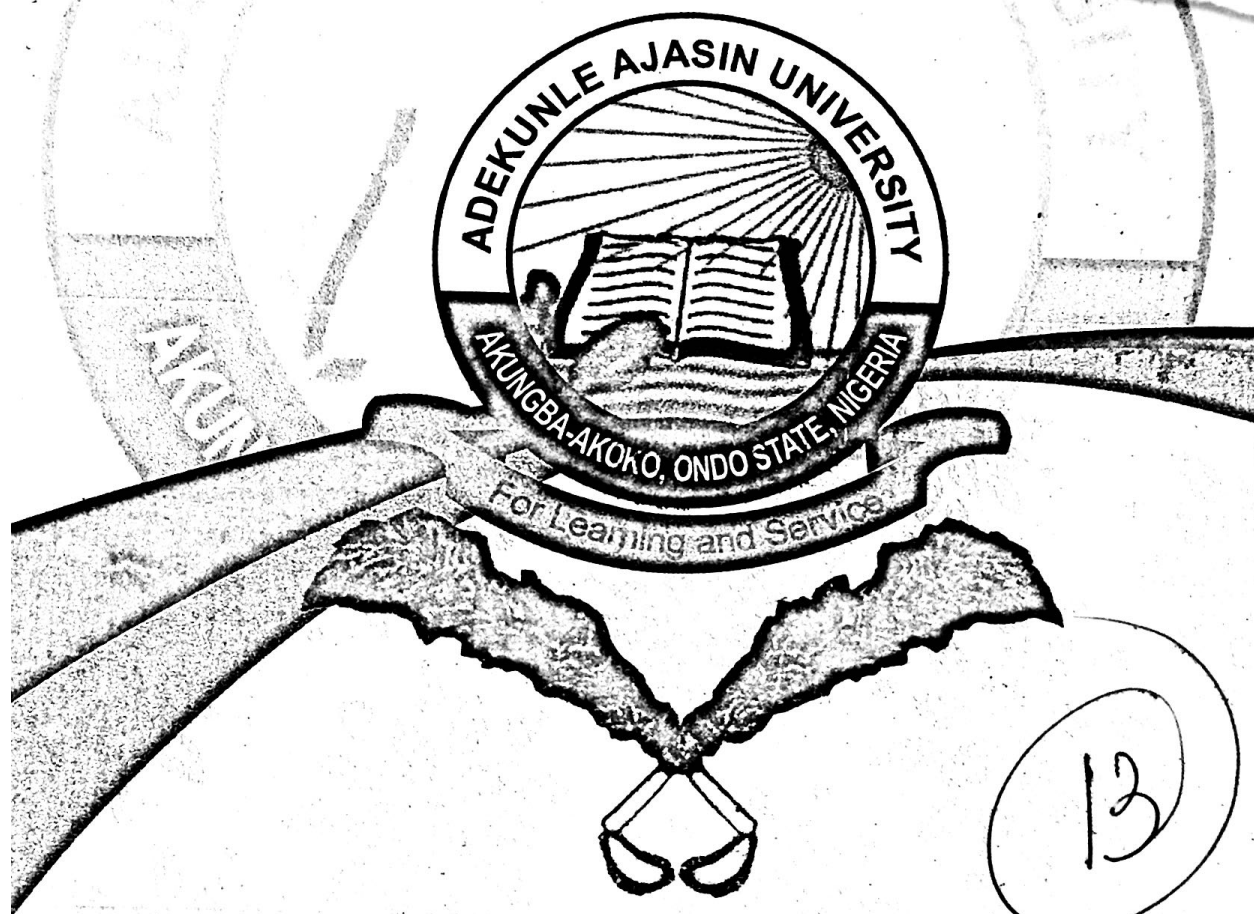


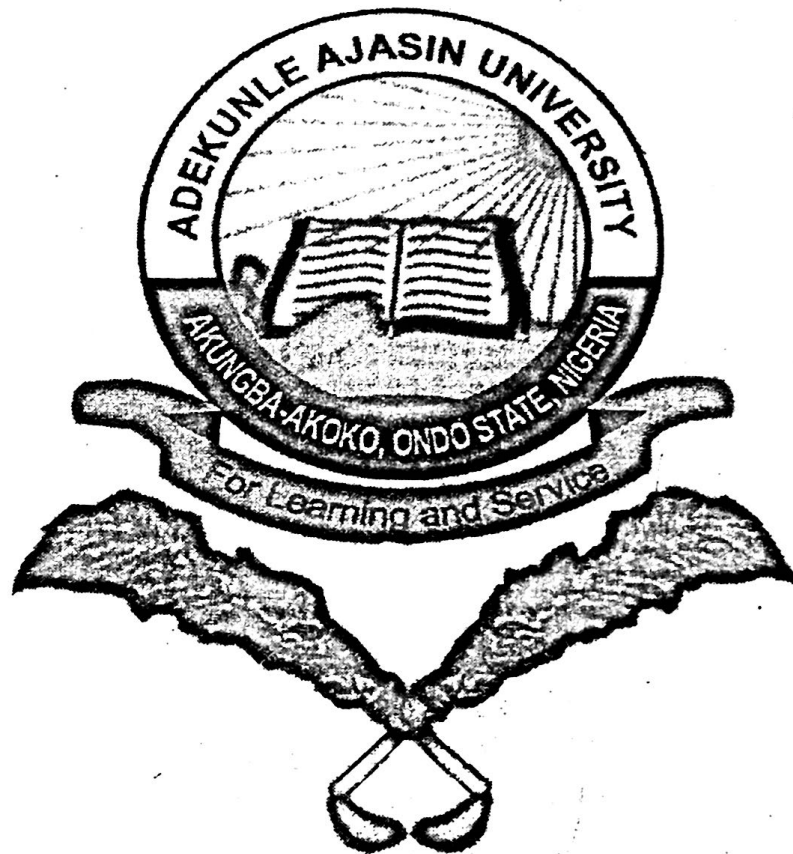
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IMPLICATION OF REFORMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY FOR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN NIGERIA EDUCATION

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Abstract

Nigeria takes education matters with great seriousness. This can be seen in the efforts she has progressively made since the departure of the colonial masters. The desire to enthrone an authentically Nigeria education has led the country to patriotic reforms and heavy investment in institutional development and capacity building. Sadly however, the country is yet to enjoy the benefits envisaged by the people. Graduates of Nigerian schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities are gravely unskilled. They can hardly cope in an increasingly competitive world of work delivery. This paper examines service delivery in Nigeria education before discussing the importance of appropriate institutional development and capacity building to functional education. It advocates the reforms and development efforts in the education sector should be geared towards greater graduate employability and technological innovations.

Keywords: Implication; Education; Service Delivery; Capacity Building

Introduction

The dynamics of socioeconomic transformation and the peculiarities of educational objectives in a country usually warrant reviews of education service delivery, which are aimed at building greater human capacity to meet the ever-increasing needs and values of societies. It is partly through such reviews it is known whether an existing curriculum can help a society to attain stability and progress, and whether some of the components of the curriculum require overhauling. Thus, Nigeria's crave for an education that can ensure functional living and self-reliance has made the country to constantly carry out reviews of her education service delivery, leading to sporadic educational reforms which are hinged on specific curriculum innovations. Through the process, educational thoughts and practices get re-shaped, with significant implications for value-orientation, poverty reduction/eradication, wealth creation and job creation.

Education reforms usually involve the re-thinking of the role of the educator in nation building (Olajide, 2007). It is essentially a re-examination of the goals and objectives of education with the redoubling of efforts towards their attainment. Indeed, the worth of any education lies in its capability to continuously serve its stakeholders better and remain the bedrock of national development through steady institutional development and capacity building.

Indeed, education reform and innovation are synonymous – both are meant to inject new ideas, methods and techniques or strategies that can bring about the efficiency of the system, thereby enhancing the socio-cultural, political, economic and technological fabrics of the nation (Adepoju & Olaniyi, 1999). As highlighted by Miles (1964), the adoption of new ideas or reforms in education service delivery is hinged upon the following:

- consideration of cost
- consideration of technological factors
- availability of associated support materials
- simplicity of implementation
- innovation system congruence

In this connection, Newsedge (2007) noted that education has become a tool of empowerment for the poor and socially marginalized groups. It is a service delivery system that aims full development of human resources; it is a veritable means of attaining an intelligent and progressive society.

Education Service Delivery and Education Reforms in Nigeria

A fundamental feature of service delivery in Nigeria education since her attainment of independence on the 1st of October, 1960 has been latching on the policy of centralization bequeathed by the colonial masters (the British Government). A nation of close to 200 million, with over 400 languages (Olajide 2007), Nigeria is a federation of 36 (the recent National Conference has been reported to have recommended more) states, which successive governments (democratic and military) have not been able to wean from the unitary educational system.

It has been within that one-track framework that education service delivery reforms have been embarked upon by government to ensure institutional development suitable for the right capacity building, that which keeps stimulating national growth and development. The reforms often appear ambitious, aiming to provide education to all Nigerians, irrespective of age, sex, religion, occupation and location. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2014), reforms in education should leverage a combination of strategic human capital and

infrastructure reviews, aided by specific tactical interventions.

Specifically, the recent service delivery reforms in education in Nigeria include the following:

1. Operation Reach All Primary Schools (ORAPS), a condition assessment programme aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public primary schools with a view of meeting their needs. ORAPS is a follow-up to ORASS (Operation Reach all Secondary Schools), successfully carried out over the last quarter of 2006. ORAPS is an exercise geared towards doing both qualitative and quantitative inspection of all primary schools in Nigeria;
2. Operation Reach All Secondary Schools (ORASS), also a condition assessment programme which is aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public secondary schools in Nigeria with a view to meeting their needs;
3. Ready-to-be-Educated and Advance-and-Develop (READ), which is geared towards encouraging a reading culture among the youth;
4. Adopt-A-Public-School (AAPS) initiative, aimed at leveraging stakeholders in education, particularly corporate organizations, to come together as partners, for the purpose of rescuing public schools and consequently repositioning them as institutions capable of delivering sound education;
5. The Community Accountability & Transparency Initiative (CATI), which seeks to get various institutions, civil society groups, town unions, and so on, involved in holding UBEC, SUBEBs, Contractors and the various Ministries of Education accountable for Government disbursements at all tiers;
6. Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEI) is to advance Nigeria's economic growth through the maximization of human potential by ensuring excellence in vocational and technological training so as to develop a competitive workforce, thereby enhancing Nigeria's rating among global economies;
7. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Reform, aimed at meeting the 21st century national and international imperatives;
8. The PPP initiative has been to ensure the effectiveness of the Federal Government Unity Schools by bringing together various stakeholders in the education system to find innovative solutions to the problems of poor school management, academic under-achievement and poor utilization of resources;
9. The Consolidation initiative, meant to deliver the conversion all Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education into campuses of neighboring Federal Universities, thus improving the carrying capacity of the Universities, and satisfying the quest for University Education and degree certification; and
10. The Ed.TAP initiative, to track the "products" of Nigeria's education system and determine who they are, their backgrounds, capabilities and needs in order to inform a long-term strategic planning process for the education sector.

Other recent cosmetic service delivery reforms include the School Feeding and Girl- Child Education Programmes.

The civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo (29th of May, 1999 to 28th of May, 2007) embarked on significant education service delivery reforms, starting with the Universal Basic Education Programme of 2000, and ending with many (already listed). As Nigeria's military leader, he had introduced several other reforms, like the Federal Government take-over of regional universities in 1975 and the Universal Primary Education Programme of 1976 (Adamu, nd.). These reforms have been primed to bring about significant changes in the running of the Nigerian education system. They cover every aspect of the Nigerian education system and involve appropriate grade levels, educational agencies, curriculum models, and so on.

However, the first serious attempt at reforming the education service delivery in the country took place in 1969, through a curriculum conference held in Lagos. The conference brought about radical changes in the country's education system (Fafunwa, 1974). Its recommendations led to the first post independent educational policy - the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria - FRN, 1977, revised 1981, 1998, 2004 2007, 2010 and 2014), which has attempted a somewhat radical departure from the educational policy bequeathed by the British colonialists. The Policy has been tailored to meet the needs of the nation.

The changes in global socioeconomic order coupled with the economic situation of the country, led to the adoption of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. According to Obioma and Ajagun (2006), NEEDS has the major targets of value re-orientation, poverty reduction, job creation, and wealth generation. This led to the need to re-define the country's education system, as exemplified in the reforms which are meant to give Nigerian education greater practical and knowledge orientation.

Bello (2007) highlighted some of the major reasons for reforms in education to include the need to make it relevant to the need of the country, equip students with the relevant knowledge to change their private and professional lives, make education accessible to more people, and pay more attention to science and technology. Others include the desire to intimate learners with contemporary information and communication technology skills, equip schools with adequate resources, improve teaching methods and educational practices, improve financing and management of education, improve the school assessment system, and prepare the citizens of the country to face the challenges of globalization.

Carnoy (1999) noted that globalization has affected education system directly and indirectly. According to him globalization has led to:

- i) Changes in both the labour market and the education systems due to the increasing demand for skilled labour.
- ii) The demand for additional resources for education in a policy environment that is not receptive to the expansion of the role of the public sector in education.
- iii) The decentralization and privatization which are considered strategic for ensuring quality and flexibility in a global economy, as exemplified in global market and global skills.
- iv) The increase in cross-national measurement of education system.
- v) The adoption of information and communication technology for increased access to education and also for quality in education.
- vi) The transformation of culture and cultural values, thereby resulting in what Carnoy (1999) called “struggle over the meaning and value of knowledge” (p. 10).

Carnoy went further to highlight specific aspects of the impact on globalization as bringing about competitiveness driven reforms (decentralization, standards, improved management of educational resources, improved teacher recruitment and training), finance driven reforms (shifting public funding from higher to lower levels of education, the privatization of secondary and higher education, the reduction of cost per student at all schooling levels), and equity driven reforms (to reach those who are not accommodated by the contemporary education system – the lowest income group, women and rural population, minorities, and so on).

Oladosu (2007) highlighted eight factors which prompted the current education reforms in Nigeria. These are stated as follows:

1. 43% of the Nigerian population can neither read nor write, i.e. sixty million, two hundred thousand Nigerians are illiterate,
2. Only 51% of practicing teachers are professionally qualified to be in the classroom,
3. Infrastructure, educational facilities and instructional materials are in short supply across all levels of the educational system,
4. Not every Nigerian has equal access to education; partly as a result of gender prejudice and socio-cultural misconceptions, and other related factors.

5. There are significant differences in learners' academic achievement and the quality of education received by Nigerians living in different parts of the country,
6. Nigerian schools tend to emphasize the learning of theories to the detriment of technical knowledge, vocational know-how and entrepreneurial skills,
7. The curriculum content calls for drastic and urgent review in favor of relevance and practical orientation of learners,
8. The natural mean scores for primary four Nigerian pupils in literacy, numeracy and life skills did not exceed 40% in any of the competencies assessed jointly by UNICEF and UNESCO in 1997.

Why There Should Be More Reforms in Nigeria's Education Service Delivery

First, the existing framework for administering education is unclear, as the roles of the various tiers of government within the education system, are not clearly laid out. The fact that education is on the Concurrent List of the 1999 constitution makes its administration complex. Take basic education for example. The Steve Oronsaye Committee Report observed that the operations of the Universal Basic Education Commission from the federal level are devoid of sufficient input from the schools in the states and local governments where they are expected to maintain good presence and make the most impact.

The regulatory system in the sector is largely ineffective, and this reflects in the curriculum, especially in many private schools of foreign origin. Pupils in many of these schools are taught little or nothing on Nigeria. Take also the duplication in the administration of Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). Why should there be two parallel examination bodies – the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) – conducting the same type of examinations for the same level of students within the same academic session, making it difficult to maintain standards at the same level? Nigeria needs a rethink here.

Second, there is stagnation and inequality in access to primary and secondary education. Although the government has made basic education through junior secondary school free and compulsory, Nigeria has not experienced the increase in enrolment rates witnessed in many countries. The national primary net enrolment rate which stood at 64 percent in 1999 was only 58 percent in 2010. The primary completion rate (the indicator used to monitor MDG progress) remained at about 75 percent between 2003 and 2010, whereas in Ghana and Tanzania, the rate rose sharply from 69.7 percent to around 88 percent, and from around 55 percent to 90 percent respectively within the same period.

Furthermore, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) database, which collects information from a large sample of nationally representative households in Nigeria, shows that there are extremely large within-country inequalities in school completion: for example while 95 percent of children from the richest households had completed grade 6 in 2008; only 31 percent of children from the poorest had done so. Similarly, gender inequality in grade completion remains likewise large, especially among the poorer groups of the population. For example, at least 60 percent of male children from the poorest households complete grades 1 to 4, compared to about 45 percent of female children.

In a nutshell, fewer than 30 percent of Nigerian children are in formal education before primary school. At the same time, only 35 percent of children of junior secondary school age are enrolled in this level, and less than 15 percent of those who finish junior secondary continue on to senior secondary level.

Nigeria continues to bemoan mass failures in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) conducted by WAEC and the National Examinations Council (NECO) year in – year out. For instance only 5.75 percent of the 803,360 private candidates that sat the WASSCE exams in May/June 2010 received 5 Credits and above (including in English Language), while only 10 percent received 5 Credits and above (including in Mathematics).

Several universities are producing graduates that lack the skills needed to perform tasks required in their chosen fields, making it difficult for them to get employment (Olajide & Adeniyi, 2013). It is possible to find graduates who have never used a computer before! Academic infrastructure in many of the higher institutions is dilapidated. Nigerian universities are no longer the citadels of learning that they used to be. They have lost their place in global rankings.

Implication of the Challenges for Institutional Development and Capacity Building

It is obvious that Nigeria needs a paradigm shift in education service delivery, and the way forward is to educate people based on the needs of the economy. There is need to educate the workforce to have the right skills and competencies in agriculture, mining, and other sectors that are critical to economic transformation, and only appropriate models of institutional development and capacity building lead to satisfying the need.

In other words, education service delivery reforms of the future should be within the context of the challenges posed by societal dreams. The reforms must be aimed at increasing computer literacy (Yusuf, 1998; Jegede & Owolabi, 2003) and eradicating ignorance, disease, mal-nutrition, unemployment, tribalism, sectionalism, parochialism, economic stagnation, political instability and other forms of insecurity. Emerging issues from the MDGS and NEEDS, such as value orientation,

peace and dialogue, human right education, family life, HIV and AIDs education, and entrepreneurial skills should be the focus of curriculum innovation and implementation. In the process, more emphasis should be placed on the affective domain and quantitative reasoning in order to boost pupils' achievement in cognitive and psychomotor capabilities and also to make education service delivery more responsive to the needs of the Nigerian child. The indigenous languages should be accord greater recognition in Nigeria education, because the mother tongue plays a most crucial role in education (Olajide, 2015).

Also, institutional development and capacity building of the future in the education sector should engender greater inclusiveness. The education of the girl-child in the country is still lagging behind that of the boys (Olawaju, 2002). Nnaka and Anaekwe (2006) reported that females are grossly under-represented in terms of enrolment, participation and achievement in science, technology and mathematics education at all levels of education. Agwagah and Aguele (2007) considered gender imbalance in education as a major issue to be addressed in any education reforms in Nigeria.

Nigeria needs to equip her workers with technical and vocational skills. As such, the country should give policy priority to technical and vocational education; she should expand and upgrade technical and vocational training infrastructure by developing vocational high schools, junior technical colleges, and technical universities, to develop technical manpower to support the capital intensive, technology biased industry (Okonjo-Iweala, 2012). Focusing on the supply of technical manpower needed for economic development, policy makers and curriculum experts need to work jointly with the private sector in order to put together the right curricula. In the process, Nigeria should specially invigorate the secondary school system so that it can build well on the weaknesses of the primary level and create the basis for a dynamic, employability driven tertiary level of education.

Conclusion

Education is one of the greatest concerns of Nigeria, because no nation can rise above the quality of her education. In her pursuit of balanced education, that which is the bedrock of sustainable growth and development, the country has paid very keen attention to formulation and re-formulation of land mark policies, couched as reforms. A persistent detraction from Nigeria education has been its inability to completely divest itself of British tendencies, when the country should favour a homegrown model that would serve national interests more effectively. A lot of resources have been expended on the development of institutions of all categories, yet the country's capacity to make life actually meaningful for her teeming population is worrisomely low. Nigeria needs to correctly link reforms to institutional development and capacity building ~~in~~, for improved service delivery and greater national empowerment.

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