

## Contemporary Educational System in Nigeria and Societal Development in The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### Abstract

This paper discussed on contemporary educational system in Nigeria and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A 21<sup>st</sup> century education is one that responds to the economical, technological and societal development that are happening at ever-increasing pace. Contemporary education is about giving students the skills they need to succeed in this new world. One primary purpose of contemporary educational system is to meet the educational needs of its citizens and equip the youths with skills that will make them self-reliant. This paper explores challenges of contemporary educational system and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as politicization of education, unstable curriculum, lack of qualified teachers and poor funding. Hence, this paper suggests that adequate funding, curriculum planning should be futuristic and goal oriented, and qualified trained teachers is a necessity.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Education, Educational System, Societal Development, 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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### INTRODUCTION

Education has been seen as an instrument par excellence and that is why no country can attain excellent development without promoting the educational system. The major objective of education is to enhance and develop the intellectual potentials and characteristics of the individual. According to Agi and Adiele (2011), education all over the world determines the pace of development and growth of any nation. This encompassing function makes it a gigantic

venture, which required large administrative organization. In Nigeria, the educational system has been structured in such a way that government at various levels as well as other agencies are directly involved and perform various functions. Education is one of the functional tools in equipping individuals with certain characteristics held in high esteem by the society. It is seen as a key used to unleash hidden potentials in students, thus making them impact positively in the society (Orupabo, 2020).

Education involves the processes of teaching, learning and training in schools from the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in order to develop knowledge and skills in the individuals of the society. Boy (2015) also noted that education is a systematic mechanism that is characterized with transfer and transformation of culture from one generation to another through formal and informal trainings.

National Policy on Education is the policy document designed to have a functional education in Nigeria. In it the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria are spelt out clearly such as; a free and democratic society; just and egalitarian society; united, strong and self-reliant nation; great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

One would dare to ask, is the Nigerian society really achieving the above mentioned goals of education? According to Wali (2007), for the philosophy to be in harmony with national goals, education has to be geared towards self-realization, cordial human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

However, education in Nigeria is challenged with myriads of issues. These problems challenging the contemporary educational system and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are politicization of education, corruption, unstable curriculum, lack of qualified teachers, lack of infrastructure, poor funding and inadequate classrooms. Moreover, not only that the education system is plagued with social vices like cultism, examination malpractices and hooliganism.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **Contemporary Education**

Contemporary education is most fundamentally a framework for teaching and learning. Based on this framework, contemporary education offers curricula, institutes and a blog to reimagine education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The contemporary education mission is to transform schools into centers of meaningful reflection on how we respond to our human needs practically and theoretically, in the pursuit of healthier lives and more just, peaceful and sustainable societies (Weiler, 2019). That is to say contemporary education simply is connecting school learning to the lives we lead and that means doing school intentionally practical rather than abstract form. The educational system in Nigeria over time became fragmented due to teachers transmitting abstract knowledge and students reproduce it on tests and be obedient. This narrative can become something different because learning is for life.

### **Educational System in Nigeria**

National Policy on Education (NPE) is a policy document designed to have functional education in Nigeria. the policy document articulates the country's plan to use education as instrument for

transforming Nigeria into a self-reliant and technologically developed nation (Wali, 2007). According to Agi and Adiele (2011), the National Policy on Education (2004) is a 61-page document that is divided into thirteen sections with each outlining a particular aspect of education. The different parts of educational system comprise; Early Childhood and Pre-primary Education; Basic Education; Primary Education; Secondary Education; Mass Literacy; Adult and Non-Formal Education; Science, Technical and Vocational Educational Services; Planning, Administration and Supervision of Education and Financing of Education.

For the purpose of this discourse, the researcher will briefly look at three aspects of educational system in Nigeria which are; Primary Education; Secondary Education and Tertiary Education

**Primary Education:** is the education given in institutions for children aged 6-11 plus. The objectives of primary education are to: inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribute to the life of the society; mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child; develop in the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment; provide the child with the tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. To achieve the foregoing objectives, primary education shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory. Government shall provide basic infrastructure and training for the realization of this goal at the primary school level (Wali, 2007). Thus far, the question remains, at this primary level, how much of this goal has been achieved?

**Secondary Education:** This is the education children receive after primary education. It is a six-year duration in two stages that is the junior secondary school and the senior secondary school levels. This is so in order to achieve the main goals of secondary education which are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and to prepare the individual for higher education. The junior secondary school was to enable students acquire not only academic knowledge but as well pre-vocational skills to empower those who may want to live on their skills. The senior secondary was designed to broaden students' outlook.

**Tertiary Education:** After secondary school, the next education is given in the tertiary institutions such as universities and colleges of education. Some of the goals of the tertiary education are to: contribute to national development through high level of significant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments and; acquire physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society (Wali, 2007).

However, the educational system in Nigeria for a developing nation is structured to develop self-learning by reasonable standards. Be that as it may, the problem is quite obvious. Most of these plans and objectives are out rightly ignored and poorly implemented.

## **Societal Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Societal development is about improving the well-being of every person in the society in order for them to reach their full potential. It is said that the success of society is connected to the well-being of its citizen (Scot-Freiberger, 2017). According to Ololube et al (2012), education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, values and skills from one generation to the next through institutions and instruction. That is to say that education is the means to attain national development. Suffice it to say that the policies in the Nigeria Policy on Education have not been matched with sustained actions in terms of resources to improve education in Nigeria. The levels of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century remain low due to neglect and disruptions (incessant strikes) of the educational sector. Thus, the country continues to rank bottom position in most international measures of socio-economic status (UNESCO, 2011). This continues to grow the rate of out of school children in Nigeria and paves way for increase in the social ills plaguing the society and stalling development.

A 21<sup>st</sup> century education is one that responds to the economical, technological and societal shifts that are happening at an ever-increasing pace. It is an education that sets students up to succeed in a world where more than half of the jobs they will have over their careers do not even exist yet (Scot-Freiberger, 2017). In other words, it brings to bare that the 21<sup>st</sup> century education is about giving students skills they need to succeed and survive in this emerging world thereby growing the confidence to practice in them. A primary focus of the contemporary educational system is to meet the educational needs of its citizens and equip the youths with sellable skills that will make them to be self-reliant.

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in Contemporary Education**

A 21<sup>st</sup> century education is one that provides students with the skills and competencies they need to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The term 21<sup>st</sup> century skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits, that are believed by educators, school reformers, college professor, employers, and other stakeholders in the world of technology, to be critically important to success in today's world. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas and in all educational career throughout a student's life. While the specific skills deemed to be "21<sup>st</sup> century skills" may be defined, categorized and determined differently from person to person, place to place, or school to school, the term does reflect a general consensus. The following gives a brief description of the knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits commonly associated with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: Critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, and synthesizing information; Research skills and practices, interrogative questioning; Creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression; Perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability initiative; Oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening; Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, facility in using virtual workspaces; Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, media and internet literacy, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming; Civic, ethical, and social-justice literacy; Economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism; Global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism; Scientific literacy

and reasoning, the scientific method; and Health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, and public health and safety (edglossary.org, 2022).

While 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are relevant to all areas of education and academic study, and the skills may be taught in a wide variety of in-school and outside-of-school settings, there are a few basic ways in which 21<sup>st</sup> century skills intersect with efforts to improve the educational system;

- Teachers should be more intentional about teaching cross-disciplinary skills in subject-area courses. For example, in a science, students may be required to learn research method that can also be applied in other disciplines, articulate technical scientific concepts, in verbal, written, and graphic forms, present lab result to a panel of working scientist, or use sophisticated, software programs, and multimedia applications as an extension of an assigned project.
- States accrediting schools may require 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to be taught and assessed in programs. For example, state can adopt learning standard that explicitly describe cross-disciplinary skills, and assessment may be designed or modified to evaluate whether students have acquired and mastered certain skills (edglossary.org, 2022).
- Schools should allow students to pursue alternative learning pathways in which students earn academic credit and satisfy graduation requirement by completing an internship, apprenticeship or volunteer experience, for example student may acquire a variety of practical, job related skills and work habits while also completing academic coursework and meeting the same learning standards required of students in more traditional academic courses.

It is therefore important that we take a look at some issues challenging the contemporary educational system and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

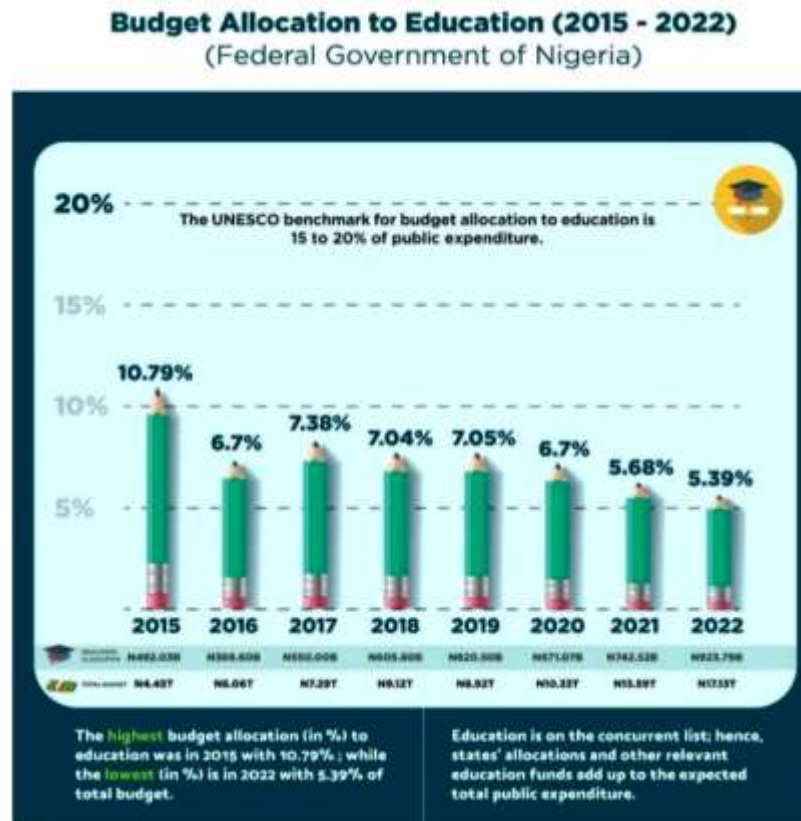
### **Issues facing Contemporary Educational System in Nigeria and Societal Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Some of the issues facing contemporary educational system in Nigeria are:

- **Politicization of Education:** Politicization of education has posed great hindrance in Nigeria's educational system. A case where tribal sentiments and political affiliations alter the admission and employment process spells retardation of its societal development. This is because it deprives those qualified for employment and study opportunities the chances of getting employed (Nwagwu, 2020).
- **Corruption:** Corruption is an evil that has eaten deep into fabrics of educational system in Nigeria. It can be seen when funds meant for the development of education are diverted by school administrators and education managers at all levels. This is observed negatively as it accounts for lack of facilities (e.g. computers, equipped laboratories and workshops) in teaching and learning activities (Omoraka, et al, 2014).

- **Unstable Curriculum:** Unstable curriculum does not support the progress of educational system in Nigeria, as no nation can develop beyond the level of its education. To this end the educational curriculum of a developing nation Nigeria, has to be reviewed from time to time so as to meet the challenges of the new realities (Oyebami & Omordu, 2011). A curriculum that relates learning to the students' experience, makes learning meaningful.
- **Lack of qualified teachers:** The quality of teachers in the educational system is a determining factor of students' academic performance in education because the educational success or failure of any nation to a large extent depends on teachers' quality. Ensuring that students in all levels of educational system have access to highly qualified teachers is very key, if the sustainable economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to be achieved. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teachers are expected to groom students for higher order thinking and performance skills. For progressive improvement, professional development, feedback and support for teachers along with well-researched mentoring and valuation is needed to attract good teachers (Okere et al, 2021). However, poor working condition, poor remuneration and allowances teachers are subjected to get discourages qualified teachers from taking up teaching jobs. As a matter of fact, it is mostly students denied their dream courses who go for education courses as a forced choice. This as a result of the low profile of teachers among other professionals in the country. They go for other better paying jobs than teaching and the few teaching do so with low level of dedication as they look out for greener pasture (Nwagwu, 2020). In addition, political interference of godfathers during employment causes round pegs to be forced into square holes.
- **Poor Infrastructures:** The problem of lack/poor infrastructures affects teaching and learning process. A large number of facilities are dilapidated and unfriendly to students. Sometimes when the facilities are there, they lack proper maintenance and end up not serving the purpose for which they are provided. To provide real opportunity to learn, sufficient instructional materials will have to be available to every student. Teachers should be prepared to use these materials, have expert knowledge of effective instructional practice, and be ready to adopt and adapt such practices. In Nigeria, this is not the case. This situation calls for urgent attention and reviewing of policies governing production and distribution of textbooks and the training of teachers on how to use learning materials efficiently (Ajeyalemi & Ogunleye, 2009).
- **Bad Governance/Budget Allocation:** According to Agi and Adiele (2011), leadership is a vital factor in the realization of the goals of any organization. The educational sector in Nigeria requires effective leadership to be able to perform its responsibilities to the society. For some time now, the Nigerian government has become insensitive to the plight of its educational sector. The UNESCO benchmark for budget allocation to education is 15-20% of public expenditures. Against the backdrop of the prevailing

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike, a report released by an advocacy group, invictus Africa, disclosed that the educational sector received its lowest budgetary allocation in 2022 (Eromosele, 2022). Moreover, the incessant strike has a way it contributes to the debilitating nature of the Nigerian education system. In a space of two years the universities have suffered deterioration as a result of industrial actions by ASUU. This is what happens when a leader cares less about the education sector. The prolonged strike since February 14, 2022 shows a lack of readiness by the federal government to yield to the demands of the striking lectures. One begins to wonder if the present administration places a premium on the future of Nigerian students whose activities, knowledge, attitude, technical and professional skill ought to be fully developed to enable them meet the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century societal development (Babatunde, 2022).



**Budget allocation to education (Eromosele, 2022)**

- **Insufficient Government Funding:** This is one of the major problems of contemporary education in Nigeria as no institution can function without adequate funding and proper

- appropriation of available funds. In Nigeria, education is relegated to the background of fiscal allocation. This is a reactive and not a proactive measure to solving a problem. The
- insecurity in the nation today has its roots in illiteracy and poverty. This can be reduced when the root cause is addressed. If the youths are educated and empowered with skills, they will not be available as tools to perpetrate harm and terrorize their fellows. If the education sector receives the much needed funding, the well paid teacher in an equipped class will be motivated to impact the educational environment. Without the right tools to work with, the most inspired teacher will find it difficult to be impactful in the class (classhall.com).

## **CONCLUSION**

The educational system in Nigeria is regrettably poor as it is surrounded with a lot of challenges as one of the major steps to reviving the educational system lies in the hands of the leaders. Important measures need to be carried out in order to close up the gap in contemporary educational system in Nigeria and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The course of events in Nigeria's educational system needs to change and education given its right perspective. The realization of the issues facing contemporary educational system in Nigeria and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the paper discusses will create room for development if intentional and proactive measures are carried out. This is as seen in the suggestions made in the course of this paper as no nation can develop beyond the level of its education.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The paper suggests the following as measures to improve contemporary educational system in Nigeria and societal development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;

- i. Teacher quality through employment of professional and qualified teachers, in-service training and retraining should be improved; and implementation of teacher salary structure and other allowances.
- ii. The educational curriculum should be reviewed and improved upon. It needs to be more practical and researched based so as to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- iii. The federal government should as a matter of urgency adequately fund the education sector by increasing the budget allocation to education sector to meet with international standard.
- iv. Adequate monitoring of resources to ensure proper, accountable utilization of resources budgeted for education. The funds should be maintained and properly monitored to avoid mismanagement and embezzlement.
- v. Proper governance of schools and intentional implementation of policies.
- vi. There should be provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities and instructional materials for effective teaching and learning process.
- vii. Government and politicians should not politicize education in Nigeria.

- viii. Teachers should be provided with quality and up to date materials for quality teaching aids will help to improve the teaching sector.

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