

POLITICS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STAFF EMPLOYMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Agugu Daniel Iliamkondo PhD

Department of Educational Foundations
Benue State University
Makurdi-Nigeria.

Bua, Felix Terhile PhD

Department of Educational Foundations
Benue State University
Makurdi-Nigeria.

Abstract

The paper examined politics and its influence on staff employment in secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper discussed the concept of politics, politics of education, concept of education, concept of employment, educational institutions in Nigeria, staff in secondary schools in Nigeria, staff employment in secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper highlighted some challenges of politics and staff employment in secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper concluded that politics dictects what goes on in education and employment of staff in secondary schools in Nigeria and recommended among others that; government should involve principals and head teachers in the employment exercise of their staff in secondary schools, avoid bias, nepotism and unnecessary favours.

Key words: Politics, Staff employment, Secondary schools.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR
Agugu Daniel Iliamkondo PhD

Introduction

The influence of politics on employment in educational institutions in Nigeria can not be ruled out in the educational system. It is an established fact that one of the trends in modern education in the 21st century in Nigeria is that political influence on the school systems is growing stronger Benjamin (2014) opines that the right to education arises out of democratic ideas. This implies that everybody should have a chance to become intelligent and out of the special emphasis that all countries would have come to place on employment or a right to work.

According to Adeyemo (2010) an enlightened citizenry is a blessing as they make a peaceful and prosperous society possible. When a statistical connection is to be established between an individual schooling and his employability and income, the right to work has to lead to the right to schooling. There are some opinions that democratic ideas became interwoven with the belief that education was the only path to a useful and productive life. Similarly, the president of the United States of America advanced that education had been his passport from his parents' condition, of tenant farmers, to the one he had himself achieved, (Abdu, 2003 in Kayode, Ijaduola, Oluwafemi & Ajayi, 2012).

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Politics

The concept politics does not appear to have a universal definition, this is because politics touches on pressure group and interests Akpakwu (2015). However, for the purpose of this paper, some few definitions of politics that may assist us to state the influence of politics on staff employment in secondary education in Nigeria is necessary. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004), politics is not only the greatest force that can bring about the desired change in human beings in the life of any nation but should transform all aspects of the nation's life over time.

To Nnoli (as cited in Anuna, 2008) politics is defined as all those activities which are closely associated with the seizure of state power, the consolidation of state power and the use of state power. Anuna further affirms that, in Nigerian perspective, politics has come to mean the allocation of social services (education being one), amenities and various government facilities to the various ethnic groups in the country.

Ogbonnaya (2009), also defines politics as the science and art of securing and advancing the temporal welfare of community organized as a state. The business of politics therefore involves both the laying down of general principles and their application to concrete problems. The scope of politics is the temporal well being of the community as a whole. Ogbonnaya further explains that politics is an activity and as such cannot be reduced to a system of belief or a set of goals. It is the opinion of the researchers that politics is a platform for planning, organizing controlling and managing orderly interactions between individuals and social groups. Politics performs functions of adaptation, integration, allocation of human, material resources, resolution of conflicts and promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation, allocation of scarce social resources, economic and cultural resources to individuals, groups, religious groups and various classes.

Politics of Education

Politics of education refers to the social and political context of education (Okwori & Ede 2012). The main objective of politics of education is to identify and appraise the

various social and political factors, influences, issues and problems which affect education production processes and also to find out the possible strategies for harnessing and controlling such factors, influences and problems for the benefit of educational management and planning in the society. Politics of education involves a complex inter relationship among, interest groups, politicians, bureaucrats and knowledge brokers. These actors who cut across the whole educational structure want the schools to serve particular goals and need and so define them to suit themselves.

In a nutshell, politics in education may be defined as the struggle by various interest groups to dominate the educational enterprise at the detriment of other interest groups. In other words, interest groups and individuals use political factors such as ethnicity, tribalism, sectionalism, favouritism, religion, catchment area systems and the quota systems to achieve educational gains at the expense of others.

Concept of Education

According to Aguba (2009) defining education as a concept may appear over flogged. It is like asking six blind men to describe an elephant. Each of the men will describe it the (animal) based on the part he touched and felt. Aguba however explains that education is positive going by the intention behind it. It is an asset, a preparation for life; a change agent and a means to a useful end. If schools therefore turnout bad products, it is not education; rather it is 'miseducation'. To Aguba (2006), education is virtue and the purpose of education is morality and usefulness to one's society. Whether it is traditional or western education, the purpose is the same; to equip the individual to progressively control his own affairs positively and contribute to societal development.

To Obanya (2007) education is believed to be the development of the human person (personal development). This is why it has been said that education takes care of the 3HS of the human person – the Head, the Hands and the Heart. Obanya further asserts that education is a continuous process. Being a continuous process, means that education is not limited to a particular age or life cycle. It also means that education can take place anywhere, at all times and in a variety of forms.

In a similar vein, Nnamdi (2006), defines education as the use of both formal and informal approaches to train any individual from birth throughout life with the aim of making him/her contribute maximally to the growth and development of himself and the society at large. Nnamdi further explains that education socializes, humanizes, develops and, equips man with skills for environmental improvements.

From the foregoing, education is believed to be a veritable tool for social change, national integration and development. The extent to which these goals are achieved in any country depends largely on the quality of education provided for the citizenry.

Staff in Educational Institution in Nigeria

Staff in educational institutions in Nigeria refers to people or personnel who work in educational institutions in the country (Akpakwu, 2011). Akpakwu, further categorises staff in educational institutions into three; academic or teaching staff; non-academic staff and supportive staff.

Each of these categories of personnel performs interdependent and inter-related functions towards the effective and efficient management of education and educational institutions (secondary education inclusive) in Nigeria.

Concept of Employment

Employment may be defined generally as job or work one does to earn a living. Agbe, Kwaghbo & Yawe (2013) remark that a situation where many graduates from our educational system cannot fix themselves up into any gainful employment shows that the educational system has not done what it purports to do and should therefore be reorganized.

Educational Institutions in Nigeria

Education in Nigeria is overseen by the Federal Ministry of Education. State ministry of education takes responsibility for implementing policies for state controlled public institutions while local authorities implement at the local government levels. (Denga & Okoro, 2006). Similarly Kalu (2012) agrees that educational set up, such as is obtained in Nigeria, the minister of education or the commissioner is necessarily the planner and policy maker, formulating general educational plans and policies while the schools are concerned more with analyzing, interpreting and implementing the overall plans and policies. Uko (2015) opines that the education system in Nigeria is divided into kindergarten, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education.

Staff Employment in Secondary Education in Nigeria

Staff employment is synonymous with staff recruitment. According to Ochai (2012), recruitment in the technical phraseology of administration means the process of tapping the most suitable and competent hands for a particular job. It may take the form of advertising for large groups of employees or tracking out a highly skilled individual for special work. In support of the above view Mgbodile (2013) adds that recruitment is concerned with the selection of the required number of people to be screened for a job, measuring their quality and attempting to predict their future behaviour. Mgbodile includes selection to mean assessing the candidates by various means, making a choice and finally making an offer of employment.

Employment in the school system are usually done by the school management board. This employment exercise is designed in such a way that qualified staff are recruited who are likely to contribute to the attainment of the institutional goals. In our educational system however, the principals and headteachers in schools do not usually take part in the recruitment and selection of teachers. The above assertion by Mgbodile (2013) shows the extent to which politics is involved in the employment of staff in educational institutions in Nigeria. It has been noted that sectional, tribal ethnic and partisan political considerations influence the employment of staff in educational institutions. Catchment area policy and the quota system has influence on staff employment in educational institutions in Nigeria.

One other influence of politics on employment of staff in educational institutions in Nigeria is that, increasing numbers of public officials, institutional board members and administrators, have come to view higher education as a multi-billion-dollar industry, with money and power to be amassed and used for purposes remote from core academic values such as contemplation, reflection, neutrality, objectivity and critical thinking. To exploit the commercial and political potential of this industry, politicians seek to run our colleges more on a "corporatized" business model. The corporate model is characterized by commercializing and breaking apart the elements that make higher education great (American Federation of Teachers, 2011).

In support of the above assertion, the researchers observe that under the guise of efficiency and confidentiality, top administrators are being employed in our educational institutions by professional search firms and in most cases lists from Government Houses with a diminished faculty role in their selection. The voice of the Faculty and staff is relegated to an advisory role rather than that of a full partner in the institutions success.

There is another way of government involvement in the employment of staff in educational institutions in Nigeria. For instance, in 1979 the Federal Government projected additional teaching staff put at 59,500 for Universal Basic Education (UBE) schools in Nigeria (Oni, 2006), Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 led to the increase in pupils’ enrolment which required additional teachers throughout Nigeria. Table 1 below reveals the trend in supply and demand for primary school teachers in Nigeria for the period 1999 to 2005.

Table 1: Trend in supply and demand for primary school teachers in Nigeria, 1999-2005

Year	Number of Primary School Teachers	
	Actual supply	Expected demand
1999	432096	447683
2000	446405	478786
2001	488164	476031
2002	491751	495152
2003	591041	642620
2004	597532	534888
2005	599172	552886

Source: Atanda (2008)

The above statistics represent UBE schools only, other public primary schools not selected for UBE programme as well as private primary schools are not included here. Besides, other categories of staff who are support staff are not included. When post-primary schools and tertiary institutions staff are added, the number employed by educational institutions will run into millions.

Education also takes a very large percentage of recurrent expenditures by governments. In some states, according to the National Open University of Nigeria (2008), it is up to 40%. Most of these expenditures are incurred through payment of workers’ salaries and allowances. Education is generally labour intensive industry and an important one. In Nigeria, Government expenditures on education are determined by its social programmes. Eze (2013:53) states that “the Keynesian economics has it that in case of unemployment caused by lack of effective demand, government expenditures on social services have multiplier effects which will generally increase employment depending on leakages”.

The importance of education as an employer of labour has been further enhanced by government’s expansion of educational services in all parts of the country. Educational institutions have expanded within the past ten years. For instance, every state in the federation has at least two Unity Schools, Federal University, Federal or State Polytechnic, College of Education etc. all these institutions employ various categories of staff.

Challenges of Politics and Staff Employment in Educational Institutions in Nigeria

This paper, discussed politics and its influence on staff employment in educational institutions in Nigeria. The paper however discovers that politics and staff employment in the country are with problems. Among which are as follows:

- i. There are misdeeds of political actors which leads to failure of our political system (Ibrahim; 2009 in Akpan & Oyetunde, 2009).
- ii. Principals and headmasters of schools do not usually take part in the recruitment of staff in our educational institutions. The staff are usually posted to the schools without the involvement of the principals or headmasters, although they are required to send to the school board the staff needs of their schools. (Mgbodile, 2004).
- iii. In some states of the federation, employment of staff in educational institutions has been politicized. Those who have “god fathers” in the states government house are said to be favoured without the necessary qualifications for the job.
- iv. Religion is another factor that has posed a very serious challenge on employment of staff in educational institutions in Nigeria. Members of the same church are employed to work in schools especially those schools established by the same church.
- v. Ethnicity and sectionalism are not left out among the list of challenges that confront politics and its influence on staff employment in educational institutions in Nigeria. In most cases staff are employed in educational institutions based on where they come from or whether they belong to one group or groups of associations thereby killing the quality educational system. Relatedly, the Kogi Transformation Network (KOTRAN), (2014) called on Nigerians to shun ethnic politics so that the country could progress from its current political underdevelopment occasioned by sectionalism, ethnicity and religious bigotry.

Conclusion

The influence of politics on educational matters appears to be in universal. Politics dictects what goes on in education and employment of staff in educational institutions in Nigeria. However, the level at which politics influences and is influenced by educational system in the country needs to be checked for better improvement and achievement of laudable educational goals and objectives in Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper observes that politics is indispensable for the growth and development of education and employment of staff in educational institutions in any part of the world. Therefore the following recommendations are made for government attention:.

- (1) Principals and headteachers should be involved in the recruitment exercise of their staff in educational institutions.
- (2) Avoidance of bias, nepotism and unnecessary favours should be applied when recruiting staff in educational institutions in the country.
- (3) Employment of staff in all educational institutions should be strictly based on merit for positions advertized
- (4) Government should intensify efforts on political re-education of the people. Re-education of the people must be seen interms of involving the people in taking part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare.
- (5) Inculcate in the citizenry a new political culture which would bring forth a stable polity and dynamic economy that will lead Nigeria through the 21st century.

References

- Abdu, R.C. (2013). The cost and finance of education in Nigeria. *Education today Quarterly*, 10(1), 12-16.
- Adeyemo, B. (2010). Public school funding: The case of community mobilization and effective management: *Journal of Educational Development*, 1(2), 27-38.
- Agbe, J.I. Kwaghbo, M.T. & Yawe, A.A. (2013). Economics of education in Nigeria. Makurdi: SAP Publishing House Ltd.
- Aguba, C.R. (2009). Educational administration and management. Enugu: Tons and Tons PDS Publishers.
- Akpakwu, S.O. (2016). Politics of education. Unpublished manuscript. Benue State University.
- Akpakwu, S.O. (2011). Types of Personnel management in education. Unpublished manuscript. Benue State University, Makurdi.
- American Federation of Teachers, (2011). Shared governance in colleges and universities. Washington, DC: www.aft.org.
- Bonjamin, N. (2014). Politics and the establishment of universities in Nigeria: Implications for university education. *Journal of Education and Practice* Vol. 5 No 19.
- Denga, D.I. & Okoro, J. (2010). Policy studies and administration in a changing world. Calabar: Anditex Printer Nig. Co.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National policy on education. Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Ibrahim, J. (2009). The relevance of political education to national development. In C. Ezeomah, E.U.U. Akpan A T.O. Oyetunde (Eds). *Innovative approaches to education and human development* (pp 344-348). Jos: LACAPS Publishers.
- Kalu, R.U. (2012). Effective classroom management and teaching. Makurdi Roska Publishers.
- Kogi transformation Network (KOTRAN)(2014, October 3). Avoid ethnic politics. *The Guardian*, P 44.
- Mgbodile, T.O. (2013). Fundamentals in educational administration and planning. Enugu: Magnet Business enterprises.
- National Open University of Nigeria (2008). Economics of education. Lagos: National Open University of Nigeria Headquarters.
- Nnamdi, A. (2010). Contemporary issues in education. Port-Harcourt: Eagle Autograph Press Ltd.
- Ochai, G. (2012). The scope of educational administration, Makurdi: Successworld Publications.
- Ogbonnaya, N.O. (2009). Social and political contexts of educational administration. Nsukka: Chukka Ed Publications.
- Okwori, A & Ede, S.O. (2012). Management issues in education. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers.
- Oni, J.O. (2010). The administration of the Nigerian primary and secondary education systems. Abeokuta: Gbemi Sodipo Press Limited.
- Uko, B.I. (2010). Politics of establishing educational institutions in Nigeria. Unpublished manuscript. Benue State University, Makurdi.