

Restructuring Education for Sustainable Development and Global Relevance

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Abstract

Over the years, various governments in Nigeria at one time or the other have made considerable effort to restructure the education sector with a view to attaining sustainable development. However, the subject of restructuring has been a contentious issue all over the world, particularly in Nigeria. The goal of restructuring should be to preserve and build upon what has been successful in educating our children and to rethink and redesign those aspects of the enterprise that have failed (mission and goals; organization; management; instruction; roles, responsibilities and regulations; external involvement; and finances). The paper discussed the concept of restructuring and sustainable development. It also established a link between education and sustainable national development. Restructuring education for sustainable development and global relevance was extensively discussed. The paper recommended that the government should professionalize education quality assurance practice by training, accrediting and certifying practitioners. They should undertake full general inspection of all basic and post basic schools once in every 3 to 5 years for school status evaluation and ranking. They should strengthen linkages with experts and academics in the Diaspora.

Keywords: restructuring, education, sustainable, development, global, relevance

Introduction

The subject matter of restructuring is a very important term as it applies to all sectors of the economy and the education sector is not an exception. Restructuring Education for sustainable development and global relevance is the thrust of this paper. The paper is structured as follows: Firstly, the definition of key concepts such as re-structuring and sustainable development. Thereafter, the link between education and sustainable national development is articulated, followed by the reasons why education should be restructured. Again, some factors/variables that affect restructuring process of Education is highlighted and restructuring education for sustainable development and global relevance is discussed accordingly, and finally, conclusion.

Restructuring

Educationally, restructuring denotes a comprehensive reworking or rebuilding of the educational system for the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Johnson,

1996). Restructuring simply means changing the system of rules, roles and relationships that govern the way time, people, space, knowledge and technology are used (Brandt, 1993). Restructuring can cause a great deal of disruption, and is often viewed as a waste of time and can become a source of discontent within an organization. This is one reason why some schools and colleges put them off until long after the strategic need to restructure has become evident. Policy announcements, the funding picture, trends, performance data and local factors are all dashboard lights that could point to a need for a change in direction. Babalakin (2019) held that Nigeria must restructure its university and secondary school education system to turn out employable graduates and regain the respect of the world community. Thus, restructuring the educational system is imperative because of the present ranking of Nigeria's best university as 800th in the world. He called on both state and federal government in Nigeria to provide adequate funding to secondary and university education system, declaring that quality products from secondary school system would ensure good and quality university graduates. He decried the present situation in Nigerian secondary schools with over population of students in classes without adequate facilities to ensure quality learning. More so, non-provision of grants in the last five years do not augur well for the education system.

Sustainable Development

The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001), as quoted by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014), defines sustainable development as the development path along which maximization of human well-being for today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. This definition suggests that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and current generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the well-being and welfare of the people (Ahenkan & Oseikojo, 2014). Sustainable development is therefore concerned with the creation and sustenance of the conditions for current and future generations of humans to live well on this planet. Hence, as noted by Sims and Falkenberg (2013), right from the beginning, a multi-prong approach to the idea of sustainable society was taken that went beyond concerns for only the destruction of the national environment to include the concern for meeting the essential needs of all people and those needs are met in a sustainable way in consideration of the needs of future generations. According to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as quoted by Ilechukwu et al. (2014), development is sustainable if "it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development could probably be otherwise called "equitable and balanced" development (Soubotina, 2004). Some objectives which sustainable development is expected to realize as identified by Age (2005:85) are: increased capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, satisfying basic needs, protecting the environment.

Educational Restructuring and Sustainable National Development: The link

Having understood the concept of sustainable development, it is imperative to examine its relationship with education. In all nations, Nigeria inclusive, education remains the instrument for effective national development. Development is championed through education, which is often assumed to have significant influence. Education entails the enlightenment of people in their ways of pursuit in life. Development is associated with a positive change in the condition of either individual groups, communities or even a country as a whole. Education and sustainable national development are interwoven, intertwined and interconnected. While on the one hand, development is geared towards producing or creating something new or more advanced for the society and its members, on the other hand, education is a tool which can enhance the desired sustainable development.

The fact that education and sustainable development shows glaring connectivity probably explained why scholars emphasized the need for education for the purpose of achieving the desired sustainable development. For any country therefore, to attain sustainable national development, there is need for skilled manpower and those skills required are basic ingredients for national development and can only be acquired through education.

In other words, Education provides consciousness, awareness and enlightenment to individuals in order to properly pursue their aspirations and yearnings. It is also mentioned that it is only educated population that can command skills necessary for sustainable economic growth and a better quality of life. Sustainable national development may therefore be seen as the target goal since it is meant for the society and its members; education however remains the instrument for achieving and attaining the target goal.

In the light of the above, education directly determines whether sustainable national development is going to be achieved or not and therefore, the need for a well-structured educational system that will enhance the achievement of the aforementioned development cannot be overemphasized (Boyi, 2013).

Why education should be restructured

The reasons why education should be restructured is stated by Adamolekun (2013) and Boyi (2013) as follows:

A. Low enrolment and low quality teachers: In Nigeria, many children up to the age of going to school are not in school. Introduction of Education for All (EFA) goal of one-year Early Childhood Care and Education (three years in Sweden) is unlikely to happen soon. Nigeria is one of the few countries in the world that launched a boy-child

education campaign in the South-East in June 2012. In 2008, Kwara State tested 19,125 teachers in Primary Four Mathematics, only seven teachers attained the minimum benchmark for the test in Mathematics. Only one of 2,628 teachers with degree passed the test; 10 graduates scored zero. The literacy assessment recorded only 1.2 per cent pass. This indicates very low quality of teachers.

B. Students' poor performance records: The following are the percentages of students who obtained five credits, including English and Mathematics in the May/June West African Examination Council (WAEC) between 2008 and 2012: 23% (2008), 26% (2009), 24% (2010), 31% in 2011 and 39% in 2012. Regarding NECO, failure rate was 98% in 2008, 88% in 2009, 89% in 2010, 92% in 2011, and 68% in 2012. It is said that "the single biggest problem (in Nigerian universities) is the abysmal quality of the intake; additionally the vast majority of the students barely know their grammar" (Adamolekun, 2013). According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011-2012, Nigeria was ranked 120th out of 144 in secondary education enrolment.

C. Some specifics on decline: "The most ridiculous indication of the rot in our universities was the recent reported dismissal of three graduates of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology from the National Youth Service Corps scheme for falling below the standard expected of graduates." (Adamolekun, 2013:8). The university is reported to have declared "an academic emergency".

"...Nigeria's university system is in crisis of manpower. Instead of having no less than 80 per cent of the academics with Ph.Ds, only 43 percent are Ph.D. holders while the remaining 57 per cent are not. And instead of 75 percent of the academics to be between Senior Lecturers and Professors, only about 44 per cent are within the bracket while the remaining 56 per cent are not. The staff mix in some universities is alarming...Kano State University, Wudil (established in 2001) has only one Professor and 25 Ph.Ds" (Adamolekun, 2013:8).

D. Over-centralization: Over-centralization is, without question, a major cause of the crisis in the education sector and its origin is unarguably the intervention of the military in the governance of the country.

E. Minimum standards: The role of the federal government in primary education is limited to prescribing minimum standards as provided in the Constitution's Second Schedule, Exclusive Legislative List, 60(e). Former President Yar'Adua was committed to abandoning this bad practice but he died within a year that he turned his attention to the subject. "I have also directed that all laws be examined that go against

the federal system so that they will be amended to be in conformity with the federal system of government.” President Jonathan appears to be agnostic on the subject. In this area, it would be correct to assert that there has been leadership failure. The military established unitary secondary schools, again contrary to the assignment of this function to sub-national level governments in the 1963 Constitution it suspended: only higher education was on the Concurrent Legislative List. Now, Federal government involvement in post-primary education is provided for in the 1999 Constitution: “the National Assembly to establish institutions for post-primary education” (Second Schedule, Part II, Concurrent Legislative List, (28)).

Factors/variables that affect Restructuring Process of Education

Egwu (2009) pointed out that the factors affecting restructuring process of education are numerous and are categorized into three main sub-heads relating to Primary Education, Post Basic Education and Tertiary level of Education:

1. Primary Education

Basic Education is the education offered to children aged between 3 and 14 years. It comprises 3 years of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE), 3 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. The challenges confronting primary education that calls for effective restructuring include:

- i. In terms of access, there are deep issues of physical access, quality access and economic access.
- ii. Absence of an institutionalized quality assurance system and regulatory body for Quality Control.
- iii. Low learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- iv. Lack of standardized and uniform quality assurance instruments and reporting mechanisms.
- v. Continued production of ‘half-baked’ products who are not sufficiently resourceful and globally competitive.
- vi. Non professionalization of Education Quality Assurance practice.
- vii. Non provision of a comprehensive Quality Standards document.
- viii. Inefficient resource mobilization and utilization.
- ix. Lack of transparency and accountability.
- x. Low political will and low commitment on the part of states in funding basic education.

2. Secondary Education

Post-Basic Education (PBE) is the education received after successful completion of nine years of Basic Education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). PBE includes: 3-year Senior Secondary Education; 3-year Technical Colleges; and Continuing education, provided in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) to those who have successfully completed basic education as well

as those who completed senior secondary education but may not be proceeding to the tertiary level. The challenges of secondary education and the call for restructuring include the barriers to access to Post-Basic Education; these are:

- i. Inadequate infrastructure and facilities.
- ii. Direct and indirect costs that make education unaffordable for the poor.
- iii. Dearth of qualified and competent teachers.
- iv. Low intrinsic value for education by some communities.
- v. Lack of conducive school environment.
- vi. Low esteem and remuneration for teachers and vocational skilled workers.
- vii. Weak regulation and coordination of Senior Secondary Education.
- viii. Low learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- ix. Inadequate equipment and facilities for teaching and learning.
- x. Non-conducive teaching and learning environment due to dilapidated structures

3. Tertiary Education

The challenges of tertiary education that necessitates restructuring include:

- i. Poor quality of prospective entrants. Only 23.7% of candidates passed Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) with credit in Mathematics and English between 2000 and 2004.
- ii. Inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and equipment as well as poor library facilities.
- iii. Inadequate number of universities and polytechnics to accommodate prospective candidates.
- iv. Shortage of qualified candidates to meet the 70:30 policy in favour of technology-based programmes in the polytechnics.
- v. Unattractive conditions of service for teachers.
- vi. Absence of deliberate policy strategies and programme for recruiting qualified secondary school leavers to train as teachers.
- vii. Over-stretching of existing facilities and out-dated legal framework.
- viii. Illegal institutions/satellite campuses/external campuses and curriculum inadequacy.
- ix. Weak support structure for Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).
- x. Brain drain or human capital flight.

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Under this section Egwu (2009), Oghiagbephan (2015) and Okebukola (2019), presented turn around strategies that guarantee sustainable growth, development and global relevance as follows:

- Develop strategies for systematic recruitment of potential teachers for the Colleges of Education from the pool of secondary school leavers.
- Developing incentives to motivate teachers and attract high quality students to take up teaching as part of the institutional reform required for Teacher Development and Motivation.
- Promote state-driven incentives, such as mid-day meals, transportation, etc.
- Professionalize education quality assurance practice by training, accrediting and certifying practitioners.
- Institute practices for schools' self-monitoring and evaluation.
- Establish a standardized assessment system that annually monitors and reports academic achievement in the core subjects.
- Development, adoption and utilization of standardized and uniform quality assurance instruments and reporting format.
- Undertake full general inspection of all basic and post basic schools once in every 3 to 5 years for school status evaluation and ranking. This is one of the measures National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and secondary education seek to achieve.
- Establish a National Quality Assurance, and Management Information System that links with the different states of the federation.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration among the various Quality Assurance agencies and relevant stakeholders from the Public and Private Sectors.
- Ensure stability in the school calendar.
- The government should always equip the laboratories to enhance effective learning.
- Faculties of education and polytechnics should review existing teacher education curricula in line with the approved Senior Secondary Education (SSE) Curriculum.
- State governments should review their conditions of service for teachers to make it at par with what obtains generally.
- Promotion of inclusive education by federal, state and private school providers to ensure integration of special needs and other excluded children.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and facilities for the disadvantaged groups and the hard-to-reach.
- Create child friendly school environment.
- Integrate children with special needs, nomadic groups, migrant fisher-folks and farmers, those in difficult terrain and other excluded children.
- Introduce incentive schemes for promoting excellence in post basic schools.

- Provide science laboratories (physics, chemistry, biology), technology labs, workshops, studios, functional libraries, e-libraries, ICT equipment and software and STM kits.

The University:

- The Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) should control the input of students' choice in UTME. Once a school tells them they need 5,000 students, candidates' entries should not exceed that number. It is believed that they can do that because they regulate the entry of candidates into their centres. Once a centre is full, they should post the candidate to another centre and if the centres in that particular location are full, they should show the list of available centres. When a particular University has gotten the number of students it needs, JAMB should redirect them to another University by showing them the Universities available for entries.
- Implement the award of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in core competent fields by Colleges of Education.
- Increase carrying capacity by 25% in programmes that have consistently earned full accreditation status without compromising standards.
- Promote private sector and state Government participation in the provision of tertiary education.
- Ensure continuous gender-focused education programmes by considering policies such as quota-based admission, fees reduction, scholarships and other incentives based on gender.
- Provide incentives, such as matching grants, to State Governments to establish more tertiary institutions.
- Set admission quota for women and other persons with special needs to at least 45% across board noting the current admission status is between 33-39% in favour of females.
- Strengthen Linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora (LEAD).
- Resuscitate Nigeria Expatriate Supplementation Scheme (NESS).
- Equip adequately the Polytechnics and Universities of Technology.
- Review and strengthen legal framework for Federal Polytechnics.

In order to restructure Nigeria's 21st century system of education to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy, the above strategies as well will go a long way to achieve this.

Conclusion

This paper on restructuring education for sustainable development and global relevance duly examined the definition of key concepts (Restructuring, sustainable development), the relationship between Education and Sustainable National Development, why education should be restructured, factors/variables that affect restructuring process of education and restructuring education for sustainable development and global relevance. It is hoped that the relevant stakeholders will give serious thoughts to the various sections of this paper and use it as a blueprint and pathway to restructure Nigeria education for sustainable development and global relevance.

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