

Building Future Ready Workforce: Re-Evaluating our Educational System

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Abstract

The educational sector in Nigeria, like most sectors have taken a dive for the worse in the recent years. Education is the bedrock of every society; therefore it is important that the educational sector is reappraised to curb the deficiencies present for a better tomorrow. Education is an investment that reaps rewards anywhere and anytime; and in a country like Nigeria where crumbling economy and an equally declining educational system has become the order of the day, investing in education becomes of paramount importance. Children are the leaders of tomorrow, therefore it's high time the government made decisions and put measures in place to invest in them. This article seeks to give an overview of the educational sector in Nigeria, the applicable laws that protect children and citizens' right to education, alongside the importance of the enforcement of these laws to achieve quality education in line with the United Nations SDG 4.

Keywords: Education; Re-evaluation; Workforce; Policies; Legislation; Rights

Introduction

Etymologically, the word "education" is derived from the Latin word "educatio" meaning 'bringing up' which was gotten from 'educō' which means 'I train'. Education, which originated as the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next, is now known as the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits, and personal development. Education could be formal, (that which occurs in formal training institutions and structured by curricular objectives), structured (more flexible than formal education but takes place in a community-based or workplace-based setting), or informal (occurs intentionally or unintentionally in one's everyday life and includes experience which forms the way one thinks, feels or acts) [1].

Education system in Nigeria: challenges facing the Nigerian educational sector

Within the context of this work, education is the development of the physical, the mental and the psychological power; and without which there will be ignorance, illiteracy and manifold problems for the government to solve. Education in Nigeria is based in the 6-3-3-4 System, which involves three levels of institutional processes introduced by Wenike Briggs the Federal Government Commissioner for Education who inaugurated a conference formulating the ideas in 1969 during the International Literacy Day. This system subsists till date, but only ensures compulsory primary school education for the first six years for all children enforceable under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme [2]. However, according to the United Nations, one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria. This means that even though primary education is free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country's children ages 5-14 years are not in school. This shows that there is still work to be done for a better education system as the future if the country depends on the level of education of its citizens. The right of citizens to free basic education is provided for and guaranteed under various national, regional and international laws. In Nigeria, the Constitution does not protect the right to education under its fundamental rights which is enforceable in the courts, but rather does so in for of Directive Principles of State Policy which is unenforceable in courts. Section 18(2) and (3)(a-d) provides for the equal and adequate educational opportunities at all rights and shall strive to eradicate illiteracy by providing for the citizens, free primary, secondary, university and adult literacy [3]. However, by virtue of Section (6)(6)(c) of the 1999 Constitution (as

amended), this provision as well as the entire provisions of Chapter II is not justiciable, and such rights encapsulated therein cannot be enforced by the Courts. The reason claimed by the government for doing such is that Nigeria has not attained the level of financial stability as a nation to effect this right to education as a fundamental right breach if which would render the government liable. It is pertinent to state that the non-justifiability of this right has proven to be the main hurdle impeding its full actualization in Nigeria, and if steps are not taken to correct such, free education for Nigerians would be a distant goal in the minds of Nigerian citizens. Various legal legislations and regulations have been put in place to ensure the protection of the right to education both at the national level, and the international level. Some of these frameworks will be examined below:

Insufficient budget allocation

The funding of the educational sector at the national level is the responsibility of the government. Inadequate funding and misappropriation of funds by the government and those in power has resulted in the educational sector receiving the short end of the stick in terms of funding. Teachers are denied their salaries, students are forced to learn in a non-conducive environment. Thus has led to strike actions and protests all over the nation. As at the time of writing, the Academic Staff University Union (ASUU) embarked on an indefinite nationwide strike due to the refusal of the government to pay the lecturers their salaries [4]. Consequently, tertiary students have been out of school for over 6 months with no plans of going back, and some students have decided to drop out of school. This doesn't bode well for the Nigerian educational sector as financial crisis has affected the nation.

Excessive population increase

In recent years, there has been observed a steady increase in the population of citizens. In 2015, Nigeria's population was estimated to be 182.2 million, which is over triple the population during the

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Independence where it was estimated at 45.2 million. This is itself, doesn't pose a problem. However, with the heavy dependence on crude oil as the source of revenue and the rapid decline in the economy of the country, it has become increasingly difficult to prevent the overburdening of the economy. The educational sector is not left out. With the increasing population, the number of out-of-school children is rapidly increasing [5]. The difficulty in getting into school also poses a hardship for tertiary students. Every year, over 7,000 students apply for admissions in Federal Universities, but the acceptance rate is less than 40%. In 2015, only 415,500 out of 2,428,379 applicants were admitted into the University. Students who get into the University has to contend with frequent strike actions. Individuals who are able to graduate has to strive hard to get a job as a result of the over saturation of the labour market. This is highly discouraging, and it is no wonder that students have chosen to abandon education for other opportunities [6].

Lack of qualified teachers

With the poor infrastructure and poor allowances, qualified teachers have been discouraged from continuing to accept teaching jobs. This affects the results seen in reduction in literacy level of students. Adequate measures are not put in place by the government to ensure that teachers are effectively trained not only in the art of teaching, but also in the facilitation of modern practices that develop the teacher-student relationship [7].

Poor standard of living

Unfortunately, not all Nigerians have access to basic education as most people prefer to learn a trade in place of education [8]. Some of those who have access to education cannot afford it. The problem of poverty is a huge obstacle hindering development. Most Nigerians live in abject squalor, feeding from hand to mouth; for such persons, health and education would be the very last thing in his or her mind [9]. The Government has to do its part in providing free education and as provided for in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Policies should be in place to alleviate such burden on citizens, and to ensure that health and education programs reach the poor in a way that they would easily adopt. Many impoverished parents are unable to send their children to school due to poverty, and the high cost of education. The government has also been unable to make good on their promises to grant free basic education to its citizens [10].

Conclusion

It is no longer a falsity that our educational system is dying a slow death. Nigeria future prosperity depends on our producing children who are capable of being our leaders of tomorrow. The production of such children is dependent on the level of education they receive which circles back to the level of development our educational sector. For a better future, our first move is to show a seed in the form an investment in our children via education so we would reap the benefits the future. All hands should therefore be in deck to ensure the actualization of this.

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Conflict of Interest

None

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