Article

Sustenance of education sector reforms in Nigeria through adequate participation by all stakeholders

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This study assessed the views of stakeholders on sustenance of education sector reforms in Nigeria. A structured and validated questionnaire was used to collect data from 160 subjects randomly drawn from primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, including education inspectorate divisions. Population t-test was used to analyze the data collected. Results of the study revealed that community participation in administration of schools, teacher’s development and retraining, improved funding by government and strengthening of the education inspectorate services, shall significantly influence the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria. The study recommends the provision for retraining of teachers at all levels of education, regular inspection/supervision of schools and provision of adequate funds to ensure sustainability.

Key words: Sustenance, education, sector, reforms, adequate participation, stakeholders, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The honorable minister of education (Mrs Oby Ezekwesili) on the 23rd of Nov.2006 during her media tour to the Rutam House (home of The Guardian newspaper) organized by her ministry, cited the various spheres of education that any serious Government must spend sufficient time and resources as:

i) Early child education.
ii) Basic education.
iii) Secondary education.
iv) Tertiary education.
v) Adult – non formal education.
vi) Special needs education.

The Minister further revealed that there is gross deterioration at the various levels of education. At the level of early child education, she pointed out that the policy, structure and governance, physical infrastructure available for delivery, deployment of technology within it, academic achievements, monitoring and inspection, quality of curriculum, teacher quality and supply, funding, and equity issues among others were found to be poor and grossly inadequate. On basic education, the minister revealed that out of the 42.1 million children within the age bracket of 1 - 14 years, only 25.8 million were in school. At the secondary education level, only 30% of the population that should be in secondary school is in school in Nigeria. The global standard recommended for developing countries, in respect of tertiary education that in any population, at least 20% of the youth should be in tertiary institutions. The situation in Nigeria according to the minister shows that only 3% of her youths are in school. On the adult/non-formal education and special needs education, she revealed that no serious attention has been given to these important aspects (Daily Sun, 2006). The situation, which gave rise to the all-embracing reforms in the education sector among others, include the followings:

i) Early childhood education in Nigeria lacked a defined national policy, it is largely private sector driven with no government regulation, there is no standardized curriculum, monitoring and inspection are inadequate, there is very low number of qualified teachers, and funding is non-existent.
ii) At the basic education level, governance is largely public sector driven, physical infrastructure is below standard and grossly in sufficient. Basic amenities such as water and light were seriously lacking. Though curriculum was rated high, but teachers’ quality and number remains
very low.
iii) Physical infrastructures were found to be inadequate at the secondary education level. Academic achievement at this level was also found to be very low, as only 23.37% of students across the federation made five credits pass in subjects, which include mathematics and English Language. The curriculum was rated low while an academic standard has declined.

iv) The carrying capacities of tertiary institutions were found to be very low, even though there were 75 universities in the country (26 Federal, 28 state and 24 privately owned).

Their overall carrying capacity was found to be 148,323 as against 1.2 million demands annually. Infrastructures were found to be inadequate and crumbling. Academic achievement as evident in underemployment, unemployment and issues of poor relevance to the market demand was rated medium: The quality of curriculum was low and irrelevant to modern imperatives of our nation state, especially on entrepreneurship and career development (The Guardian, 2006).

The reforms

Ezekwesili (2006) observed that the current structure of the Federal Ministry of Education seriously limits its capacity to provide a strong policy articulation, delivery, and regulation of the education sector. This, according to her, has implication for the development of human capital needed to generate progress. In this vein a new organization has been proposed for the Federal ministry of education. In the proposed organogram, 21 parastatals have been grouped into six, thus:

i) Capacity/economic development group: This group shall be made up of the national university commission (NUC), the national commission for college of education (NCCE), and the national board for technical education (NBTE). This group as proposed will take charge of tertiary education matters.

ii) Basic and secondary education commission: This houses the universal basic education commission (UBEC) and the Federal inspectorate services (FIS). The commission will oversee basic and secondary education matters.

iii) The examination group: This includes joint admission matriculation board (JAMB), West African examination council (WAEC), national examination commission (NECO), and the national business and technical examination board (NBTEB).

iv) The education resource commission: This shall be made up of the national teacher institute (NTI), the Nigerian educational research and development council (NERDC), national institute of educational planning and administration (NIEPA).

v) Education finance group: This is made up of education trust fund (ETF) and Federal scholarship board.

vi) Social democratization group: This group has the largest membership proposed. These include national commission for nomadic education (NCNE), the national mass education commission (NMEC), the national institute for Nigerian language (NINLAN), the Nigerian French language village (NFLV), and the Nigerian Arabic language village (NALV).

The teachers’ registration council (TRC), national library of Nigeria (NLN), and the national mathematics center shall retain their full autonomy.

Other reforms proposed by the government according to Ezekwesili as contained in the Guardian newspaper of November 23, 2006 include:

(a) Putting in place a housing scheme for all teachers.
(b) Annual presidential teachers’ excellence award, which will be instituted with effect from 2007.
(c) To cater for those who did not make it into universities and polytechnics, the ministry has proposed Innovation enterprise Institutions (IEI) such as:

i) The information and communication technology institute.

ii) The school of oil and gas technology.

iii) The adire institute of technology.

iv) The Fashion Institute of Technology, it has been estimated that 50 of such schools across the country should enroll 300,000 students yearly.

At the 53rd session of national council on education held in Calabar Cross River State tagged, ‘Promoting access to quality education’, the delegates exhibited enthusiasm and agreed that there should be no further delay in dealing with the problems so far identified. About 18 items were approved for implementation at the summit. These among others include:

i) Approval of guidelines for establishment and operation of production units in technical colleges.

ii) The infusion of elements of drug abuse and preventive education into the adult and non-formal education sector.

iii) An Edo language curriculum for senior secondary school level.

iv) Early child-hood development policy.

v) Frame work/guidelines for the gender policy in basic education.

vi) The inclusion of vocational education into special education.

vii) National school health policy as a legal framework for promoting learning.

viii) Retraining of French teachers.

ix) Setting up of school based management committees (SBMCs) by March 2007.

x. States repositioning of their inspectorate departments and to adopt the instrument used for the operation reach all secondary school (ORASS) for effective sustenance of
The Ex-post facto design was used for this study. The design is appropriate for studies, which are intended to assess existing characteristics (Gay, 1992). It involves describing conditions that already exist, and determining reasons or causes for their existence or occurrence. Therefore, in this study, the sustainability of the ongoing education reforms in Nigeria shall be determined by examining the responses of stakeholders to the items raised in the hypotheses generated to guide the study.

The variables that were considered very important in this study are community involvement in school administration, teachers’ development and retraining, funding by government, and strengthening of inspectorate services.

The four hypotheses raised to guide the conduct of the study are:

i) Community involvement in the administration of schools would not have significant influence on the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria.

ii) Teachers development and retraining would not significantly influence the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria.

iii) Sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria would not be significantly influenced by improved funding by the government.

iv) Strengthening of the education inspectorate services would not significantly influence the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria.

A sample size of 160 randomly selected respondents drawn from among primary and secondary schools teachers (including the school administrators), lecturers in tertiary institutions, and staff of education inspectorate services, were used for the study. The structured questionnaire used for data collection was divided into two:

Sections – A and B. Section A contained 3 items designed to seek demographic information about the respondents while section B (made up of 12 items) sought information about the variables raised in the hypotheses. The questionnaire was pre-tested in a trial study involving lecturers and administrators in the faculty of education, University of Calabar. The Split-half-techniques was used to estimate the relative reliability of the instrument. Reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained. Population t-test statistics was used for the data analysis.

RESULTS

The results are presented hypothesis by hypothesis. The testing of the hypotheses was carried out at 0.05 level of significance. A population t-test analysis was adopted to test all the hypotheses because of the nature of the questionnaire items. This involves comparing the mean obtained from the study sample with the hypothesized mean. The hypothesized mean was obtained by multiplying the average of the scores attached to the four response categories (strongly agree - 4 point, agree – 3 point, disagree – 2 point, strongly disagree – 1 point) by the number of items measuring the variable (Hypothesized mean = \(4 + 3 + 2 + 1 \times 3 = 7.50\)).

The summary of population t-test analysis of the variables investigated is presented in Table 1.

The result of the analysis presented in table 1 reveals the sample mean and standard deviation of the community participation variable.

Standard deviation of the community participation variable. A comparison of the sample mean with the hypothesized mean value of 7.50 gave a calculated t-value of 14.42 at 0.05 level of significance with 159 degree of freedom. With result of this analysis the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implies that community involvement in the administration of schools will significantly influence the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria.

On teachers’ development and retraining, the result
A critical analysis of the responses of the stakeholders showed that community participation in the running of public, primary and secondary schools situated in their locality is a welcomed idea, and that this will promote sustained education reforms in Nigeria. Over 92% of the respondents were of the view that this is vital for the sustenance of the ongoing reforms in the education sector. It was also the views of over 89% of the stakeholders that the proposed housing scheme for all teachers is an appropriate motivation for teachers to striving for excellence, as well as the annual presidential teachers excellence award proposed to take effect from 2007. 90% of stakeholders used as subjects for the study strongly affirmed that conversion of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to Universities or degree awarding Institutions would create difficulties in the production of middle level manpower needed at the lower cadre of educational institutions. In an open letter to president Olusegun Obasanjo, the national president and secretary of college of education academic staff Union (COEASU) reiterated this view of stakeholders, and further observed that the merger is capable of placing the children of the less privilege at a disadvantage, especially in terms of affordability of education, among others (Sunday Punch, 2006). It is important to state here that there is need for the Federal government to make a wider consultation on this issue and take into consideration the view of stakeholders and the entire public.

Further more the result presented in Table 1 reveals that the calculated t-value of 9.76 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 159 degrees of freedom. With the result the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore means that the strengthening of the education inspectorate services would significantly influence the sustenance of education reforms in Nigeria.

On the development and retraining of teachers at all levels of education in the direction of the reforms, stakeholders are of the view that is vital for the sustenance of the ongoing reforms in the education sector. It was also the views of over 89% of the stakeholders that the proposed housing scheme for all teachers is an appropriate motivation for teachers to striving for excellence, as well as the annual presidential teachers excellence award proposed to take effect from 2007. 90% of stakeholders used as subjects for the study strongly affirmed that conversion of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to Universities or degree awarding Institutions would create difficulties in the production of middle level manpower needed at the lower cadre of educational institutions. In an open letter to president Olusegun Obasanjo, the national president and secretary of college of education academic staff Union (COEASU) reiterated this view of stakeholders, and further observed that the merger is capable of placing the children of the less privilege at a disadvantage, especially in terms of affordability of education, among others (Sunday Punch, 2006). It is important to state here that there is need for the Federal government to make a wider consultation on this issue and take into consideration the view of stakeholders and the entire public.

Improve funding by the Federal government as expressed by stakeholders will serve as a potent motivational gesture towards the sustenance of educational reforms in Nigeria. The upgrading and provision of adequate infrastructure including maintenance of same, and improved wage package for teachers at all levels of education were identified to include areas that need improved funding by the Federal Government, as well as provision of service vehicles for the coverage of all schools to ensure adequate supervision and inspection by the education inspectorate service division. This may assist in curbing the fraud identified in the education sector, as most of such has been linked to poor working conditions identified among employees (Mitchel, 1985). This may also help in raising the dignity of the teaching profession, which is important for improved performance and sustenance of the reforms.

Finally, stakeholders (91%) strongly affirmed that revitalization of the education inspectorate service department would have positive impact on the sustenance of the ongoing education reforms. In the same vein, Oby Ezekwesili observed that the governments failure in the education sector, working through the federal ministry of education was as a result of not being conversant with what was going on in the various levels of education through the inspectorate services (Daily Sun, 2006). Equipping of the inspectorate services, as expressed by stakeholders is thus very necessary in the sustenance of the ongoing reforms. Beside the provision of adequate service vehicles for the department, regular inspection and school supervision is vital for the sustenance of the reforms. In addition 83% of the respondents were of the

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community participation</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>14.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers development and retraining</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved funding</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspectorate services</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>9.76</td>
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*p < 0.05; t = 1.96; df = 159 (significant at 0.05 level)
view that the inspectorate should be given more powers to recommend removal of staff that have been identified to be very low in performance. The researchers are also of the opinion that this in no small measure will keep all stakeholders in check and possibly lead to improved commitment and performance on the part of uncommitted staff.

Conclusively, Community participation in the administration of schools located in their locality is a welcome innovation. But care need to be taken in the structuring of the public participatory process to avoid creation of conflicts and bureaucratic bottleneck in schools administration. Teachers retraining and development need to be enured. Teachers at all level of education need to be properly educated on what is required of them for the success of the education reforms, while improved wage package be considered, and the proposed housing scheme and annual presidential award be vigorously pursued. A lot need to be done on improving and providing of adequate infrastructure in all educational institutions while also equipping the inspectorate adequately.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Public participation in the running of schools within their locality should be properly streamlined and structured to avoid administrative bottleneck.
2. Adequate provision should be made for the retraining of teachers at the various levels of education in the direction of the reforms.
3. Workshops and seminars should be organized to properly educate all stakeholders on the direction of the reforms.
4. Upgrading of physical infrastructures and provision of additional facilities, which are seriously lacking in most institutions should be vigorously pursued by the Federal Government.
5. Regular inspection and supervision of all primary and secondary schools should be ensured.
6. The inspectorate services need to be adequately equipped for improved performance.
7. Provision of adequate funds to ensure proper implementations and sustenance of the reforms should be ensured.

**REFERENCES**
