

REFOCUSING LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Education of any nation is a sensitive sector that should be taken care of because of its role in advancement and development of other sectors. Therefore, there is need for refocusing leadership in education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Exploring proper and effective leadership would provide good relevant data and evidence for some policy decisions on our education enterprise which will lead to sustainable national development. It is in line with this that the paper discusses effective leadership in education as the main instrument for national development. The paper recommends among others that education be refocused to guide and motivate people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to participate in a democratic society and live in a sustainable manner. Education must be properly tailored to the needs of the people and properly acquired; there must be responsible, God-fearing, patriotic and experienced leaders at the national, state and local government levels. This is the only way to sustainable national development through leadership.

Key Words: Education, Leadership, Sustainable and National Development.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education all over the world is regarded as an important tool for achieving national objectives. It is a veritable instrument for both human and national development (Akuh, 2016). Education improves the quality of human life and empowers people to solve all kinds of social and environmental problems (Arikwandu & Ifesi, 2003). Education constitutes the very foundation of meaningful socio - economic, political growth and development of many nations. No wonder the federal government of Nigeria adopted education as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development (Ajeyalemi, 2009). It is as a result of the premium placed on education that made the federal government in 1969 to organize the first ever national curriculum conference in education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Ikpeze, 2010). The outcomes and resolutions of that curriculum conference gave rise to the national policy on education which was first published in 1977 and has been revised in 1981, 1996, and 2004 respectively.

Since the implementation of the national policy on education in 1981, there have been a lot of innovations and reforms in the education system. Unfortunately, education in Nigeria despite these reforms and the continuous huge investment by various regimes of government has not sufficiently lifted the nation from the morass of technological, under - development, political instability and social decadence (Nwagu, 2010). It can be argued that most of these reforms and innovations are poorly implemented due to lack of effective leadership. In this light therefore, for effective national development, there is need for effective leadership for sustainable development in Nigeria. Exploring proper and effective leadership would provide good relevant data and evidence for some policy decisions on our educational enterprise which will lead to sustainable national development (Akinyemi & Bassy, 2012; Akuh, 2016).

2. LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION:

Leadership is a long standing and widespread topic of concern and many people see it from different perspectives. Ukeje *et al.*, (1992) defined leadership as a way of stimulating and motivating subordinates to accomplish assigned tasks. The leader moves the individual(s) or group(s) within the constraints of its maximum capabilities to attain certain specified goals. The responses of the individual(s) or group(s) will largely depend upon the capabilities of the leader.

Adesina (1990) sees an effective leader as the person who is not only able to make his subordinates want to do what they have to do, but also recognizes that they must be motivated to ensure that the goals and objectives of the institutions, organization or system are met. According to Ukeje *et al.*, (1992), it is an input into organization and involves interpersonal influences as one initiates structures and acts that result in a consistent pattern of group interaction aimed at productivity and individual fulfillment. Suggestively, leadership is the behaviour of an individual when he is directing and guiding the activities of the group toward a shared goal.

3. QUALITIES OF A LEADER IN AN EDUCATION SYSTEM:

It is generally accepted that the quality of leadership in an organization, be it religious, social, educational or otherwise affects to a large extent the success or failure of that organization. Qualities of leadership according to Adesina (1990) can be summarized under two major headings. These are:

- **Tangible qualities:** They are more obvious and quite easy to evaluate. They have to do with acquired skills like sound educational qualification, experience on the job, etc.
- **Intangible qualities:** These are less obvious and usually take a long time to grasp-for example the leader's imaginative ability, leaders love, consideration for others, progressiveness, motivation techniques, respect for subordinates, good intentions etc.

Again a good leader must be courageous. This is not the physical courage to face external threats but the courage to expect and accept risks and failure. He must believe in his own potentials. In a school system, the leader may include headmasters, principals, provosts, rectors and vice-chancellors. The qualities of a good leader in an education system are:

- Clear knowledge of what the objectives of schools are and of the means for their attainment.
- Reasonably good health and physical stamina.
- Sympathy, confidence, gregariousness and demonstrable capability to work with people.
- Even disposition, sense of humour without intense moodiness and temper fuse-ups.
- More than average intelligence associated with mental quickness and acuity.
- Orderly life.
- Very wide interest.
- Balance between introversion and extroversion.
- A philosophy of life that leads to action with desirable character.
- Intensive professional training with a social general education.

In addition, a good leader should have a religious belief and live a religious life.

4. LEADERSHIP TASKS IN AN EDUCATION SYSTEM:

The specific task areas of leadership would vary from one situation to another. The major task of all leaders is how to influence the behaviour of subordinates so that results of the system are attained.

- a) **Motivation:** - In the school system, the principal motivates his staff by providing immediate attainable goals toward which the staff should work. He is to ensure that means are provided for attaining goals set for staff. Another way is through feedback.
- b) **Understanding the Ability of Staff:** - Since the school system would comprise men and women of different specializations, it is essential for the school principal to know the capabilities and characteristics of each staff.
- c) **Job Classification:** - On entering a system, the new employee would like to know what his specific tasks are. It is the principal's task to match people and position. This should be done based on specialization and interest areas.
- d) **Staff Orientation:-** After staff have been recruited and assigned, the school head introduces them to the system. This minimizes the adjustment problems confronting the staff. The type of environment in which the new staff finds himself and the first impression he has in his early days would go a long way to influence his behaviour and moral within the system.
- e) **Staff Development:-** In the education system four types of staff development as viewed by Adesina (1990) can be conceived.
 - It aims at correcting certain deficiencies which were known at the time of appointment.
 - It equally enables the teaching staff to face the challenges resulting from innovation in the school curriculum.
 - Non professional teachers are encouraged to professionalize and lastly;
 - The professionals themselves acquire higher qualifications for greater responsibilities and status within the school system.
- f) **Staff Supervision and Assessment:-** Supervision helps the new teachers to understand the purposes, responsibilities, and relationships of his position and the directions of his efforts. The principal gives clear guidance as to steps, methods and goals of work and makes personal examination or the work of individual members without straining relationships.

In assessing staff, emphasis must be placed on the requirements of the position and the relevance of the staff's contributions to the institutions activities, aspirations and objectives.

5. SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Sustainable development is the management and conservation of the national resources base and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generation (Akuh, 2016). Sustainable national development is

translated to mean the exploitation and improvements in all aspects of our national existence for the continued betterment of today and tomorrow.

It requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. Sustainability includes intergenerational equity, gender equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation (Bukola, 2011; Levine, 2012). According to Federal Ministry of Education (2010) the major essential tools for achieving sustainable national development in education include the following:

- a) Improve the quality of basic education;
- b) Reorient the existing education programme to address sustainable development;
- c) Develop public awareness and understanding; and
- d) Provide training for all sectors of private and civil society

6. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Education for sustainable development is the focus or projection of education that seeks to equip people towards creating a sustainable future. Stakeholders such as government, businesses, educational institutions, media, and organizations play important roles in achieving sustainable development (Bukola, 2011). Each of these sectors has a different vision of sustainable development. Some are interested in environmental preservation and protection; some have economic development interests while other may be more interested in social development. According to UNESCO (2000), the way each nation, cultural group and individual views sustainable development will depend on its own values. In many European nations, Universities and technical colleges trained students of science, economics and business management in skills that helps to build more sustainable societies.

Education for sustainable development is lifelong process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and co-operative actions (Nwachukwu, 2014). UK Panel for education for Sustainable Development (1998), states that education for sustainable development enables people to develop the knowledge, values, and skills to participate in decisions about the ways we do things, individually and collectively, locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet of the future. Education for sustainable development is a holistic approach for school's management and the curriculum, not a separate subject. It therefore requires reflection on what to teach, and how to teach in order to:

- 1) clarify and extend the ability of students to think for themselves
- 2) encourage students to reflect and debate issues to enable them to form their own opinions
- 3) foster learning that emerges from discovery and is relevant to the learner's life experiences.

7. CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

While many nations around the world have embraced the need for educational management and effective leadership to achieve sustainability, only limited progress has been made on any level. This lack of progress stems from many sources. In some cases, a lack of vision or awareness has impeded progress. In others, it is a lack of policy or funding (United Nations, 2014).

7.1 Poor awareness within the system

The initial step in launching an education program and effective leadership for sustainable development is to develop vision or awareness within the educational community and the public that reorienting education to achieve sustainability is essential in Nigeria. If government officials or school district administrators and leaders are unaware of the critical linkages between educations and sustainable development, reorienting education to address sustainable development will not occur (United Nations, 2014).

7.2 Inadequate funding of education programme

Education is an expensive and a capital intensive project. This implies that adequate funding is one of the basic pre – requisite for its success giving credence to the above position. The challenges of Nigeria education sector in general and its funding in particular could be traced to policy and strategy instability and inconsistency, inefficient leadership, wastages and leakages there by overriding macroeconomic conditions that have determined the fate of the sector and where the economy is not growing at a reasonable high and sustainable rate, it will not have the resources to fund a largely- social service sector such as education in Nigeria with a high population growth rate, lackluster growth rate of the GDP would imply severe resource constraints, which could lead to the poor funding of education (Nwachukwu, 2014).

According to Okenwa (2013) cited in Chidobi & Okenwa (2015), education in Nigeria is in serious financial crisis which threaten its collapse as a result of poor management and leadership. In this situation, quality has been sacrificed in favour of quantity because the demand for education tends to out strap its supply.

8. DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

Sustainable development is a complex and evolving concept. Many scholars, leaders and practitioners have invested years in trying to define sustainable development and envisioning how to achieve it on national and local levels. Because sustainable development is hard to define and implement, it is also difficult to teach. Even more challenging is the task of totally reorienting an entire education system to achieve sustainability.

When we examine successful national education campaigns, we find they often have simple messages. For example, messages that encourage us to vaccinate our children and boil our water, or discourage us from driving drunk and taking drugs, are simple concepts compared to the complex range of environmental, economic, and social issues that sustainable development encompasses. Success in sustainable education will take much longer and be more costly than single-message public-education campaigns (United Nations, 2014).

9. POOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Nigeria government and many developing countries are known for the formulation of laudable policies. But in most cases these noble policies are either not implemented or left half-way. Inconsistencies in policies are one of the biggest problems facing Nigerian education system. The effectiveness of the Nigeria educational systems is already critically debated in light of the changing needs of society. The current widespread acknowledgment of the need for educational reform may help advance education sustainable development. If it can be linked to one or more priorities of educational reform, education could have a good chance for success. However, if promoters try to add another issue to an already over-burdened system, the chances of success are slim (Stan, 2010).

10. INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES:

Physical facilities are very important in teaching and learning processes. No level of education can survive in the absence of physical facilities (Chidobi & Okenwa, 2015). Apart from that, dearth of infrastructure, inadequate classroom, offices, inadequate laboratory for teaching and research, shortage of books and journals are some of the problems that beset the educational sector in the present times. In most public schools, the conduciveness of the environment for teaching can only be imagined. The classes serve as habitats for rats, snakes, bats and other dangerous reptiles. This ugly situation cannot ensure an education that can serve as an instrument for national development.

11. CONCLUSION:

Education of any nation is a sensitive sector that should be taken care of because of its role in advancement and development of other sectors. Therefore, there is need for refocusing leadership in education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Exploring proper and effective leadership would provide good relevant data and evidence for some policy decisions on our educational enterprise which will lead to sustainable national development. The paper concludes that Nigeria education sector and its leadership problem in were attributed to policy and strategy instability and inconsistency, inefficient management, wastages and leakages, and inadequate funding.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Effective leadership in education which is the main instrument for national development can be achieved in Nigeria through the following recommendations:

- There must be responsible, God-fearing, patriotic and experienced leaders at the national, state and local government levels. Functional curriculum that can take adequate care of our development needs. There must be competent, well-qualified and experienced educational leaders and administrators at all levels of our educational sectors.
- Education should be refocused to guide and motivate people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to participate in a democratic society and live in a sustainable manner. Education must be properly tailored to the needs of the people and properly acquired. This is the only way to sustainable national development.
- There should be improved institutional management through strategic planning. This involves adopting total quality leadership principle towards utilization of allocated resources in an efficient manner. This reduces wastages. This option also embraces revision of education curricular to include programs that are more responsive to societal needs.
- The funding scheme of public institutions characterized by heavy reliance on government funding, is highly unsustainable. The situation calls for the involvement of all the key stake holders-government, our academic institutions, parents, funding agencies, etc in cost sharing.

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