INFLUENCE OF POLITICS ON MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of politics and management of secondary education in Nigeria. The concept of politics and management of secondary education were examined. It was observed that management of secondary education is not devoid of the influence of politics because education is the substructure of the superstructure which the political system represents. The paper unveils the role of politics in the management of secondary education. The paper points out that politics play significant roles in the appointment of principals, recruitment, transfer of teachers, distribution of school facilities, among others. The implication for management of education is more harm than good as it often results to principals becoming mere robots in the performance of their duties; teachers also give negative attitudes to work resulting to poor academic performance of students and increases social vices like cultism, examination malpractice and so on. The paper recommends among others that: there should be attitudinal rebranding and value reorientation among politicians and secondary education managers in Nigeria. This should be spearheaded by the National Orientation Agency. There should also be institutional freedom for policy making; less political interference in the appointment of principals, school board members, recruitment and transfer of teachers; even distribution of school facilities should be devoid of political interference. Government should also ensure less favoritism in the disbursement of funds to secondary schools for enhanced management of secondary education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Politics, political factors, management, secondary education.

Introduction

Management is concerned with formulation of plans, programmes and policies towards actualizing the goals of organizations. Akpakwu (2014) sees the goals of organization as a process that involves planning, management, controlling, coordinating, leading and evaluating the human, material and resources towards the achievement of goals and objectives of organizations. On the other hand, management which can be described as a rational process by which organizational resources are integrated, coordinated or utilized to efficiently and effectively achieve the set objectives is very essential in the management of secondary education in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world if secondary education is to

achieve the predetermined goals. Akpan (2011) defined management as the design or creation of an internal environment in which people working together in groups can perform efficiently and effectively towards the attainment of group goals. Akpakwu (2012) defined management of secondary education as the judicious application of the human, material, financial and time resources towards the attainment of the objectives of an organization.

If schools are the institutions for the production of a nation's manpower, it is proper management that makes them effective. If well planned, adequately resourced and managed, secondary education has the potential to provide an environment where large number of young people can gain the skills and knowledge needed to better participate (economically, socially and politically) in a peaceful democratic society as well as develop the necessary knowledge to avoid anti-social behavior and lead to healthier (Amadioha, 2018). Nigeria is currently faced with various crises ranging from terrorism in form of Boko Haram, herdsmen attacks, armed bandits and the likes. In each of these teenagers who should be in school form a huge resources for nefarious activities. This shows the inadequacies in the secondary education management in Nigeria. This is also noticed in the level of failures in the public examinations like West African Examinations Council (WAEC), BECE.

This may be one of the reasons why many Nigerian school age children do not have access to education. Sanubi and Akpotu, (2015) reported that over 13 million children of secondary school going age in Nigeria are out of school. Apart from poor funding of schools, the quality of education students receive in many schools seems to be a serious cause of worry.

Secondary school management which constitute the head and the management team, executes the management functions of planning, organizing, leading, controlling, motivating, policy making, communicating and so on to achieve the goals of secondary school. Chibuzor (2013) notes that it is not only the school heads that execute such functions, but also teachers and students who are the main purpose for which the schools are established. This implies that any mischief done by the school management and the community in which the school is situated may affect and the effective achievement of the school's goals. Therefore, it is important for secondary schools to be effectively managed for the purpose of achieving set objectives. Secondary schools occupy a strategic place in the educational system in Nigeria, and it is the link between the primary and the University levels of education. Asikhai (2010), add that education at the secondary level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation for higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. Education is a process of a systematic transmission of knowledge and skills as well as basic value and norms that are acceptable in a particular society.

The role of politics in the management of secondary education in Nigeria seems to be affected by political interference. This is because politics and school management cannot be separated. In support Osuji (2011) asserted that the objectives of education, the control, production, process variables and financial provision are tied inescapably to politics. On the other hand, Okwori and Ede (2012) maintains that government commits huge funds for the education of the citizenry and since government commit huge funds to the provision of education for the masses, it is incumbent on government to assert some degree of control on educational operations. Politics of education involves a complex inter relationship among interests groups, politicians, bureaucrat and knowledge brokers, want schools to serve particular goals and needs as they define them to suit themselves.

Osuji (2011) defines politics as a struggle over values, power and scarce resources in which the aim of the conflicting interests are to gain the desired values and resources at the expense of the rivals. Politics is all-embracing; it deals with power, and power involves elements of decision making, allocating of resources, settlement of conflicts, provision of social amenities as well as the provision and management of education (Okwori and Ede: 2011). Therefore, no society can think about having an established government without politics. This paper therefore seeks to examine politics and management of secondary education in Nigeria.

Politics in Education

Politics, in the broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Although politics is also an academic subject, it is clearly the study of political activities. Politics is thus inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation. The existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests guarantees disagreement about the rules under which people live. Ogbonnaya (2009) sees politics as a subject concerned with attracting, securing and maintaining the well-being of a community, State or nation. The business of politics, therefore, involves both the laying down of general principles and their application which may create problems in a social setting like secondary education.

In another view Lanshie (2013) sees politics as the science and act of securing and advancing the temporal welfare of a community organized as a state. Maduagwu (2013) also sees it as a device intended for finding solutions to social, economic, political and educational problems by political means. The scope of politics is the temporal well-being of the community as a whole. The definitions also suggest that politics is an instrument for finding solutions to social, economic, scientific, technological and educational problems of a nation.

Politics and education are interwoven and it is for this reason that Okeke (2007) emphasizes that politics plays an important role in decision making, control and governance of secondary education. Okeke further opines that politics in education can be looked at as a process of control, decision making, implementation, management, governance and a method by which resources are allocated to different ethnic groups to achieve their aims. The role of politics is heightened in view of the fact that an educational system has political goals and these goals are essential to justify the existence of the system and the political order of society. In other words, tt political order initiates good education. Okwori, et al, (2012) maintaines that the main objective of politics is to identify and examine the various social and political factors, influences, issues and problems which affect education processes and to identify the possible strategies for harnessing and controlling such factors for the benefit of managing education in Nigeria.

Management of Secondary Education

Secondary education is generally believed to provide the uptimum settings to prepare Young people mainly adolescents, fit healthy and productive adult lives, including participation in social, political, economic and religious activities. Secondary Education is one of the important levels of formal learning, secondary education can be obtained from both public and private institutions designed to provide education to individuals after primary education, in preparation for tertiary education. The broad aims of secondary

education within the national objective, as contained in section 4 subsection 18 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:18) are to:

a. provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with opportunity for education of a higher quality, irrespective of sex or social, religious and ethnic background.
b. diversify its curriculum to cater for difference in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course.
c. equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology;
d. develop and project Nigeria culture, art and language as well as the world's cultural heritage.
e. raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate those values specified under our broad national aims, and live a good citizen;
f. foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
g. inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement at school and later in life.

Government, therefore, planned secondary education of six-year duration in two stages; junior secondary school and senior secondary school stage, each being of three years duration. Students who leave school at the end of the junior high school stage may then go on to an apprenticeship system or some other scheme for out-of-school vocational training. The senior secondary school will be for those able and willing to have a complete six-year secondary education. Since the National Policy on Education (NPE) came into operation, it has become nationally accepted as the reference point for the development of secondary education in Nigeria. If secondary education is properly planned, executed and encouraged, it could be used to develop innate genius in the youths and enhance their capacity to stand by themselves, Sanubi and Akpotu (2015). Thus secondary education could be used as an investment that could yield rich productive dividends in a very near future which could have far reaching effect on national development. This coupled with the dwindling economy, perhaps explains the need for the establishment, provision and management of secondary schools with a view to providing quantitative and qualitative education at the secondary education level in Nigeria.

Politics in the Management of Secondary Education
Politics plays a significant role in the management of secondary education since different sectors participate in policy making and implementation. Politics interference in the policy making processes and involvement in the administration of secondary schools is very disturbing to effective and efficient management of these schools also to the administrators of these institutions who have become mere administrative puppets or stooges in the hands of political powers. These politicians came up with policies to suit their interest, culture, religion, tribe, and so on. Educational System in this country does not have freedom from the clutches of domestic politics (Ogbonnaya, 2009). The system of education has been completely politicized since the establishment of education from time of the colonial masters. Every decision taken in education has been under the dictation of political kingpins. The main reason for so much of political interference is that in many cases the indication of secondary school teachers is made on political basis (Olujowon&Pemural, 2014). The concept of merit is pushed behind in the process of professional appointments.

Thus, politically elected teachers cannot work independently. This factor has grossly affected the smooth process of education. The teachers who do not listen to the dictations of the political actors are severely punished in the social or financial terms. This absence of professional freedom of teachers in secondary schools has badly affected the level of their performances.

It is disheartening when one looks at the role politician play in handling some of the crucial matters like citing of schools in Nigeria. Some of the Communities in Nigeria do not have secondary schools yet some other communities have more than three secondary schools; Politicians with special interest can insist that a school be cited in their communities where other schools already exists. Most likely because that is where he will achieve his aim, or maybe as a compensation to the community for their support during the election period. The political interference also affects the various appointments in the schools such as appointment of principals, teachers' recruitment, and transfer.

There is the issue of appointment of principals which is also politicized. The principal is a school leader charged with managerial functions. Principals serve as supervisors of classroom teachers and government representatives (Okoli, 2015). For the school to perform optimally and achieve its objectives, the principal who is at the leaders of the school management must be endowed with sound physical health, adequate mental ability, moral integrity, sound general education and specialized technology (Ayuba, 2009). To become a principal in a secondary school, the policy states that it will be based on hierarchy. From level 13, the person can be made a vice principal, beyond this level the teacher is qualified to serve as a principal. But today, this position motivated by primordial political factors. This means that certain leadership positions are kept for indigenes or those who can maneuver their way to the position. Somebody in level 14 can become a principal because he has connections with political class who influences it by calling members of the schools' board and placing his request, in response the teacher is made a principal while some of his seniors with grade level 15 are still classroom teachers.

Similarly, Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) which is a pressure group for teachers has been weakened therefore cannot look into the problems and interest of teachers. Union members are there to dialogue with the government on contending issues of conflict or common interest for the teachers. Unfortunately, government ensures that those who supported them and will be loyal to them find their way into these positions. The management of secondary schools is at the dictates of the politicians against the school welfare and students' academic performance. The NUT is a professional pressure group like their counterparts in Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) and Nigeria Medical Association (NMA). They promote the standards of their profession, provide the code of conduct for maintenance of standard and professional discipline is maintained. (Etim&Akani, 2016). However, political interference tends to compel the school administration to undermine the rules in the management of schools.

The Appointment of School Board of Governors

The school boards are usually established by the Ministry of Education to oversee the affairs of each of the secondary schools in the state or country. According to Akpakwu (2012) the school board can be defined as a body of experts set up by the ministry to formulate policies and ensure their implementation in schools. In most cases, the ministry delegates the responsibility of establishing such boards to the Teaching Service Commission or Board,

Secondary Education Board or Management Board. But a situation where education seems to be the business for the politicians, things turn out differently. The appointment of the aboard Members is done by politicians. The Board members ensure that other leadership positions under them are being occupied by the loyalist, regardless of the law.

Recruitment and Transfer of Teachers

Recruitment is one of the important functions of personnel management. Recruitment refers to all activities in personnel management designed to attract the desired number and quality of people required to carry out the work of the organization (Ayuba, 2009). Mamuna (2015) also sees recruitment as all activities or operations which the school administrations undertake with the intention of attracting and securing personnel of the desired quality and quantity to satisfy the staff needs of the school. It is the process of identifying and attracting the right candidates to apply for existing vacancies in the school. The focus of recruitment exercise is to have as many applications as possible so as to have a large pool of candidates from which to select through the directive of the politicians. Most times, this exercise is carried out to reduce the number of liabilities they have. Theystart by watering down the criteria for recruitment in order to accommodate their primordial interest. This system is not healthy to the administration and development of secondary schools. The exercise brings "half-baked" graduates who do not have the teaching qualification while the intelligent applicants who merit the position may not be allowed or given the opportunity to serve. The teaching profession is never an all-comers venture. It has to do with technical and intellectual competence. Recruitment should be based on merit and not by favouritism. "Transparency and meritocracy in employmt of teachers is so germane that any act of subject matter ineptitude or misinforming students will amount to widespread intellectual deformation" (Nwabueze&Nwabueze, 2016:7).

It is humorously said that a medical doctor can make a grave mistake and kills one person, but if a teacher makes such mistake, he or she kills millions of people'. Therefore, in recruitment for teachers, round pegs should be put in round holes in order to create and maintain a just society. In the same vein, most teachers lobby supervisors in the school board to influence their posting and transfer in order for them to be permanent in urban schools (Maduagwu, 2013). This has also resulted in structural disequilibrium in the posting and transfer of teachers thereby impoverishing the school in the rural centres.

Funding of Secondary Education

Funding is a necessity for any level of education. Funding according to Babalola (2011) is concerned with procuring, expending, accounting and maintaining the financial resources of an educational institution efficiently to achieve educational objectives. Government provides fund for the management of Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria. These funds are controlled by those in power or political leaders who in most cases influence the allocation and disbursement of such fund. From the budgetary allocation, a certain vote is for the principal for the administration of secondary school. According to Nwabueze, et al, (2016) it is sad to say that these politicians divert this funds, the money is not always used for what it was allocated for but channeled towards political interest.

In Nigeria however, education is the most neglected in terms of financial support from the government. Due to receiving less financial support, the sector has remaines the most under paid. This fact has rendered the education sector as the most unattractive profession

in the country (German, 2013). In secondary schools where students at the end of their career are expected to be self-relianct; more money is supposed to be injected into this level but this is not the case as politicians are busy amassing wealth to themselves. Secondary School teachers are unable to lead a decent life within the salary provided to them by the government. This factor has affected the motivational level of teachers. The teachers as a whole do not take active interest in the performance of their duties. This situation has ultimately impacted the whole process of quality in teaching and learning in school. In many cases teachers get salaries without attending schools. The ratio of teacher absenteeism in government secondary schools is higher. Many teachers run their own businesses apart from their professional duties. The secondary school managers seem to be helpless in this case leading to poor provision of secondary education in Nigeria. Therefore, funds are very crucial to the provision of facilities and quality education

Provision of School Facilities

The school facilities in both urban and rural areas of the country are a structure through which many parents hope to realize their dreams and educational aspirations for their children. Asigbu (2014) defines school facilities to mean the school building, all materials and features on the school sites, including paths, roads, parking lots, playgrounds, open grounds, trees, flowers and other objects used for implementing or supporting the implementation of an educational programme. According to Ogbonnaya (2009) there is political impediment on the provision of basic Infrastructural facilities in secondary schools Ogbonnaya further reports that there is quota system in the provision of facilities, allocation of building structures as well as government determines where schools are cited.

Lenshie (2013) also stress that there is political interference in the provision of equipments, federal government colleges and schools in the urban cities, particularly state capitals are more favoured than those in the rural areas. There is uneven distribution of facilities due to the interest of the ruling party in leading to unconducive learning environment.

Implication of Politics on Management of Secondary Education

From the discussion of politics and management of secondary education, it is evident that politics has implication on the management of schools. Nwabueze, et al., (2006) highlighted the following as implication of Politics on management of secondary education.

Principals Become Mere Robots

Politics make administrators of secondary schools mere robots in the dispensing of their job, since there is no synergy between the government and the administrators. They begin to put up lackadaisical attitude towards their job, this implies that principals will negate their duties of effective which will affect the school tone (Olorunsola& Belo, 2018)

Teachers Pose Negative Attitude to Work

In line with the nonchalant of the principal over issues which leads to poor administration, the teachers now no longer go to school early and are not regular. Some chose to go to school only the days that they have class to teach and at the worst scenario. Aside the nonchalant attitude of principals some teachers have personal affiliation with

other politicians in power and therefore believe that their jobs are secured no matter their behavior, this pose challenges to effective management of secondary education.

Examination Malpractice

Teachers are no longer interested performing their jobs but the students are interested in passing their West African Examination. They achieve it by all means. Some pay the teachers to write the examinations for them. The worst of it is that a reasonable number of the principals are into this business. It now serves as one of their sources of income. Before the examination time, they have already told the students the amount to pay. Students who fail to pay the agreed amount stay in separate halls in order to write the examinations. Supervisors are not left out in this business. Certificates with good grades are now sold to those who can afford it. Merit now has to place in secondary education. So one can only imagine the quality of secondary school students produced in Nigeria all as a result of politics

Poor Academic Performance

The idea of principals and teachers helping the students to pass examination these days has polarized the students. The students no longer read, in the hope that during the examination help must come either from within or they hire people outside. This eventually leads to poor performances when external supervisors refuse to compromise. The annoying thing is that most of these young school leavers with good results cannot defend their results. They may have a credit or an alpha in literature yet cannot tell story of any of the text they read. All these seem to relate to politics. Politics interfere either in the appointment of principals or supervisors (invigilators) who oversee the schools and conduct of examinations.

Conclusion

Politics and education are inseparable. Stakeholders including the government, politicians, community, members of the school board, school board of governors and the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) interfere in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. It is observed inthis paper that these actors interfere in policy making, appointment of principals, school board members, recruitment and transfer of teachers, allocation of school facilities and funding of secondary education. At times these are associated with political factors such as tribalism, ethnic, religious and favouritism posing some implications on management of secondary education. The overwhelming and undue influence from the politicians stultifies the educational managers within the school setting. Secondary education in Nigeria cannot be standardized until adequate measures are put in place to enhance the interference of politics in the management of secondary education.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion above, the following recommendations are made.
1. There should be attitudinal rebranding and value re-orientation among politicians and secondary education managers in Nigeria and this should be spearheaded by the National Orientation Agency.
2. Government of Nigeria should ensure that there are no favouritism in the disbursement of funds in the secondary schools.

3. The secondary school management boards in different states should eschew preferential appointments of principals and board members as this generate conflict in schools,
4. The government should avoid quota system in the provision of facilities and equipment in the schools. There should be even distribution of school facilities in all secondary schools. The issue of political consideration should be played wisely in order y ensure fairness in the distribution of facilities and equipment in schools.
5. The personnel department in the ministries of education should be allowed to follow due process in the recruitment, and transfer of teacher.

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