunity to control and direct the thought and destiny of the people within the community. The political, economic and cultural significance of secondary education explain the reasons for the continuing competition for power, influence and authority in the educational enterprise between the educationalists, administrators, economists, politicians' parents, the civil servants the businessman, the churches and religious organizations, the educational interest groups, political parties and other organizations and the governments (Moka, 2002). Thus, she went further explains that education has become an arena for struggle among actors

pursuing conflicting desires on public issue. The system witnessed augment roles of the federal and state government as well as public and private agencies. There were thrust towards increased national influence, on the one hand, and the resultant counter thrust of the resurgence of state and local influence on the other hand, through a great measure of autonomy prevailing at the local level. The establishment and activities of education commissions, no doubt, enabled one to sense the aspirations, thrust and frustrations at the state level. Those who control the vital resources of power invariably control public policy. Professional bureaucracy, boards of education and the teacher's organization are known to hold tightly to power.

The legislature and inter-government relationships also influence secondary schools. In developing nations of the world, educational systems are based essentially on the check and balances of power and on the processes of consultation and negotiation. The phenomenon has tremendous political influence and several types of interests are therefore focused on it. According to Sanuna (2003) the governance of secondary education has become inextricably connected with the politics of the state and the federal governments. The problems of the federal education system provide abundant materials for political conflicts. For example, the ownership and control of schools, siting of secondary institutions, funding, certifications evaluation, students' admission, staff appointment and promotions are seen through political lenses. Politics controls the school system. Politics is unavoidable in institution setting. As Olutola in Okeke (2007) rightly remarked, 'you can take education out of politics but you cannot take politics out of education.'

### **Politics and School Management**

The concept of politics has been well articulated by educators and social scientist on the subject. Both agreed that politics is not restricted to political parties but is also there in the Nigeria markets, banks, the ministries, educational institutions, military establishments, churches, sports, business, commercial and industrial factors of our economy (Ogbonnaya, 2009). This is because educational planning in the final analysis is a political process of give and take hence it is a central policy issue. The objective of education; the control, production process variables, financial and accreditation systems are tied inescapably to politics. Any government in power pounces on education promising support and control. It is used as a vote catching weapon with unrealistic promise (Ogbonnaay, 2009) because education is a public good, government of all ages in Nigeria see it as a gift to the people rather than an outgrowth from their needs and values. Education sector depends on some authorities for its supply, and maintenance by way of fiscal support. It "cannot" generate enough funds for itself. Because of politics, school management, educational policies and practices are different in many states of Nigeria. The management is highly interfered by the government without genuine commitment. These affect school management. The technocracy of school management only operates within the political ideology frame work of the government in power without any regard to the socio-economic realities of the day.

There is politics of education and politics in school management. Government interference quota system, admission in unity schools, in the appointment of principals, promotion, giving of grant to run the school, welfare of the principals, in providing funds



equipment and even government interference in school community relation. All these affect the management of secondary schools and the smooth running of the schools.

Problems Associated with Politics on Secondary School Administration in Nigeria In most developing nations, the success or failure of any political party depends partly on its policy on education. This is because education is closely related to politics. For instance, Vladimir Lenin of Russia in proposing the elimination of ownership of private property and domination of religion in Russia first proposed a sweeping change in public education system as an essential factor for success (Adesina, 1984). The author further stated that the people have to be convinced through education, to give up their property and religion – the two things that are closest to their hearts. The public request for education could be likened to Kant's belief that education elevates man out of disorderly life of egoistic desire into that of humanity.

Secondly, education moulds the future citizen, maintains political and economic stability, shapes political systems and social goals which reform the society and provide social stability. Furthermore, Education also gives rise to social development and helps to sort and select talents for the labour market, develops human capital and plans economic development which eliminates poverty. Its political goals are always in the mind of the people as it educates the citizen and helps in selecting future political leaders. Education is also seen as a means of instituting a common political creed in all citizens and that is why the educational manifest of each political party affects the educational system of their time. For Nigerian politicians, these facts are well known and they make education the centre of their political campaigns for political position and this is a problem to educational industries. Most of the political parties which came into power have failed the nation as they did not live up to their promises of improving the quality and standard of education in the country. Some after obtaining the people's mandate messed up education and created problems to educational industries.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria is a highly politicized society amidst the diversity of ethnic linguistic, geographical and religious interest and all these affect the management of educational institutions. Education is also seen as a means of instituting a common political creed in all citizens. Conflicts arise out of frequent changes in government, political instability and inconsistency in the overall national development and implementation of educational policy which mostly impacts negatively on our educational system ranging from location of the school to the recruitment of the staff in the school. It therefore follows that if our educational institution must live up to its dictates by qualitative education to the masses.

### **Suggestion**

The influence of politics for the development of education per excellence is apparent and cannot be over emphasized. However, its undue interference has led to a lot of setbacks in our educational institution. In order to ameliorate the situation, the following are suggested:

1. The political actors should desist from negatively influencing educational institutions to engineer even development in the educational sector.

2. There should be national need assessment to help in the formulation of sustainable education policy for national transformation.
3. The country's constitutions need to be modified so that the educational sector can control and coordinate the choice and election of their administrators while strictly adhering to the education laws.
4. In order to maintain transparency in the appointment of educational administrators, a national leadership summit on the impact of politics and tactics should be held in each of the state
5. In contrast to our leaders' materialistic tendencies, there should be a focus on cultivating healthy moral principles that will limit undue political influence.

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