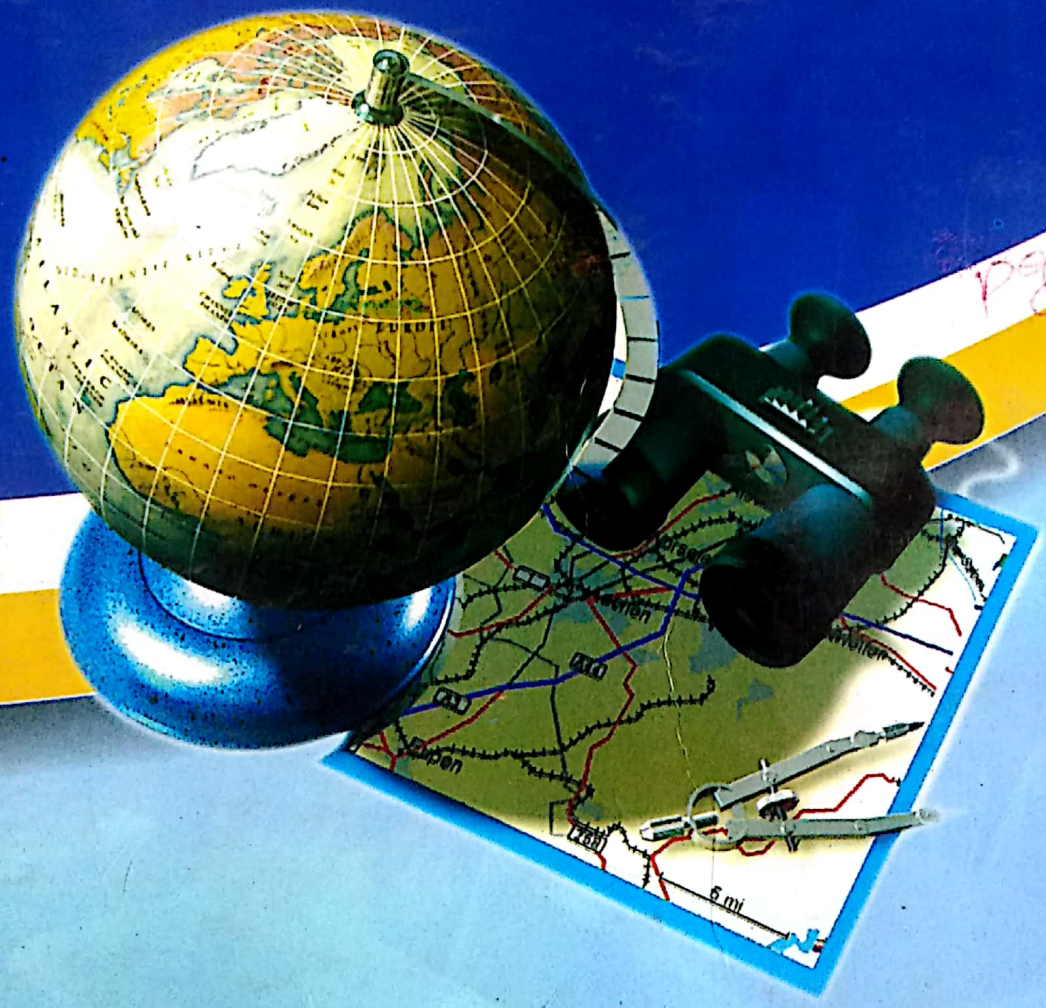
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Mirroring the DFID, British Council and the Commonwealth's Proactive Involvement in the Nigerian Education

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ABSTRACT

Achievement or development of any nation can be made or experienced without an association with one another, especially that resources are unevenly distributed across the globe. Through an association with one another, meaningful and rapid developments are abound. It is therefore the concern of this paper to mirror what this type of association can achieve for members. In this regard, the manifesting roles of Nigeria's association or membership with Commonwealth and its other agencies as the British Council and Department for International Development have been able to contribute to the Nigerian education system in the areas of infrastructure, instructional materials and other resources, control and prevention of HIV/AIDS through educational means and other ways, supports for teacher education, literacy programmes, funding and so on. The paper, however, concluded with a call on the Nigerian people and Government to evolve positive attitudes towards those things provided as *infrastructure, materials, programmes and shun corrupt practices.*

Introduction

Just like the membership with United Nations (UN) qualifies the member nations of the benefits from the UN and its agencies programmes, projects, policies and activities. The same way, the British, with its Commonwealth membership advantages; through the British Council, and the Department for International Development (DFID) activities, all commonwealth members are potential beneficiaries of programmes, policies, projects and activities of these bodies.

Nigeria as a developing nation and an independent country from the British colonial government, i.e. commonwealth country is recognized and identified as one of the countries to be supported for social, economic, infrastructural and educational development. Nigeria is identified to be supported. The entire facets of the Nigerian education is such that have been so much miserable, considering a plethora of disappointing circumstances – in the inadequate equipment and facilities, no furniture, dilapidated edifice, poorly stocked or non-existent library and laboratory; poor funding, shortage of qualified teachers and other personnel, as well as other needs.

With the government coming out boldly to express its inability to solitarily take responsibilities for educational provision for the citizens, and obviously the discouraging and repugnant state of Nigerian educational system make it highly imperative to welcoming the involvement of non-governmental organizations of national, regional, continental or global status, to salvaging her education from a total collapse.

The clarion call of the Nigerian government is that which the likes of Department for International Development (DFID), British Council and the Commonwealth responded to, getting themselves doing one thing or the other in the development of specific areas of the Nigerian education system.

The writers therefore, see the need to get the proactive response of these bodies encapsulated for appraisal and as basis or reference mirroring to other organizations, foundations or bodies that may consider re-engineering the Nigerian education as the most favoured assistance they could render. The involvement of these bodies is considered the mirror through which this can be so far assessed for others swinging into action.

Statement of the Problem

Government has come to the understanding that a plethora of problems and inadequacies in the Nigerian educational system have assumed a dimension in which she can not handle them alone. Government has recognized this impossibility of shouldering alone, the responsibilities of educational provision to her citizens, thereby looking for ways of salvaging this education which is now characterized with a lot more inadequacies in terms of facilities, resources - human and materials; funding and so on; from being plunged into a state of retrogression or stagnation. However, external involvement is welcomed and entertained to assisting in the overhauling of the various spheres of the country's education system.

Conceptual Framework

Having realized that education is an expensive social service (FRN, 2004). Government alone can not shoulder it and that educational provision for her citizen is one big responsibility it can not singularly be responsible for, if quality is to be maintained. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) emphatically and unequivocally stated that in this connection, government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and other organisations. It is upon the basis of this government's statement that the paper looks at the proactive involvement of the three organizations studied.

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Research Questions

1 What have been the inputs of the Department for International Development (DFID)?
2 How much efforts or resources have been committed by the British Council to assisting the Nigerian education?
3 To what extent has the Commonwealth of Nations contributed to the Nigerian Education?

Literature Review

The entire Nigerian education system has been studied by quite a number of educational researchers with virtually all concluding on a negative note. From primary to tertiary, it has been observed that there a lot more decay in the Nigerian education system requiring remedies. A study in 1997, commissioned in order to assist the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) in the improvement of primary education services manifested a much more revelations. From the study, Francis (1998) identified a lot of problems waiting for urgent attention. These are:

1 Infrastructure: classroom space and facilities were found to be inadequate and in poor repair, with insufficient funds to maintain the facilities or obtain supplies
2 Instructional materials: textbooks supplies and other materials for instruction were inadequate.
3 Staff conditions and training: many teachers lack minimum qualifications for primary school teaching, teacher's morale is eroded by low pay, poor working conditions and inadequate facilities, gender imbalance in staff cadres and wholesale staff transfers.
4 Enrolment, attendance and retention: regional imbalances in enrolment were found.
5 Funding: tension exists between Local Government Areas (LGA's) and the State Primary Education Boards that control federal funds for salaries and operational costs – Local Government feels disenfranchised from the control of schools and educational resources made available for their areas.
6 Community participation: while financial needs for building repairs and supplies are frequently met by parents and community-based organizations, economic differentiation results in equitable community involvement.

To this extent, Sulaiman (2005) affirms that wealthy families often abandon public primary schools in favour of private education. In his contribution, Enemuo (2002:32) observing the phenomenal increase in enrolment in school without commensurate human and material backings, therefore remarks that:

> ...Consequently, be it at the primary, secondary or tertiary levels, our educational system is characterized by problems of dilapidated or non-existent infrastructures, poorly stocked library, inadequate laboratories and equipment, poor condition of service, prompting brain drain, poor quality of teaching and poor quality of graduates, especially in science and technology.

Also, Talabi (2002) noted that research, teaching, student amenities, staff pay and other social/welfare services all have their claims on the limited resources at the disposal of the university. Hence, there is deprivation (relative or absolute) of the needs of all the groups within the system. It therefore suffices that the consequences of inadequate provision of financial resources to the university system are the decay of structures and the decline in services and functions.

Research Method

This research was conducted using Historical Research Method with the data sourced from both primary source (e-mail communication and organizational website- internet materials) and secondary sources (documentary information: records, books, journals etc).

Population

The population constitutes all the known organizations, British, American or German origin; Foundations- Ford foundation, MacArthur foundation, Techno serve, Carnegie foundation; the UN agencies- UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO, IBRD etc.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample is composed of three (3) organizations namely the Department for International Development (DFID), British Council and the Commonwealth, purposively selected for the study. The three purposively selected samples are the focus of the paper and because they all have British origin. There are millions o f organizations of UN and non-UN, as well as those of America origin

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e.g USAID, MacArthur Foundation and so on. They are known for doing one thing or the other to engineering education of the developing nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive.

However, the three purposively selected organizations are chosen for their unique origin or affiliation traceable to the British. As maintained above, there are so many organizations, but purposely, the three selected samples have synonymous identity of being British.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented and discussed based on the various research questions raised, thus:

The Inputs of Department for International Development (DFID)

The Department for International Development is a department of the British High Commission that assists in the social, economic and physical development of the developing countries, including Nigerian. DFID has done a lot for Nigerian, especially in her education sector through the provision of fund, equipment, facilities, as well as sponsoring conferences, workshops and seminars regarding the promotion off education in Nigeria.

Specifically, DFID under the Education Sector Analysis (ESA), supported a Taskforce on Quality Assurance, including the repositioning of the Federal Inspectorate service. The coordination of this activity, as part of the study on Quality Assurance was made by the ESA unit of Federal Inspectorate Service.

Also, the Ministerial Taskforce on the Education Sector Status Report (ESSR) had a strong partnership input. The DFID funded the participation of two international consultants who worked with the committee to produce the report, based on the major funding of ESA project as at the time of the Report. The FME in Nigerian is implementing the UBE with support from DFID. DFID has provided a grant of £26million to the UBE scheme in 6 Northern states as help to the Nigerian government on the scheme.

As earlier identified the plight of the nomads concerning the degree of being disadvantaged in the formal schooling, the British Government through the Department for International Development (DFID) trained nomadic children to become teachers, so as to go back and train their own people, this is an effort which has yielded good result, as the nomads now find joy in having to communicate and write in English.

DFID played a major partnership role with UNESCO in the HIV/AIDS Preventive Education. Interestingly, DFID co-organized a National Advocacy workshop on HIV/AIDS and Education with UNESCO and UNAIDS the workshop was organized for four days, from 9th-13th June, 2002. However DFID as a department of British High Commission mostly collaborate with other international agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and some NGOs to contribute in engineering Nigerian education.

The Effort & Resources Made Available by British Council to Assisting the Nigeria Education

The British Council is United Kingdom's international organization set up purposely for educational opportunities and cultural relationship among countries of the world. It began its service and operation since 1930s and presently working in 220 towns and cities in 110 countries including Nigeria (British Council, 2005).

British Council's interventions in Nigerian education is impressive, for it caters for virtually all the learning aspects of our education through their young learners zone, Library facilities, Video conferencing facility, Online Resource Centre, English language learning sessions.

British Council (2005) reveals that English has been taught to over 500,000 people by the British Council with an average of 120,000 students enrolled at any time in her 126 learning centers including Nigeria. Also, it has issued up to 7.5millon books and videos to 300,000 British Library members across the world. Equally, dealt with 2.3million enquiries in British Council Libraries and information centers and welcomed 8.5millon visitors.

In the area of employment of teachers British Council employed well over 1,700 teachers in 126 teaching centers who have taught over 1.07millon class hours around the world with Nigeria as beneficiary.

Other activities of the British Council in engineering Nigerian education cover a wide range of special package of assisting Nigerians to study or live in the U.K. Books, journals, video tapes and other academic items are available in their various centers across Nigeria for hiring and borrowing. Also, distribution of books as aids to the nation's schools. There are other opportunities available for Nigerians who take up membership of this body's centre by participating in British Council events, free access to electronic journal under the specialized internet portals like Emerald Management Reviews and Gale's Infotrac. Also available is the opportunity to network with other professional. The Kano Centre of the British

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Council has Learners' facilities for children by creating children learners area. And, Lagos, Abuja and Port-Harcourt are now offering one service or the other to the young learners, as part of effort to make library use open to all ages. However, there are other organizations, agencies, clubs and foundations that are equally doing a lot in Nigerian education in the areas of funding, award of scholarship and fellowships, ICT development organizing and sponsoring of workshop, seminars and conferences; giving support and creating the Database of African. Theses and Dissertations (DATAD), this is implemented in 11 African universities , including Nigeria; training of Nigerian educationalist, especially in the area of ICT etc; construction, renovation or face lifting of schools; provision of learning and teaching materials as well as others, too numerous to deal with in this study. And, prominent among these bodies and Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, Technoserve, Rotary Club International (RCI) and many others.

And, of course some of those organizations and bodies considered in detail for this study also partner or collaborate with some that are not given full and independent consideration herein, such as:

International Labour Organization (ILO); World Health Organization (WHO); Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); Rockefeller Foundation, Technoserve, Ford Foundation; Rotary Club International (RCI), MTN and so on.

The Contributions of the Commonwealth of Nations to the Nigerian Education

Commonwealth of Nations is an international body of all the independent countries of the world, and who were colonized and liberated by the British Colonial Government. The Queen of England remains the official Head of Commonwealth. Commonwealth is at work in the member countries, including Nigeria, doing one thing or the other to engineer education, identified as a tool for social, political and economic development. Under this parent body, there are other sub- Commonwealth bodies performing specialized roles, as it concerns education. For example, there are a number of them which include;

- Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- Commonwealth Countries League (CCL)
- Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) and so on.

In 1958, Sidney Smith, former Vice particularly at the graduate level, should be promoted. Of course, it was ratified and launched a year later at a conference held in Oxford. Since then, scholarship and fellowship awards have begun, with a target of about one thousand (1000) awards at any one time. The value of this for Commonwealth co-operation in education was widely recognized, with the number of awards on offer expanded rapidly and the target of 1000 awards was reached in 1966. By 1968, 28 countries were participating in the plan. Chancellor of the University of Toronto and then, Secretary State for External Affairs in Canada, addressed 8th Quinennial Congress of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in Montreal, praising the work of the association. Mr. Smith put forward his belief that to encourage and facilitate the flow of ideas, a programme of exchange of Commonwealth Universities' staff and students,

By 1987, the number of awards had risen to nearly 2000, with all the 48 Commonwealth countries and 17 associated states and dependencies participating in the plan. Of these, 22 countries had offered awards: Australia, Bahamas, Britain, Canada, Cyprus, Ghana, Guyana, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Zimbabwe.

For the continuity and improvement of the plan, the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee (CELC) and the Commonwealth secretariat were saddled with this responsibility.

Basically, the Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship plan was instituted in 1959 to give practical expression to the declared intention of Commonwealth countries to contribute to the provision of high level education and training by sharing their resources and their facilities (Federal Ministry of Education, Scholarship Broad, 2003).

Commonwealth Countries League (CCL)

CCL brings together the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth countries to appraise and reappraise the education system of the member countries, particularly the girls in the Commonwealth, as well as organizing conferences,

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seminars, workshops and summits. Also, promoting literacy through a literacy class held under the mango tree. CCL also gives scholarship from the CCL grants otherwise known as CCL Education Fund, which has been in operation for 35years back. CCL gives support to disadvantaged bright girls throughout Commonwealth countries to continue their education.

Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

COL is also a structure of the Common wealth, involving itself more in the education enterprise of the member countries. COL has done a lot in Nigerian education which its intervention started through a fellowship programme to staff of African Universities. In 1990, to increase his knowledge of Open Distance Learning, COL sponsored the participation of M.O. Akintayo (Nigerian) to COL/British Council visiting fellowship programme. Also, another Nigerian, Okwudishu of centre for Distance Learning, University of Abuja visited institutions in Canada under the same programme.

Equally, some senior officers of various ODL institutions were assisted in the formulation of programme proposals. Among such institutions were;

3 University of Abuja, in its media production;
4 Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the production and utilization of Soya beans, as crop by rural women;
5 Imo State University, in its media production facilities and educational broadcasting service in collaboration with the state government (COL, 1994).

COL also sponsored training workshop in 1992 for ODL experts in West Africa, including Nigeria. Another capacity Building Workshop in programme planning and management for similar group in 1994 in Badagry, Nigeria (Aderinoye and Ojokheta, 2004)/.

COL has also made it marks on other aspect of Nigerian education through;

3 The provision of teaching and learning materials for Nigerian schools
4 Funding of major and minor projects of the Nigeria's education sector
5 Giving of scholarship awards;
6 Organizing workshops, seminars and conferences.

Role of Commonwealth in Nigerian education has been a wonderful intervention and that there are other partnership roles with the likes of UNICEF, UNESCO, British Council and others to promoting Nigerian education.

The Commonwealth Business Council is also doing a lot, especially the Job Fairs of recruiting Africans studying aboard for jobs back home in Africa, including Nigeria through *'African Recruit'.*

CONCLUSION

The level of involvement of the studied organizations is such that has manifested in significant changes and improvement in the development of Nigerian education system. It can therefore be unequivocally maintained that no nation, especially the under-developed and developing can grow or develop without external involvement of the likes of Department for International Development (DFID), British Council and the Commonwealth which their impact in promoting Nigerian education is no doubt commendable and appreciable. Membership of Nigeria with these organizations has produced a number of far reaching agreement for development, through bilateral, multilateral and other partnership accords.

Whatever the efforts of these organizations or agencies, Nigerian people and Government should try to turn positive attitudes towards those things provided as infrastructure, materials, programmes and shun corrupt practices. Keeping to these will go a long way to sustain the gestures from this association.

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