

Educational Policy in Nigeria from the Colonial Era to the Post-Independence Period

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Abstract: There is a widened western educational gap between the north and south of Nigeria with the predominantly Muslim areas of the north lagging behind due to some historical antecedents. In the colonial era the British educational policy did not address the aspirations of the people leading to a clamour for change in the post-independence era resulting in the first indigenous National Policy on Education in 1977. Changes have resulted in three revised editions of the national educational policy. This paper reviews the educational policy in the Federal Republic of Nigeria since 1944, highlighting specific issues on the disparity between educational policy and the implementation in context of the wider socio-economic and political development process. This is a case study of the peculiarity of educational policy development in a pluralistic society and developing country, with unity and developmental concerns.

Keywords: Educational policy; colonial era; post independence period; Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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Introduction

Educational policy in Nigeria has passed through two significant stages, the colonial and post independence eras. Prior to the British conquest of the area and the subsequent establishment of Colonial Government, most of the area to the northern and western parts comprised empires, kingdoms and some chiefdoms, while in the central parts and south eastern parts there were small chiefdoms with some semi autonomous communities. In the northern parts, Islam was deeply entrenched both in the religious belief and educational orientation of the people who had a uniform Qur'anic education policy (Ozigi and Ocho, 1981). In the southern parts, each ethnic group had its own traditional form of education based on its own culture and tradition, whose aims and objectives were similar (Taiwo, 1980). The curricula which is informal comprises developing the child's physical skill, character, intellectual skills and sense of belonging to the community as well as inculcating respect for elders, and giving specific vocational training and the understanding and appreciation of the community's cultural heritage (Fafunwa, 2004). This was the scenario in 1842, when the Christian missionaries arrived on the coastal area of the southern part of Nigeria and introduced western education. The aims of education as given by the missionaries were to enable recipients to learn to read the bible in English and the local language, gardening and agriculture as well as train local school masters, catechists and clergymen. Ozigi and Ocho (1981) noted that even though the Christian missionaries' major objectives of establishing schools were the propagation of Christianity, their greatest legacy was their educational work and development of indigenous languages into writing.

However, it is the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, that brought people of different ethnic groups and faith together, as one country thereby creating a pluralistic society that necessitated the adoption of a federal structure for Nigeria. Also, British policy of indirect rule restricted the activities of the missionaries in the predominately Muslim Northern protectorate thereby, curtailing the spread of Christianity and western education (Fagbumi, 2005), leading to a considerable educational gap between

the northern and the southern parts of Nigeria (Ogunsola, 1982). Also when grants in aid were given to missions and voluntary agencies' schools, the Qur'anic schools were excluded because of their peculiar curriculum (Imam, 2003). The colonial government needed vital personnel from amongst the natives and thus, the responsibility for the provision of western education in the northern parts of Nigeria, shifted to the colonial government (Ogunsola, 1982). In this set up, three forms of education: Qur'anic, traditional and western education co-existed side by side with the north and south each having a different pace of development in terms of western educational attainment. This was the scenario by 1944 which heralded the advent of globalisation in the post Second World War period that coincided with the processes of democratic transformation and national liberation from colonialism. Since then educational policy in Nigeria has been shaped by the quest for national development based on political, and socio-economic considerations.

Conceptual Framework

Education policy issues continue to be a question of critical concern in developing countries in Africa (Tikly, 2001) as a tool for development. The relationship between education and development has been established, such that education is now internationally accepted as a key development index and it is in recognition of this importance that governments all over the world have made commitments in their countries' educational policies for their citizens to have access to education (Odukoya, 2009). However, it is essential that account is taken of political, economic and socio-cultural factors in examining nations' educational policies (Green, 1997). For instance, considerations of consolidating the nation state have pride of place among the origins and foundations of contemporary educational policies (Hyland, 2000; and Green, 2000). Colonialism and Post-colonialism is the conceptual framework which makes visible the legacy of British colonial educational policy, the close alignment of Nigeria's educational policy's philosophy of 'the right of all

people to education, material and cultural well-being by seeking to change the way people think, and the way they behave', to reflect the dynamic process of nation building that is continually being modified by new policy demands.

Educational Policy from 1944 to Independence in 1960

The phase of world-wide depression, which began during the second world war from the political perspective ignited the clamour by Nigerian nationalists' movement for self government and educational relevance which gained momentum in 1944. Thus from 1944 to independence in 1960 was a period of self-determination and educational expansion in Nigeria. This development formed the basis for the promulgation of the 1948 Education Ordinance, which decentralized educational administration in the country. The Colonial government additionally reviewed its ten years educational plan for Nigeria, and appointed a Director of Education as well as mapped out a clear cut procedure for assessing grants-in-aid by mission schools (Fagbunmi, 2005). At the time the educational system in the southern part of Nigeria comprised a four year junior primary education, which was followed by a four year senior primary education and a six year secondary education, while in the more established secondary schools, the School Certificate examination was taken in Class 5 (Taiwo, 1980).

In the northern part of Nigeria, on the other hand, the school system comprised of four years of junior primary schooling, three-year middle school and secondary classes 1 to 6 and in some places, middle school classes 1 to 6. The educational system was not uniform throughout the country. These differences notwithstanding, the 1948 Educational Ordinance was a mile stone in British colonial educational policy in Nigeria, because it was the first educational legislation that covered the whole country (Fafunwa, 2004).

The creation of three regions (Eastern, Western and Northern) in the country, led to the promulgation of the 1952 Education Ordinance which empowered each of the regions to develop its educational policies and systems (Taiwo, 1980; Fafunwa, 2004) and the Colonial Education Board was

abolished. On the socio-cultural level, the clamour by Nigerians for self government resulted in two constitutional conferences which brought together Nigerian political leaders and the British colonial government between 1951 and 1954. The deliberations of the conferences resulted in the drafting of a new Federal Constitution in 1954 (Dike, 1980). By this constitution, Nigeria became a Federation of three regions (i.e. the Eastern, Western and Northern regions) and the Federal Capital of Lagos. The constitution gave each region the power of making laws for its territory and citizens as well as its own educational policies.

The outcome was the promulgation of the Education Law of 1955 in the Western Region, the Education Laws of 1956 in the Eastern and Northern Regions and the Lagos Education Ordinance in 1957 (Taiwo, 1980, Fabunmi, 2005). However, the Regional Education Laws and Acts derived from a common source, 'the Education of Act 1944, of Wales and England' (Taiwo, 1980, p.121). There were some variations in the definition of components of the educational systems in the regions. Nevertheless, they had common administrative features and statutory system of education which comprised three stages: primary, post primary and further education. The duration of primary education varied from region to region; however, the secondary components were similar (Sasnett & Sepmeyer, 1967, p. 463). The variants of secondary schools included the middle school/secondary modern school, the grammar school, the technical college and the sixth form of the secondary school. Technical education was offered throughout the regions through the Departments of the Federal government and regional Ministries of Education (Odukoya, 2009). It must be noted that the Regional Laws and the Federal Education Act were an advance of the Nigerian Educational Act 1952, adopted to suit the prevailing local regional conditions (Taiwo, 1980).

The 1954 Constitution of colonial Nigeria, emphasized the policy of decentralization. Thus, an initial experiment to give Universal Primary Education was started in the Western region in 1955 and the Eastern region of Nigeria followed suit in 1957 respectively (Fafunwa, 2004). Considerable efforts were made to develop and expand educational facilities in the North (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981). On the other hand in the northern parts even though

pupils did not pay fees in the government schools, the colonial government had to encourage people to send their children to the schools. There was general apathy towards western education by the people who mostly preferred to send their children to the Qur'anic school and viewed western education with suspicion. This problem was a fall out of the colonial governments policy restricting the activities of the missionaries in the area thereby, curtailing the spread of Christianity and western education in the predominately Muslim Northern protectorate (Fagbumi, 2005). The free enterprise which characterised missionary work in the Southern protectorate was not permitted in the North leading to a widened educational gap between the northern and the southern parts of Nigeria. (Ogunsola,1982). Also when grants in aid were given to missions and voluntary agencies' schools, the Qur'anic schools were excluded because of their peculiar curriculum (Imam, 2003).

In 1959, the Federal Government set up the Sir Eric Ashby Commission to identify the future high-level manpower needs of the country for the next twenty years. The setting up of this Commission was a landmark in the history of Nigerian educational system as it examined higher educational structure in terms of the needs of the country and was the first official comprehensive review of higher education in the country. The Ashby Report also prescribed that education was indeed the tool for achieving national economic expansion and the social emancipation of the individual (Aliu, 1997). It also, gave Nigerians opportunity for participation in the deliberations that culminated in the report. However, the policy of decentralization remained in force until Independence in 1960, with an unbalanced Federation made up of a Northern region which was bigger than the Western and Eastern regions. The Federation provided the institutional basis for political development. Invariably, the regional governments degenerated into political constituencies, with mutual distrust and suspicion that plagued the first republic at independence. Ethnicity and religious differences gained a stronger foothold than that of national identity. This is despite the fact that national stability and strength depend on effective integration of plural traditions (Tikly, 2001, p. 151). Reviewing the educational policy under colonialism, the period 1944 to independence in 1960 it was a time when

1. the role of state and that of Missionaries in the governance of education was defined;
2. the school system was geared towards producing the desired manpower for the civil service, thus the recipients of western education ultimately became misfits in their own local rural setup and were suited for blue collar or white collar jobs in the cities;
3. integration of the plural traditions were not addressed by the policy and sowed the seeds of mistrust, hatred and suspicion amongst the various peoples from the different parts of the country and religious intolerance was born;
4. introduction of universal primary education in the 1950s in western and eastern regions of the country further widened the existing education gap between the north and southern parts of the country; and
5. the western, Qur'anic and traditional education thrived as parallel modes with Qur'anic education being the preferred mode in the largely Muslim north amongst the rural communities.

The National Educational Policy from 1960 to 1977

In Nigeria, educational policy at independence was most concerned with using schools to develop manpower for economic development and Africanisation of the civil service (Woolman, 2001). The legacies of colonialism underline the many problems of nation building facing the Federal Republic of Nigeria since independence in 1960. This has led to a shaky democratic foundation which resulted in the first military coup in 1966 and three counter coups during the period in focus. Further, the educational policy was narrow in scope and did not meet the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians. Criticisms of the educational policy include irrelevant curricula, obsolete methods, high drop-out and repetition rates, and the fact that many graduates were dependent, and low on initiative (Rwomire, 1998). Similarly, Uchendu

(1979) identified problems that included inequality of access, rural-urban disparities, the educational gap between ethnic groups and differences in the curriculum of mission and non-mission based education.

In 1969 the National Curriculum Conference was convened which reviewed the educational system and its goals, and identified new national goals for Nigeria which would determine the future and direction of education in the country (Nigerian Educational Research Council, 1972). The conference was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the Nigerian educational system and promote national consciousness and self-reliance through the education process. Education as a social service and investment in manpower was given top priority by the government (Taiwo, 1980). In order to consolidate on the gains of the curriculum conference, in 1973, the Federal Government of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1973) instituted a Seminar of distinguished experts to deliberate on a truly Nigerian national educational policy. This body also included a wide range of interests including the representatives of Muslim and Christian organizations in Nigeria. The report of the outcomes of the Seminar, which after due consideration by the States of the Federation and other interest groups was presented as the draft National Policy on Education.

Furthermore, the period was marked by Federal Government takeover of mission schools as education was regarded as a huge government venture and no longer a private enterprise. By 1976, when the states of the Federation were increased to nineteen, each state promulgated an edict for the regulation of education, and its provision and management. Each state also amended the Federal education law when necessary, which resulted in all the states' edicts having common features, such as state take-over of schools from individuals and voluntary agencies, using similar curriculum and the establishment of school management boards as well as a unified teaching service (Fagbunmi, 2005).

In 1976, due to a substantially improved revenue position brought about by the oil boom, the Federal Government of Nigeria, embarked on the very ambitious Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) programme and expanded access into tertiary education and increased the number of unity schools in the

country. The UPE was geared towards giving all children between age six to twelve years of age, free primary education, which was to bridge the educational gap and reduce the rising levels of illiteracy in the country. The programme which took off with much promise, failed to achieve its goals of eradicating illiteracy largely due to inadequate planning, which is a consequence of lack of adequate data. When the schools were opened to register the pupils, instead of the 2.3 million children expected, 3 million children arrived to be registered (Fafunwa, 2004). This resulted in an under-estimation in the provision of classrooms. In addition, there was dearth of qualified teachers with the majority of the teachers recruited being trainees who underwent a one year crash programme in the pivotal teachers' colleges set up by the government of the time.

The most significant changes of the period was the takeover of schools from the missionaries by the government resulting in a unified educational system based on the 7-5-2-3 educational policy: 7 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary school, 2 years Higher School Certificate Levels, and 3 years of university education. This was in the stead of the 8-5-2-3 educational policy: 8 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary school, 2 years Higher School Certificate Levels, and 3 years of university education. At terminal stages, candidates sat for external examinations and were certificated based on their performances. In addition, the large-scale government financing of education included tuition free university education and the setting of the stage for a national policy on education that was relevant and suited to the needs of the people.

Viewing the educational policy in Nigeria during the first 13 years of independence, the following are pertinent:

- a) the influence of political change on the educational policy;
- b) the roles of the Federal and states government in the regulation and control of education;
- c) the promotion of education to the level of a huge government enterprise by expanding education access to raise enrolments and presumably bridge the educational gap;

- d) the absence of consultation with local communities on children's education that was more suited to their peculiar circumstances resulting in the continued coexistence of two parallel education modes in the predominantly Muslim north; and
- e) the overall policy approach of government which was geared towards the development of an educational policy blueprint that took into cognisance the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians.

This last factor culminated in the 1977 National Policy on Education which was Nigeria's first indigenous educational policy.

The National Policy on Education since 1977

The 1977 National Policy on Education was geared towards addressing the problems of educational relevance to the needs and aspirations of Nigerians as well as promoting Nigeria's unity and laying the foundation for national integration. Also, due to the high level of underdevelopment, the policy aimed at realising a self-reliant and self-sufficient nation to meet the country's developmental needs. In order to achieve the objectives, the policy made education in Nigeria the Federal Government's responsibility in terms of centralized control and funding of education. Such centralization was a departure from the colonial education policy of financing of education based on cost sharing between the proprietary bodies, local community, parents/guardians and the government (Ibadin, 2004). Taiwo (1980, p. 194) has made reference to the ambitious nature of the National Policy on Education which was conceived during a period when Nigeria's national economy was at its zenith, but born in a period of economic decline. The policy introduced the 6-3-3-4 educational system modelled after the American system of 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary school, and 4 years of university education (Nwagwu, 2007). Although primary education was free, it was not compulsory and the policy sought to make universal free primary education (UPE) compulsory for all children as soon as it is practicable.

In 1979, a new Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979) ushered in Nigeria's second attempt at democratic governance, the legal basis of education was provided and education was placed on the concurrent legislative list. The Constitution shared the responsibility for education amongst the three tiers of government: Federal, State and Local Governments; while it gave the Federal Government more powers than the states in the areas of post primary, professional, technological and placed university education under its control. In addition, it vested the Federal Government with the control of primary and post primary, and non-formal education within the States. Primary education was to be a joint venture between the states and local governments, with the local governments responsible for teachers' salaries. This provision for education in the 1979 Constitution, culminated in the first revised National Policy on Education and the 2nd edition (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1981). In the revised educational policy of 1981, it was yet again proposed that the government would make the UPE compulsory as soon as possible.

The UPE policy which eliminated school fees in 1976 aimed to have a comparatively limited impact on primary school enrolments in the educationally developed states, while having large effects in the educationally less developed states. However, while primary school enrolment levels increased in both groups of states, schooling increased faster in the less developed states but this trend was not commensurate with the population figures. In the north of the country, the Qur'anic school system with its attendant problems of itinerant pupils continued to thrive and run parallel with the national educational system because even though the UPE made primary education free and universal, no attempt was made to make it compulsory for all children (Imam, 2003). On the other hand, in the states of the south, where there was already in place a policy of universal primary education since the 1950s, pupils' enrolment in school was the norm and so classroom construction at the primary-school and teacher-training levels was less prevalent in these states (Osili, 2005).

However, the UPE ended in September 1981. The reason was that the federal government in the revised policy shed the responsibility it undertook in the 1977 policy to finance primary education by transferring it to the states and

local governments. Nwagwu (2011) reported a crisis of educational funding brought about by the oil glut in the world market in the early 1980s which led to a sudden decline in Nigeria's revenue from petroleum products that had accounted for approximately 80% of its income from exports. The result was unpaid teacher salaries, degradation of education facilities at all levels and strikes in universities and schools resulting in declining literacy rates in the country (Odukoya, 2009). Thus with reduced funding for primary education, and school fees reintroduction in the 1980s, primary enrolments fell or stagnated in some states (Osili, 2005). Also, instead of the automatic promotion policy of the UPE, a combined method of evaluation of pupils/students' performance and certification through continuous assessments and examinations was introduced. However, this did not stop the emphasis on certification instead of skills acquisition. There was also, recognition of the importance of language as a means of preserving the culture of the people and for forging national unity. Consequently, the 1981 revised policy prescribed that each child be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages in the country; Hausa Ibo and Yoruba, other than the mother tongue (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981).

The National Policy on Education was again revised in 1998 and 2004 to make it relevant to the development needs of the country. Woolman (2001) opined that there is observable relationship between education and national development in Africa, as education continues to be a question of critical concern in many of the countries just like it is in Nigeria. Since education is an agent of cultural transmission as well as change; the constant revision of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria readily finds support in Woolman (2001's) prescription that education should also reflect the dynamic process of nation building that is continually being modified by new conditions.

The revised National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998)) prescribed a Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which is compulsory for all children in the country, given in the form of nine years continued education in the form of six years primary education and three years junior secondary schooling. Consequently in 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria, flagged the UBE programme as a means of achieving equal

educational opportunities and eradicating illiteracy. However, even though policy prescribed a compulsory UBE, it was not enforced. The Federal Government had adopted the National Policy on Education as ‘an instrument par excellence for affecting national development’(Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). Thus, in the 3rd edition of the policy, the minimum standard for entry into the teaching profession was raised from Teacher Grade II Certificate to the National Certificate of Education (NCE). This qualification is obtained after three years of senior secondary schooling and a Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. The sources of Government’s financing of education were diversified to include sources such as the Education Tax Fund amongst others. The Government hoped to use education as a tool for promoting national unity and for the total development of the individual as well as equipping the individual with knowledge and skills for adaptation into the larger society (Fafunwa, 2004). It was also the intention that the far-reaching provisions of the policy would transform all aspects of national life over time. Thus, various programmes like the Nomadic education for the education of the migrant ethnic groups such as the nomadic cattle rearing Fulani and Ijaw fishermen were introduced (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998; Umar and Tahir, 2000). Furthermore, the policy reiterated the government’s stance in provision of secular education but with opportunities for religious instruction according to the faith of pupils’ parents. However, the issue of giving basic education to children who are itinerant pupils attending local Qur’anic schools was not directly addressed by the government. This form of education continued to thrive in the north because of its sensitivity to local customs and religion (Imam, 2001).

The National Policy on Education has been revised to accommodate changes in the direction of education brought about by technological development (Nwagwu, 2007). To this end, the policy proposed that admissions into universities be based on 60 per cent science based programmes and 40 per cent humanities. Nwagwu (2007) is emphatic that it was in the bid to launch Nigeria into a technological and industrialized nation that universities and institutes of technology were established by the government. He supported his argument with the expressed belief in the National Policy on Education

(2004, p. 8) that 'education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by educational revolution'.

However, the policy failed to achieve its goals for higher education as the universities were unable to meet the prescribed science-humanities ratio in admissions in favour of the humanities which continues to attract more candidates due to social demands. Also, according to Nwagwu (2007) the Nigerian economy, science and technology are grossly underdeveloped because the educational system at all levels is not equipping beneficiaries with the needed skills necessary for national development. Harbison (1973) is emphatic that human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations because they are the active agents in the political, economic and social development of the nation. Therefore, graduates with little or no skills in self-reliance, have continued to the ranks of the unemployed (Odukoya, 2009). Further Buchmann and Hannum (2001) have asserted that developing countries (such as Nigeria), may be able to signal mass educational opportunity by expounding the benefits of education, but may be too weak to create stable and effective educational institutions. Thus Buchmann and Hannum (2001) have made reference to several studies that have examined the deleterious effects of state weakness in the education sector, including excessive demand for higher education, extreme regional disparities in school supply, and poor school quality (Buchmann 1999, Parrado 1998, Fuller 1991, Post 1990).

The unsatisfactory state of education in Nigeria is the resultant consequence of a lack of proper implementation of the national education policy and the funding crises. The findings of the educational sector analysis (Federal Ministry of Education, 2006) confirmed the poor state of education in Nigeria. Amongst the findings of the education sector analysis reported by Igbuzor (2006) are a national literacy rate of 57 per cent, 49 per cent unqualified teachers in the schools, and acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities at all levels. Furthermore, access to basic education is inhibited by gender issues and socio-cultural beliefs and practices, among other factors. There are wide disparities in educational standards and learning achievements at all levels of

education, because the system emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expense of skills acquisition.

In 1983, the National Policy on Education was again revised. However, this revision was aborted when the second democratic government was toppled by the Military. The Federal Military Government thereafter promulgated several decrees to guide and regulate the conduct of education. Notably amongst which was Decree No. 16 of 1985, which set the bench mark for National Minimum Standards and the establishment of schools. Decree No. 26 of 1988, which proscribed and prohibited the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) from participating in trade union activities and Decree No. 36 of 1990, which revoked the proscription of ASUU, and other decrees. This era witnessed a down turn in the economy which led to massive trade unions unrest in the country and crises in the educational sector due to grossly inadequate funding of the sector.

There was yet another revision of the policy in 1998, which culminated in the 2nd revised edition of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998) the 1983 revised edition having been jettisoned. This edition of the policy prescribed the First School leaving Certificate and the universal basic education (UBE) programme the 9-3-4 system of education, comprising of nine years of universal compulsory schooling to be given as six years of primary education, and three years of junior secondary education. At the end of the nine year UBE programme, all candidates are required to sit for an external examination and graduate with the Junior Secondary School Certificate. The educational system was designed to allow recipients to continue careers through apprenticeships and other vocational training programmes after the nine years of schooling (Olaniyan and Obadara, 2008). The 2nd edition of the policy also proposed the provision of UBE in a variety of forms, depending on the needs and possibilities for all citizens.

The 1998 revised National Policy on Education, came on the heels of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria, which ushered in the country's third attempt at democracy. Chapter 11, Section 18 of the Constitution re-affirms the objectives of education in Nigeria as contained in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education. The

Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, p. 29) gave impetus to ensuring the following:

1. equal and adequate educational opportunities for all at all levels of the educational system;
2. promotion of science and technology;
3. eradication of illiteracy through the provision of
 - a) free compulsory universal primary education, and
 - b) free university education, and
 - c) free adult literacy programme.

In 2004, the National Policy on Education was once more revised. This is the latest revised educational policy and 4th edition. Generally, the National Policy of Education in Nigeria is based on the dynamic model of formulating educational policies, which is adaptive to changes and most appropriate for a developing country and multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria. The policy has the following peculiarities:

- 1) It set specific objectives for the nation and its education;
- 2) it addressed the problem of unity and laid foundation for national integration;
- 3) It aimed at realising a self-reliant and self-sufficient nation to meet the country's developmental needs.
- 4) It gave a comprehensive structure of educational system and laid the foundation for the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria (i.e. six years primary schooling, three years junior secondary education, three years senior secondary school and four years university education);
- 5) It made education in Nigeria the government's responsibility in terms of centralized control and funding of education;
- 6) It had a broad curriculum which aimed at creating learning opportunity for all children, irrespective of their sex, peculiar background or ability; and
- 7) It also specified the functions of adult education, non-formal education, special education and open and distance learning. (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1977 Revised 1981, 1998 and 2004)

This 4th edition of the policy which is presently in operation prescribes an inclusive education to take care of children recognized as having special needs. It in addition it addresses the needs of itinerant pupils through the prescription of the integrated Qur'anic school programme as well as programmes for out of school children. The policy reiterates the Government's commitment to the implementation of the UBE programme and the 9-3-4 system of education. Basic education is given in the form of six years primary education after which pupils proceed to the Junior secondary school where they spend three years. The policy saw the disarticulation of junior secondary school from the senior secondary to form basic education schools.

The goals for primary education are the provision of functional literacy and numeracy, cultivation of positive attitudes, leading to cooperation, community and continuous learning that support national development (Woolman, 2001, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The primary education is for children aged 6 to 11 years plus, while the junior secondary school is for those aged 12 years to 14 plus. Basic education is managed by the states and local government with some financial input from the Federal Government which gives the direction for policy implementation. Both the primary and junior secondary schools are under the management of the States' Universal Basic Education Boards. However, staff of the primary school are recruited by the local government authorities. Also, each school has its own respective administrative system under the leadership of a head teacher or school principal as may be applicable at the schools' levels. These persons are usually appointed from amongst experienced teachers in the school.

The senior secondary school is of three years duration, and is for adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years old. It is wholly financed and managed by the States' government through the Secondary education Management Board of the Ministries of Education. However, there are a few unity secondary schools financed and managed by the federal Ministry of Education. The school is headed by a principal who is charged with policy implementation at that level. People are appointed to a school leadership position based on experience and a quota policy which supports fair representation based on ethnic grouping.

In terms of the school curricula design, the responsibility for basic education and senior secondary school curricula, rests with the Federal Government through its organ the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). However, each locality is expected to adapt the implementation of the national policy to suit their local conditions based on the national curricula. At the basic education level, the curricula comprises of English language, Mathematics, religious studies (depending on the faith of pupils' parents), academic subjects like Basic Science and Technology, and Social Studies. The prevocational subjects offered include Cultural and Creative Arts, Computer Studies, Agriculture, Home Economics and Physical and Health Education. One major Nigeria language (either Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) has been added to the list of curricula offerings and where there are available teachers French or Arabic is offered, bringing a total of fourteen subjects. At the end of the nine years basic education, in the final class of the junior secondary school, all pupils sit for an external examination and certification. The assessment is by a combination of 40 per cent continuous assessment and 60 per cent performance in the examination. Pupils' performance in the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) determines whether they go on to the senior secondary school level.

The senior secondary school is streamed into Arts and Social Science, Sciences and Vocational and Technical Education, and students at this level are placed in a stream based on their performance in the JSSCE and interests. The curriculum at the SSS level comprise compulsory subjects which are English Language and Mathematics, one major Nigerian language, one vocational subject and a selection of three subjects from the subject area of interest in the Arts and Social Science, Sciences, Vocational studies or Technical Education. All students sit for external examinations. The certification at this level is based on 40 per cent continuous assessment and 60 per cent examination and on successful completion students pass out with the Senior Secondary School Certificate/General Certificate of Education (O' levels). The emphasis is still on certification.

In Nigeria, English language is the medium of instruction, however, the national policy advocates the use of the mother tongue in teaching the lower

levels of the primary school. But as Woolman (2001) has observed Nigeria has in all, 270 indigenous Nigerian languages that may qualify as instructional tongues for early primary classrooms. Many of the smaller languages have no written orthography, which makes materials production quite difficult. Woolman was emphatic that it is for this reason that English is still largely used and the language was adopted as the language of instruction since independence. Nonetheless, he observed that the content of textbooks was Africanised. Also, in the Qur'anic schools, pupils learn in Arabic under a system of education that runs parallel with the nation's educational system. The curriculum in these schools is narrow and prepares them only for adaptation into their own communities alone, read the Qur'an and to be able to observe Muslim religious rites (Imam, 2003). For now the integrated Qur'anic school policy is yet to be actualized. It is however, pertinent to note that the Qur'anic school and its itinerant pupil phenomenon is the greatest source of rural urban drift that is threatening rural farming communities amongst the large Hausa population in the north of Nigeria (Imam, 2001). This is because when many of the pupils complete their education they remain in the city where they end up on the bottom rung of society's ladder and take up menial labour like truck pushing. According to Imam (2001) the Qur'anic school does not provide a favourable environment for inculcation of the right kind of values for the survival of the individual in the larger Nigerian society. Rather the Qur'anic school adapts pupils for their own immediate community and to practice the Islamic religious rites. The consequence of not being integrated or the feeling of not belonging to the larger society for national unity is enormous. If people are driven by their limited outlook, and by hunger and poverty, there is the potential for social instability and sectarian crises. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) has proposed an integrated Qur'anic school policy to take care of the education of itinerant people in their own cultural setting. However, the implementation of the policy is fraught with problems. An alternative basic education curriculum for the integrated Qur'anic school, adapted to local conditions is needed as well as the modality of implementation.

The National Educational Policy provides educational opportunities for those who are unable to complete their education or benefit from further education through the regular channels, through adult education and open and distance education. The objectives of secondary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) are 'preparation for useful living in the society and for higher education'. There are high failure rates in the SSSCE and a clamour for higher education while those who are unable to proceed beyond the senior secondary school level are lacking in self-reliant skills in any vocation. The objectives of secondary education 'preparation for useful living in the society and for higher education' are not being achieved. Many of the pupils do not go on to the senior secondary due to a lack of resources to pay the fees and other charges. Such young people are not equipped with adequate skills. Also, young people would benefit from pathways from the Qur'anic school to secondary education beyond that of a basic education level for those who are able and willing and with the actualisation of the integrated Qur'anic school. There is need for a revision of the 2004 National Policy on Education to make children stay in school until they complete the senior secondary school and turn eighteen years old. This development is in tandem with British educational policy which evolved from the 1944 Education Act and allows for a universal free secondary education according to the interest of candidates (Gillard, 2011). It is also in consonance with what operates in other advanced countries of the world like the United States from which Nigeria borrowed its new educational system. However, no matter how beautiful the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) is on paper, the implementation is fraught with problems if the political, economic and socio-cultural aspects are not sensitive to the aspiration and needs of the people, and country.

Conclusion

Since 1944, during the colonial era, governments in Nigeria have expressed a commitment to education, in the belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form a basis for accelerated national development as evidenced

by British Colonial participation in educational provision, the UPE of the western and eastern region in the 1950s, the 1976 national UPE and the current UBE programmes. Education is very crucial to the development of citizens. Nigeria, however, has problems such as inequalities in access to education, an educational gap between the north and south, dwindling financial resources, and inadequate infrastructures. These barriers continue to impede the effectiveness of the educational system. The relationship between education and national development is a matter of critical interest to present and past governments of the country. Similarly, Constitutional reviews in the country and in recognition of the fact that educational policy is dynamic, have led the Federal Government of Nigeria to revise the National Policy on Education from 1977, resulting in four editions to date. In synopsis, the National Policy on Education is dynamic and subject to amendments so as to make it relevant and effective in addressing societal problems and meeting the needs of the pluralistic Nigerian society. In addition, in order to minimize conflict, it is good that people are adequately involved in the policy process and cognisance must be taken in education policy reviews of all the good parts of educational policies, whether they be of former British colonial masters or of the post-colonial era. Also, the values of traditional African education for self-reliance should be infused into the educational policy. This calls for a review of the National Policy on Education in the light of the new socio-economic demands. Correspondingly, the effect of political instability on the goals of education and mobilization of resources is all too evident. A stable democracy no doubt would provide the necessary conducive environment for the effective implementation of the National Educational Policy. This review of educational policy development in Nigeria provides a platform for comparative study of educational policies of countries with pluralistic societies and those that have undergone colonialism and which are still evolving.

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