

EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW.

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Abstract

This paper focused on management of inequalities in Nigeria educational sector. It also looked at the concept of education and inequality, it further pointed the problems that may arise if inequalities in the educational sector are not checked. Some recommendations were proffered as way forward towards managing inequalities. However, quality education should be given to Nigeria citizens to equip them with the skills to live a meaningful life.

Introduction

Here, the education sector is one of the instruments for national development and an asset for any nation. It can also be seen as a tool for social economic, cultural and political development of the human society. Education, having been considered as one of the major pillars of the human society, human beings is able to pass on, develop and improve knowledge, skills and abilities. Education in essence makes man by developing skills and competencies impacting knowledge and leaning from the school which enables individual well into their personal professional lives as well as their later years. Also, education is viewed as the surest way to development in any society.

In line with the above, the importance of education cannot be overstressed, with education several social economic activities in the societies will not be effective rather remain stagnant and the human society will continue to wallow in ignorance. Irrespective of this fact, various societies in the modern world are still far from providing this basic necessity to the greater proportion of the people. This act is seen unacceptable more so, if one view

that education has been categorized as a major fundamental human rights in the contemporary society. Also, in the present globalized society in which every nation is connected to the other, education is perhaps the sole instrument for people to adequately cope with the new trend. In most contemporary nation-states including Nigeria, the level of educational attainment vary across regions. Such discrepancies also exist within regions and sub-regions (Yusuf, 2003).

In Nigeria, concerns have been expressed in the glaring educational inequalities in the education sector which has created a lot of gaps and marginalization among groups in education sector. For instance, Yusuf (2003) opined that the classification of many states in the North as "Educational Disadvantaged – states" has not even remedied the situation. There have been a lot of discrepancies and inequalities between the regions in education. According to Dogra (2011), "There are some major inequalities in today's education system which should be addressed and solved, if future of the country has to be secured. It will require a lot of initiative, zeal and hard work

on the part of government authorities, education stakeholders, schools and teachers to do away with these negatives (Inequalities) plaguing the education sector." In consonance with these views, Igbuzor (2016) also pointed out that the importance of education to human beings cannot be overemphasized. This is because education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human.

However, inequalities are seen at every stage of life. Individual, association, groups, clubs, societies, local, national and even world communities experience inequalities in one way or the other. It is the feature of life and it has been since the beginning of creation has inequalities between darkness and light and even among the first set of human beings created on Earth. So, inequalities are permanent features of life which we have come to live and cope with and resolve from time to time. Also, the existence of inequalities cannot be terminated in life unless we want to terminate life itself. That is why Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) stressed that inequalities have become part and parcel of human society word over. Flippo (1980) attempted an explanation when he remarked that "a total absence of inequality would be unbelievable, boring, and a strong indication that inequalities are being suppressed." The unavoidability of inequality was also emphasized by Harod Kerzner (1998) where he pointed out that inequality is part of change and therefore inevitable. It is not an aberration to expect inequalities in the society. However, a poorly handled inequality could become violent or destructive which could hinder national peace. Thus, effective ways that can assist to reduce inequality in the bud, to prevent it from escalating if it erupts, as well as to sustain peace ways of managing inequalities should be developed and sustained by any society that needs peace, growth and development.

Theoretical Frame Work

In line with the title of this paper, any theoretical frame work employed to some in this nature must be meaningful and suitable perspective that will portray the functional role of education in

inequality management. as a result of this reason, the sociological perspective of structural functionalism and conflict theory are adopted due to the functional relationship between education and inequality.

Structural function theories argued that education performs many functions; such as cultural transmission and reproduction, social control, teaching of special skills, selection of student for adult roles and promotion of change. The function helps in no small measure, the restoration of order (Azikiwe, 2008).

The conflict theory argue that inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources actively defend their advantages. The masses are not bound to society by their share values, but, by coercion at the hands of those in power. This perspective stresses social control, not conscience and conformity. Groups and individual advance their own interest struggling over control of society resources (Azikiwe, 2008). Those with the most resources exercise power over others with inequality and power struggles resulting.

The Concept of Education

In almost all societies, attending school and receiving an education is very important and necessary if one wants to achieve success. Lere (2011) view education as the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all process through which a person develops ability, skills, attribute and other forms of behavior with positive value in the society which he lives. Also, Ukeje (1973:230) defined education as a process, a product and a discipline. As process he argued that education is the means by which we acquire the civilization of the past and are enabled both to take part in the civilization of the present, and make the civilization of the future. As a product he contends that education means change in behavior and as a discipline Ukeje stated that education is a body of organized knowledge. Education, according to Okecha (2008), in Lere (2011) is a lifelong process which frees a man from ignorance and to some extent, superstition. Education enhances the

quality of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an effective role in the development of the society which he belongs. Victor (2007) in Iere (2011) also has it that education is the total process of human learning and experience by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. Also, education according to Elliot (1997) in Okeke Oti (2010) is the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all individuals within it and enables them take their part in it. It attempts to pass on to these individuals its culture including the standard by which it would have them live.

Concept of Inequality

In the words of Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2004) stressed that inequality is an unfair situation in which some groups in society have less money, influence or opportunity than others. It could also mean a prolonged struggle or clash between two or more parties. Obegi and Nyamboga (2008) quoting Nicolas (1992) described inequality as situations where two people (or groups) wish to carry out acts which are mutually incompatible.

He further states that inequality entails the pushing and pulling, giving and taking, process of finding the balance between, powers. Kesterner and Ray (2002) view inequality as a social factual situation in which at least two parties (individuals, groups, states) are involved and strive one party, and or want to employ incompatible means to achieve a certain goal. It thus implies struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values but not neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.

Causes of inequalities in Nigeria education

Major causes responsible for educational inequality in Nigeria education are:

- ❖ Poor funding, inadequate budgetary allocations and lack of financial support by other public /private institutions to education including the government.

- ❖ Lack of priority for boosting education to highest standard in the country.
- ❖ Failure to establish effective policies/ ineffective implementation of policies concerning different segments of education.
- ❖ Failure to establish effective institutions that will monitor standards and quality of all levels of education.
- ❖ Lack of political will on the part of the general public on matters concerning education.
- ❖ Corruption in the education system.

However, the major causes of inequality in Nigeria according to Albert (2010) are competition for resources. Resource as a cause of inequality refers to all forms of human possessions such as land, money, power and influences that are often in limited supply.

These cause inequality in three major ways:

Where the resources are not enough to go around everybody, people fight for the little that is available.

People fight over resources when what is available is in justly distributed or allocated.

It is believed that excessive lack (poverty) makes people to become pliable instrument in the hands of some persons.

Inequality management in Nigeria education

Measures taken by federal government to redress the imbalances in Nigeria education led to the introduction of:

Compensatory educational programmes; here, many programmes have been establishing in Nigeria with a view to reducing educational inequality. Such programmes are JAMB, federalization of universities, women education campaign, nomadic education and the schools of basic studies and other remedial programmes. These programmes have helped in narrowing the educational gap between candidates from educationally backward states and those from educationally advanced states, but have not

succeeded in equalizing educational opportunities in Nigeria, due to the high percentage of candidates from educationally advanced states that pass jamb and are admitted into universities annually.

However, in a bid to salvage the situation, the following perspectives towards inequality management in Nigeria education sector must be followed. In the area of financing/funding the education sector, budgetary allocations to all education sector must be increased. Yusuf (2003) pointed out that one major problem besetting the educational sector in Nigeria is the low funding.

Education in modern world is capital intensive industry. There could be no education without funding. To address the obvious inequalities and lapses in educational sector over the years, adequate fund must be made available and must be expended appropriately.

The role of education in inequality management

Education transforms a person to live a better life and more importantly in a socially well behave being. It equips an individual with skills to live a meaningful life in the society. Education also plays an important role in the management of inequality in the society. The national policy on education (2014) revised, expressed concern over “the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society”. It advocated Turning education into a “forceful toll for the cultivation of social and moral values”. Education should “foster universal and external values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people”. Education is vital for the effectiveness of both strategies. For this to happen, the basic education level should be the starting point. Basic education has to go beyond the warehousing of information to a celebration of awareness, which is best facilitated through peace education.

However, one factor that had been found common in an inequality situation is the absence of the right information or breach of communication between the parties involved. Provision of the right information has been seen as the panacea for inequality situation.

Problems of Educational Inequalities in Nigeria.

The problems and negative consequences of educational inequalities in the educational sectors whole end result if not solved will lead to the following as pointed out by Igbuzor (2006)

1. Poor quality and low standards in educational delivery why quality education will be left for only those who can richly afford it.
2. Decline in literacy rate in the country which has negative effects on both individuals and national development.
3. Persistent instability, interceptions and obstructions in the education sectors such as strikes as a result of agitations from various work force in education.
4. De-motivated teaching force and brain drain syndrome.

Conclusion

Education is the bedrock of national development and no society can survive without education. Education is to have quality management what blood is to our body systems. It is in recognition of the importance of education that government and other key players call to establish schools in every nook and cranny of the country.

However, the goal of achieving quality, excellence and improving the Nigeria education sector lies on the management of inequality existing in the educational sector. This paper has discussed extensively the issue of management of educational inequalities in the education sector in Nigeria and the problems that may occur if not solved.

Recommendations

To help in managing inequalities in Nigeria education, the following recommendations are given;

- Implementation of effective policies and curriculum that will improve all education sector.
- Adequate resources finance and increased budgetary allocations which will be needed to build new schools, train more teacher and

provide sufficient equipment in the schools at all levels of education sector.

- Promoting good governance in school and strengthening leadership at all level of education.
- Instituting effective means/strategies of keeping proper accountability of resources and accountability on utilization of resources budgeted for education.
- Quality education should be given to Nigerian citizens to equip them with the skills to live a meaningful life.

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