

**QUALITY EDUCATION: BEDROCK FOR  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:  
THE WAY FORWARD FOR NIGERIA**

***BY:***

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**A KEYNOTE ADDRESS:**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOUNDATION LAYING CEREMONY OF  
PRAXIS CATHOLIC e-SCHOOL LIBRARY BLOCK IN THE  
PERMANENT SITE OF THE COLLEGE**

**ON**

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## **Protocol,**

I wish to appreciate the management of Praxis Catholic e-School and the Chairman of the Governing Council of the School for inviting me to participate in this discourse. Thank you for the honour.

## **Introduction**

The fact that there is a general outcry of the fallen standard of education in Nigeria is no longer news but rather a pointer to the fact that the conscience of every stakeholder is being awakened to the need for a collective effort to find lasting solutions to the problems in the educational system. This outcry spreads across the different levels of education in Nigeria right from the lower basic education stratum to the tertiary level of education. Some scholars have however argued that it is difficult to talk of fallen standard when one is unable to peg what the standard was. Be that as it may, education has to do with literacy, hence if a graduate of a primary school is unable to read and write, the societal expectations are not made. In Nigeria the idea of a low standard need not be over emphasized as anything associated with a **low standard** is tagged as “second hand” products or processes. It gives the impression that the original with a first class quality is not available or is unaffordable therefore the need to make use of the “second hand” product. Can the same thing be said of the low quality in education? Does Nigeria not have the resources to provide quality education? What are the consequences of the quality of education provided at present for national development?

The indicators of this low standard of education which include a low literacy level, high poverty level and a high level of unemployment stare, us glaring in the face as our “educated” youths are involved in all kinds of anti-social behaviours due partly to high level of unemployment in the country. A reverse of this situation, if the standards were high, would have been disciplined behavior among our youths, hard work, improved cultural heritage, acquired skills, competencies and valuable techniques. These would have created opportunities for our youths to be gainfully employed. Unfortunately, a

great percentage of our schools are unskilled and cannot gainfully contribute to their self development nor can they contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. The situation is completely at variance with the goals of the national policy on education which projects a vision of a free and self reliant nation (NPE, 2004).

The educational sector has surprisingly witnessed a rapid increase in number of schools and students' enrolment at all levels of education. Records show that there are well over 130 universities (Federal, State and Private), 90 polytechnics and 70, Colleges of Education in the country. In addition, many primary and secondary schools have sprung up in virtually all parts of the country as most state governments are initiating free and compulsory education for various reasons. Despite the rise in number of institutions the educational system has not been able to produce qualitative and skilled manpower. Amaele (2005) calls it growth without development.

On the contrary, the financial inputs seem to be decreasing. The financial input for 1999 was 11%; it has declined to 6.9% in 2011 and 8.43% in 2012. It has been observed that no budgetary allocation for education has reached 25% in any year as against the recommended global standards of 26%. Nigeria has also been observed to perform more poorly than other African countries which at least have appropriated more than 15 to 30% budgetary expenditure to education. The essence of this budget benchmark stipulated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was to increase the level of literacy and reduce the level of poverty (UNESCO, 2005).

This in summary portrays a government that does not have the will power to appropriate adequate funds for the provision of quality education. As such the country is grooming its human resource workforce under unacceptable teaching and learning environments. The consequence of this on national development is grievous as the products of the countries educational systems will offer what they gained from exposure to education

that lacks quality. Based on this background this paper will consider the following issues:

- Conceptual framework:
  - ✓ Quality education
  - ✓ National Development
- Quality education at the primary and secondary school levels and national development
- Quality education at the tertiary education level and national development
- Problems/challenges militating against quality education in Nigeria.
- Way forward for the provision of quality education in Nigeria.
- Conclusion

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Quality education:** Education is a human right issue. It generally has to do with systematic development and cultivation of the mind and other natural abilities. It specifically refers to the process by which we acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values or attitudes to make us useful and functional members of our society. It further entails the outcome of the process of both learning and teaching. Thus, education requires quality inputs if it has to provide the enabling environment in which the philosophy and goals of the nation and individual needs can be achieved.

The quality of education could be described as the worth or fabric of education. Quality in itself is something good, ideal or of a high standard. The quality of education can be guaranteed by the ability of the different stakeholders of education to adhere to the standards of achieving quality. The various components of quality in education can be assessed on the basis of the **inputs, processes; environment** and **outputs** (outcome). Inputs include teachers, trainees, instructional materials and the curriculum as a whole. Processes involve instructional delivery system, evaluation and assessment methods. The environment has to do with classroom organization and control,

interactions between the different components of the instructional situation. Then the outputs which are reliant on the other components are the academic achievement and attainment with the educational system. That is the quality of value added to the learners' knowledge, skills and attitude during and after ones exposure to the educational system. Quality in education can be accepted as being multi-faceted due to the different inputs of education, organization and management, content of learning and learning outcomes (Amaele, 2013; Fasasi, 2006). This makes it mandatory that education be given greater attention and top priority in the Nigerian government's developmental plan and budget allocation. In this way Nigeria can reverse the present situation in which quality is sacrificed for quantity.

Quality education is a right to every Nigerian child. As such the government has set up a quality assurance system to monitor the implementation of quality standards in education. The Federal Inspectorate Service (FIS) in the Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for quality control. The importance of quality assurance in education can be seen from the features and attributes of the products and services provided through education.

FIS ensures that there is a component of quality control strategy in education. More specifically, FIS

- aids the maintenance of high standard in education.
- Provides basis for monitoring and supervision
- Determines quality of teachers inputs, adequacy of facilities
- Ensures prudent and judicious utilization of funds.

Quality assurance is a powerful means of improving the effectiveness of education. The key actors in the education industry such as teachers, counselors, head teachers are responsible for improving educational performances.

**National Development:** The concept of national development is the ability of a nation to improve the socio-economic welfare of the people through the

provision of social amenities. Thus the different phases of national development include but not limited to the following:

provision of quality education, portable water, health and transportation infrastructural facilities, production, foreign trade, security, finance, etc.

Education forms the oars on which all the other developmental components can efficiently be assessed and addressed. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education has maintained its position as a key index of development. Education erases ignorance which is associated with under development. The products of education form the cadre of decision making regarding the nations developmental goals and projects. Nigeria has realized the importance of education as it accepts the international declarations regarding the attainment of basic literacy by all in the year 2015. Nigeria is also a signatory to the World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) which was launched in the year 2000 (FRN, 2005; Igbuzor, 2006).

### **Quality education at primary and secondary school levels and National development**

Education at the primary and secondary school levels has been characterized by so much instability and inconsistency with regards to which arm of government controls which aspect of education. The increase in the number of primary schools to accommodate the up-shoot of population of pupils due to the implementation of free and compulsory education and the girl child education in some parts of Nigeria is an established fact (UNICEF, 2005) Unfortunately, this hike in population of pupils has not been similarly matched with the provision of quality inputs ranging from the provision of qualified teachers, relevant instructional materials and infrastructural facilities.

This imbalance between emergence of numerous school-age pupils and government's ability to provide required learning environment has contributed to the lack of quality in the services provided by the teacher. This situation is

further aggravated by the government's inability to provide prompt financial benefits due to the teachers. This has further resulted in incessant strikes and unproductive attitudes to work. The poor service condition and economic hardship among the teachers brought about their increased engagement in non-academic moonlighting activities, business that has now gone deep into the school system.

Maslow's motivational theory indicates the fact that certain factors either influence a person positively or negatively depending on the needs of the individual involved or the organizational. Thus when the right kind of teaching and learning environment is provided to the satisfaction and needs of the teachers and learners, they become more dedicated and committed to their services.

The low standards of education at the primary school level had resulted in the setting up of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). This commission was mandated to see to the improvement of the standard of education at the primary school level to ensure quality. This, the commission has pursued through the execution of teacher development programmes. These programmes mostly involve launching of workshops that expose teachers to child centred and globally accepted strategies and teaching skills. UBEC has also tried to fill the gap of imbalance in teacher student ratio through a scheme called Federal Teachers Scheme (FTS). These strategic programmes by UBEC has not provided the much required significant quality because of the inadequacy of the inputs and other intervening variables of the educational system. Thus some pupils complete primary education without the ability to read and write. This is the gap that the University of Uyo Literacy Research Group has systematically aimed at filling with the synthetic fast track reading project known as Read and Write Now (RAWN).

Education at the secondary level has been marked by examination malpractices which both students and teachers indulge in for better performance and cheap financial benefits. It is similarly characterized by imbalanced teacher-student ratio, incessant strikes, lack of facilities, lack of

instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, negative and unsupportive parental influence and lack of a reading culture. This situation cannot guarantee the quality of education. Education is a partnership enterprise. The parents at home and the teachers must work together for good success. Quality of students' performance began to deteriorate when this partnership relationship broke down.

### **Quality Education at the Tertiary Education Level and national development**

The progress of the development of the status of education in higher institution has greatly been hampered by inadequate funds and frequent disagreement between the federal and state controlled universities and their various governments. The resultant effect is often prolonged industrial disharmony in an effort to get the government to reconsider an improved funding for education to ensure the implementation of the right standards of education in the country. This instability has equally driven out young Nigerians into neighbouring nations. The quality of education provided in some of these nations is not necessarily of higher quality than what Nigeria offers.

National Universities Commission (NUC) has been invested with the responsibility of supervising and monitoring of the affairs of the university for the purpose of realizing a qualitative educational output. The government's intent at achieving high quality education is still not attainable. As long as there is that gap between what the academic staff expects and what government can afford or is willing to provide the idea of quality can be elusive. Besides, there is serial impersonation, a sophisticated level of examination malpractice that plagues most tertiary institutions. However, some universities in an effort to instill quality regarding inputs of the nature of students admitted, have set up the post University Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) screening to check the caliber of students admitted. It is assumed that when the standard of the undergraduates' entry behavior matches the requirement for each course, the problems and difficulties of



training is reduced. Moreover, quality inputs into the system ensure quality output.

The government and university management have a major responsibility in providing a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The problem of the products of universities being tagged as unskilled man power needs to be addressed through the provision of virtual learning experience through information communication technology (ICT). Despite other negative variables limiting quality in tertiary education, there has to be a complete overhaul of instructional delivery approach. Lecturers need to be professionally trained to teach. Teaching or lecturing is more than talking. In the words of Pa Obanya, "It is not simply telling someone else something, it is not simply informing, not simply demonstrating and not just instructing". Teaching today is complex and too demanding for anybody to assume that he or she will not benefit from professional training and retraining.

Development of any nation should be driven by quality research. The urge to carry out edge-cutting research is no more there in our Universities and Research Institutes.

The essence of researches at the tertiary institutions is defeated if proper and adequate use of the outcomes (both process and products) of the researches are not guaranteed and utilized. The purpose of such researches to increase the quality and effectiveness of educational outputs are not given adequate recognition and publicity.

**Problems/Challenges of Education Militating Against Quality Education in Nigeria:** The problems and challenges facing the educational sector can best be appreciated as it relates to the different stakeholders in the education sector.

It is generally noted that effective teacher training is synonymous with quality education in Nigeria. To measure the quality of education is to measure the quality of teachers. The students cannot grow above their teachers. Teachers are the major stakeholders.

The major challenges affecting teachers may be highlighted as follows:

- Inadequate number of trained teachers.
- Some of the teachers do not have teaching skills nor the passion for teaching.
- Many practicing teachers entered the teaching profession as a last resort due to unavailability of an employment or admission into their preferred professions. To them, teaching is just a stop-gap.
- Most teachers lack ICT relevant skills to utilize numerous free teaching and learning resources.
- Lack of commitment and instability among teachers due to poor remuneration and conditions of service
- Lack of orientation regarding educational standards.
- Teachers' dependence and limitation to teacher centred instruction and delivery methods due to lack of facilities while receiving training and during practice as a professional teacher.
- Complete lack of teacher motivation strategies. Studies have proven that there is significant relationship between teacher's motivation and quality performance.

### **Pupils/students**

- Drop-outs in schools due to poor performance in terminal examinations
- Mass promotion of pupils into higher classes without required prerequisite skills.
- Lack of instructional materials to participate actively in classroom activities.
- Lack of interest in learning due to peer pressure and other parental and environmental factors.
- Lack of individual attention due to overcrowded classrooms and high imbalanced teacher–student ratio.
- Poor parental guidance and counseling.

## **Government**

- Government (Federal and State) is the leading stakeholders in the implementation of educational goals. It has the responsibility of directing instructing, supervising and monitoring. It also has the responsibility of carrying out needs assessment, meeting needs, providing instructional materials as relevant inputs to meet the needs. The government stakeholders include Federal and State Ministries of Education and Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The problem associated with government include:
  - Insufficient provision of teaching and learning materials and facilities.
  - Inability to create conducive learning environment for learning.
  - Ineffective teacher development programme due to lack of adequate training facilities and will power to enforce discipline.
  - Lack of proper coordination supervision and monitoring of implementation of government policies.
  - Poor and inconsistent remuneration of teachers' salary and job benefits.

(Adesuna, 2005; Omaze, 2007, Ekpo, 2010; Abayomi, 2012)

## **The Way Forward: For the Provision of Quality Education in Nigeria**

The picture derived from a look at the status of the educational system is quite certain of the fact that no progressive and functional development can be achieved through the products that graduate from the present system. Since National development is closely tied to the quality of education, it therefore begets the need for some major overhauling inputs to be urgently set in motion to uproot the present low system of education which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the nations societal values. Since it is an acceptable fact that no nation can grow above the quality of its teachers, there is need to earnestly consider the plight of the teachers apart from other challenges. The following specific plan of action should be set in motion to ensure quality assurance:

- The government should place education as top priority in its developmental plan by allocating nothing less than the minimum benchmark stipulated by international standards.
- The government should put in place a highly powered quality assurance mechanism with sufficient financial back up and authority to sanction defaulters who defraud the nation through their deliberate substitution of high standards with low standards.
- The government should equip and update teachers with teaching skills through Initial Teacher Training Programmes, and continuing Professional Development of Teachers short courses.
- The teacher education programme should be given a complete facelift in terms of provision of infrastructural facilities, professional and financial benefits as grounds to introduce a new orientation that will have a lasting effect on their attitude to work.
- Virtual learning experiences through the use of ICT should be integrated and blended with the use of the traditional methods of instructional delivery.
- Teachers who were trained without the knowledge of Computer Managed Instruction and Computer Assisted Instruction should be re-trained.
- Best practices in instructional delivery and school management should be introduced at the training institutions by instructors who are also suitably equipped with relevant skills to avoid creating a gap between theory and practice.
- The possession of ICT application skills should form a requirement for registration into the Teachers Registration Council.
- Teachers at all levels should be accorded equal recognition with motivational working conditions that encourage their commitment to this all-important service to the nation.
- Frequent policy change should be checked.

- The government should correct inconsistencies existing in the management of the basic education level as to which arm of government manages which aspect of the educational system.
- Uncertified persons should be discouraged from joining the teaching force.
- Where government is unable to provide free education, it should have the will power to say so rather than provide Universal Schooling in place of quality education.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, the development of any nation depends, to a large extent on the Quality of Education it provides. Great nations of the world do not toy with their education sector. The united States of America for instance has placed so much premium on education matters that she has devoted a commensurate percentage of its budget to the education sector. All succeeding administrations tend to maintain this high premium.

The former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, during his political campaigns highlighted education as his priority. In a series of his policy papers he wrote:

*...We are starting with education because education was, is, and will remain our number one priority. For the past 10 years, we have said, year in year out, that Britain will only prosper, and its people will only get on in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if they are well educated... We are proud of our records – investment up by 50% in education in real terms since 1997, (Blair, 2005).*

Our nations existence and survival is at stake if we fail to give due considerations to improving the status of education. It is dangerous to play politics with education. There are no two ways about finding solutions to the problems of education. We have to face it, either we make the sacrifice of patiently and painstakingly imputing the right attitudes, adequate financial, human and material resources now and reap the benefits of national

development, or continue in the present low standard and watch our country go deeper and deeper down the depth of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment to mention a few. It is my strong believe that the situation of things can be salvaged by our collective effort. Both private and public sectors, parents, non-governmental organizations, rural and urban communities, meaningful and well placed Nigerians are called upon to assist Nigeria in finding and implementing lasting solutions to Nigeria's problems. The time to act is NOW!!!

Thank you.

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