EDUCATIONAL CHANGE VERSUS EDUCATIONAL REFORM

By

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter makes a distinction between educational change and educational reform. It then goes on to discuss the distinguishing characteristics of educational reform. Whether the changes that have occurred in Nigerian education since independence qualify as educational reforms is an issue submitted to some scrutiny in the body of the paper, using the much discussed 6-3-3-4 system as case study. This scrutiny finally leads to a set of conclusions dealing specifically on how best Nigeria can re-strategize for genuine educational reform.

WHAT IS CHANGE and WHAT IS REFORM?

Change refers simply to alterations that do not have any profound effect on the system. In educational development issues, examples of changes that do not result in any profound turn-around are legion. Going from the most banal or pedestrian of to those that result in disruptions in the system, one can construct a hierarchy of educational changes as follows.

1. Unsustainable rules and directives
2. Routine administrative interventions
3. Changes merely decreed into existence
4. Face-saving changes
5. Musical Chair syndrome
6. Politically-motivated shakeups
7. Ill-thought-out/feebly implemented ideas

Unsustainable Rules and Directives

This is a common occurrence at all levels of management of the education sector. At the policy level, they come in the form of panic measures intended to cure some ills. Here, a good example would be radio and television announcements that proclaim that parents who send out their children to hawk wares on the roadside (while they should be in school) would be persecuted. As we all know, such ‘laws’ are often respected in breech than in compliance. Street-hawking children will flood the streets and no sanction will be taken against their parents.

At the management level, we often hear of ‘regulations’ directing that education should be absolutely free in primary and junior secondary schools. From what we know, such regulations have often gone unheeded and heads of schools have continued to collect all forms of financial levies from students.

At the institutional level, instructions on the conduct of teachers and students, the organisation of school work are often simple paper tigers, as a general ‘do-as-you-like’ attitude seems to be dominant, except in the better off private schools. The case of Continuous Assessment has been an intriguing one. It is a requirement of the system, but the concept has been seriously misunderstood but by those who make the rules and those who apply it, and in fact by the wider society. The result has been wide scale abuse, resulting first in continuous testing in schools and then in continuous cheating all over.
The point here is that these interventions are simply essential duties of the educational management system; they are fundamental policy obligations of government. They constitute a must-do, to make education work. When such interventions come with a publicity bang, and are proclaimed as reforms, stakeholders expect some fundamental improvement in education. Sadly enough, the interventions end up as mere distractions.

**Routine administrative interventions**

These often take the form of education management systems doing what they normally would have done but had avoided doing. When this happens, the authorities often claim to have undertaken a reform. Experience however shows that, if at all such interventions lead to any changes, these do not often go far as to lead to any deep-seated reforms.

A case in point here is the way educational inputs have been handled in the country, as in the following illustrative examples

- Every year, there is an increase in budgetary allocations to education (as claimed by governments), as evidence of the priority accorded to the sector, and in order to improve both facilities and performance. This goal is however not being attained, as the funds (if at all they exist) do not go to where the education action really is - schools and classrooms.

- Books are often procured by government agencies for distribution to schools. This is with the intention of ensuring compliance to a policy of one-book-per-child-in every-core-subject. The system is however characterised by serious cracks in the book supply chain - illustrated in figure one below -. This is due to a variety of factors: corruption, inefficiency, tardiness in government operations, over-centralisation, logistical problems, etc. As a result, the books either get late to end users or never get to them at all. Thus, the intended ‘reforms’ in teaching and learning are never achieved.

![Fig. 1: The Educational Material Supply Chain](image)

**Changes merely decreed into existence**

Table one shows various approaches that have been used world-wide for educational reforms, their main features and the results. The table shows that when Imposition is applied the result is Antagonism by stakeholders. It also shows that it is only when Involvement (of stakeholders) is the dominant methodology for reforms that Enthusiasm (again by stakeholders) results.
The Nigerian case is replete with ‘reforms decreed into existence’ - one blatant example being the decision by government in 1978 to deploy soldiers to schools to instil discipline in students. The hell that was let loose by that decision led to a tactical withdrawal of the soldiers. There was no formal announcement of the abandonment of the intervention. In spite of the might of the military regime of the time, the ‘reform’ simply died a natural death.

Table 1: Features and Results of Different Approaches to Educational Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>MAIN FEATURES</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imposition</td>
<td>Reform already decided; no questions; no going back; government knows what is good for the stakeholder</td>
<td>ANTAGONISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Reform packaged; key elements revealed to peripheral stakeholders before sensitizing the real stakeholders</td>
<td>APATHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>A series of discussion sessions with selected stakeholder groups as you go along</td>
<td>LETHARGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Side-side work with veritable stakeholders all through the process</td>
<td>ENTHUSIASM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Face-saving changes

These are cases of continuous policy reversals, in which ‘reforms’ are announced with fanfare today and reversed tomorrow, as a response to stakeholder concerns or as a result of executive incapacity. In most cases, the latter explanation is the one prevailing, as government is yet to get attuned to the dictates of participatory methods of initiating and implementing reforms. Also, in most cases, government applies half-way reversals, implying different degrees of modifications to the original ‘reforms’.

This can be illustrated with a particularly interesting example. Nigeria introduced a new school calendar, running from October to June in 1973. Then, in a New Year broadcast in 1977, the then head of State announced (to the surprise of the nation) a reversal to the former school calendar that ran from January to December. Government was later to apply the face-saving approach to return to the October-June school year, its argument of reform ‘in conformity with the farming calendar of our people’ notwithstanding.

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2 Obanya, PAI (2008): Reforming Educational Reforms; Lawal, A. R et. al. (Eds.): Education Reforms in Nigeria., Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, 24-46
**Musical Chair syndrome**

The game of musical chairs is best illustrated by the frequent changes in the political leadership of education ministries (federal ministers and state commissioners). As the quotation below shows, each new minister comes - not to ensure continuity and consolidate on past achievements - but to carve a niche through a new brand of ‘reforms’

‘The minister who was in office from 1999 to 2001 was preoccupied with seeing through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. His successor was more concerned with ensuring the take off of the National Open University. His successor focussed on curriculum reform and the review of the National Policy on Education. After him came a minister who vigorously pursued structural reforms of the sector, an effort judged as taking on too many tasks in a single swoop and not involving stakeholders fully¹. The minister who came after that was pre-occupied with ‘reforming the reforms’, while the minister currently in post has as pet project a national educational ‘Roadmap’ project.¹³

Thus, we end up in a classic dilemma of plus ça change, plus ca reste le même. In other words, the frequent changes, often intended to ‘inject new blood’ into the system, end of causing confusion and having no effect on education system dysfunctionality.

**Politically-motivated shakeups**

These are cases in which changes (bandied around as ‘reforms’ by their initiators) are motivated mainly by the desire to score cheap political points. One good example of this is the citing of educational institutions. In many cases, schools are cited in places that are also the political constituency of the person taking the institution or in the political strong holds of known political heavyweights in society. The well-ventilated rationale is to bring services closer to the people, therefore facilitating access. Such schools get all the required attention as long as the promoters are in office. The fate of the institution when the promoters are voted out of office is often downright neglect.

Politics has been the major motivation for every state having its own higher institutions, even when there are federal institutions to meet prevailing social demands for education. It is the same motive that largely explains the phenomenon of multi-campus institutions, the establishment of federal institutions in every state of the federation, the proliferation of federal government colleges (particularly, their physical location).

In most of these cases, the goals of the intended reforms are never attained. Quality is sacrificed to mere increase in numbers. Funding and human resources are spread thinly. Worst of all, the ‘reforms’ tend to be reversed as soon as there is a change in political gladiators.

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Ill-thought-out/feebley implemented ideas

These are cases in which ‘reforms’ are dreamt of overnight and implemented in a rush. In such cases, the educational challenge to be addressed by reforms would be genuine. However, owing to faulty analysis and lack of consultation with stakeholders, the choice of response to the challenge is often inappropriate. The real issues are not often addressed because issues analysis has been one-sided. Implementation mechanisms are inappropriate and achievements far from the intended results.

One classic example of ill-thought and feebly implemented idea in the Nigerian experience was the introduction of Modern Mathematics in the 1970s. This was a borrowed idea that aped global trends at the period. Its intention was partly to de-mystify mathematics and to make it more attractive and accessible to students. The country was awash with workshops and materials for the ‘new’ concepts and methods. Schools were expected to be implementing a modern mathematics curriculum at all levels. It became unfashionable (perhaps, no longer prestigious) to talk of Mathematics without the epithet ‘Modern’.

However, there was no consensus among mathematicians on what was ‘Modern’ in Modern Mathematics. Teachers were not quite sure of what they were teaching. Learner achievement, attitude and motivation did not seem to have improved. It therefore required what was called ‘the great modern mathematics controversy’ for the nation to settle for ‘simply mathematics’ and for curricula to be reversed as a consequence.

Boundary between Change and Reform

Reform, in the true sense of the term, addresses a genuine problem that it tackles as its root cause, on the basis of strategic interventions that impact positively on the entire education system. This is the distinguishing feature that makes reforms a lot more sustainable than changes. Factors that help to build in sustainability safeguards into educational reforms (in the true sense of the term) are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

CONCEPT CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Figure two is intended to illustrate what it takes to conceive of educational reforms, to make them happen, and to effect positive and sustainable transformation in the educational system. We shall expatiate on each of the factors in turn.

i. Transformational Goal

This conditionality is the crux of it all. Educational reform must aim at transforming by moving the system to the next level of positive instrument. If, for example, the challenge in the system is poor learning achievement, related reform must set the goal of significantly raising achievement to a level that is considered satisfactory. This implies that reforms should not envisage short term objectives; they should aim at long-term goals that ensure sustainable, long-term multiplier effect on the entire educational system.

The emphasis on ‘long-term multiplier effect on the entire educational system’ is an important one. First, the national education set-up is a system in which every sub-system impacts on all others. For this reason, reform aimed at a sub-system would not be judged
successful if it does not impact positively on all other sub-systems. For example, improvements in funding would be meaningless if does not result in improvements in facilities, in teaching, and ultimately in learning. Secondly, a reform that has an immediate bang effect but which does not change things on a permanent basis would be of little value. For example, if bringing the school closer to the people immediately leads to a 20% increase in enrolment, but within a few weeks, leads to reduced net attendance, the intervention would have had only a short-term promise but would have damaged rather than improve the system.

*Fig 2: What it takes to reform education*

**ii. System-Focus**

As already stated, any intervention that seeks total reform must focus (not simply on the specific level of intervention) but more on the extent to which specific interventions can bring about varying degrees of positive and sustainable transformation in the entire system.

For example, infrastructural decay is one easily perceptible sign that education service delivery is poor. A reform that simply paints and re-roofs school buildings would be a simple whitewash. The paints would shine for a while and then fade of with education not making any gains. On the other hand, if the reform had involved a number of quality steps, like the following

- Involvement of local school management committees in design and construction, with training in maintenance of infrastructure
• Re-design of classrooms, to ensure sufficient sitting place, comfortable leg room for students, and possibilities for flexible classroom arrangements, to facilitate child-centred teaching
• Provision for the storage and retrieval of books and other teaching-learning material, to ensure easy access and use by teachers and learners
• Ventilation and right type of roofing for comfort in the classroom
• Use of sturdy and durable construction materials, to ensure long-lasting buildings
• Adequate space around the buildings, to facilitate out-of-class activities
• Provisions specially designed for learners with special needs

A combination of all these steps would have lasting impacts of the education system: ready acceptance of the school, (in view of its attractiveness) students who are proud to be in comfortable environment, teachers who can take advantage of more conducive environments, students whose learning environment become more learner-friendly and with enhanced capacity for learning, etc. In other words, the more a reforms takes a system-wide view (and ensures system-wide gains) the greater the possible sustainable long-time impact on Education.

iii. Deep-Seated Challenges

This simply means dealing with the real challenges facing education and not simply with their symptoms. One way of approaching this is through the process of PROBLEM TREE ANALYSIS. As illustrated in figure three.
The ordinary meaning of figure three is as follows: The trunk represents the problem as perceived by everybody; the levels are the effects of the problem seen at the trunk level; the origin of the problem is deep down in the roots.

Applied to challenges facing education, the problem tree concept can be better appreciated with an understanding of figure four below.

![Problem Tree Concept](image)

**Fig. 4: Education-Related Illustration of the Problem Tree Concept**

Here, the trunk of the problem is what most people observe - learners not performing. The leaves are what people lament; the ill effects of learners’ poor performance; the roots are the real problems to be tackled to eliminate the problem focus and avoid its ill consequences on society and the educational system.

For sustainable positive transformation to take place in education, reform has to be deep-seated, by addressing the root causes of educational ills. When this rule is not obeyed, the changes introduced simply create more problems than they are intended to solve.

### iv. Strategic Attack

This refers to the need to be selective in the choice of methodologies for responding to educational sector challenges. Being strategic involves (a) applying the best-fit method to addressing a problem, (b) applying interventions that would impact on all other challenge areas, and (c) having a long-term view of the effects of the interventions applied.

The implications here is that a reform would apply methods of ‘attacking’ education challenges that are strategic. In plain language, the attack must be one that would hit at the
root of the challenge. For example, adolescent boys’ disaffection with schooling in the south-
east of Nigeria can only be addressed by digging into its root causes (societal attitudes in
favour of instant money-making, in-adaptation of school organisation, curricula and teaching,
household poverty, unemployment of school leavers, etc. The next step would be to choose
out of a multiple of solutions that which would hit at these root causes, like

- Poverty reduction measures
- Value re-orientation in society
- Economic growth to create employment
- Adolescent-boy friendly school environments

Measures such as these would most likely impact on attendance, retention and performance
of adolescent boys than short-term measures like laws forcing them to stay on in schools

v. Strategic Planning

One does not simply jump into a reform; its implementation has to be planned, and should
then take the form of a strategic plan. What makes a plan strategic? A plan is strategic if it
- is a result of in-depth situational analysis
- addresses the root causes of the challenges facing education
- prioritises the challenging to focus on high impact ones
- applies interventions that have a multiplier effect on the entire system
- focuses on the forest and not on the trees (i.e. takes a systems view of the education
  challenges to be addressed
- takes a long-term view of the desired impact of the reform interventions being applied

vi. Participatory Conceptualisation, Articulation and Execution

Table two shows the wide range of education stakeholders in Society. A reform worthy of the
name should carry to various classes along.

Table 2: Classes of Education Sector Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Dwellers</td>
<td>Women Groups</td>
<td>Practising Teachers</td>
<td>Education Sector Technocrats</td>
<td>Govt Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Urban Poor</td>
<td>Youth Organisations</td>
<td>Teacher Associations</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Institutions</td>
<td>Organised Labour</td>
<td>Parent-Teacher Associations</td>
<td>Organised Private Sector</td>
<td>Education Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassroots Based Organisations</td>
<td>Small Scale Economic Operators</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Professional Bodies</td>
<td>Education Sector Parastatals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Govt Agencies</td>
<td>Religious Bodies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Govt Ministries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows the real need bearers (those whose lives can be changed by reforms) as classes one and two. Classes three to five are also concerned with education. They can influence what happens to Education but the can effect no change if the ‘lower’ classes are not carried along.

Educational reforms will always fail if its conceptualisation (the birth of the idea), its articulation (spelling out the details), and implementation (practically effecting the desired changes) are undertaken only with classes four and five on the table.

vii. Systemic Impact

This is a reiteration of the point made earlier to the effect that a reform is no reform if the interventions do not impact positively on the entire educational system. For example, a reform that entails enrolling all five-year into a pre-school class should not simply lead to increased enrolment, but must also impact on the system in a number of ways, like

- Enhancing learning readiness, so that learning outcomes are able to improve
- Expose teachers to child-centred pedagogy thus leading to quality teaching for quality learning
- Improving links between homes, communities and schools, thus enhancing community ownership of education
- Bridging gender gap in participation in schools, since ALL five-year-olds are able to get to school and remain there to learn

viii. A continuous learning process

Fig. 5: An Educational Reform Cycle
This is a way of saying that improvements (which is what reforms are expected to bring about) can never come to an end. Reform must be a continuous process. As illustrated in figure five, reform is not a one-shot event but a cyclic process that begins with an analysis of the prevailing situation, leading to a clear identification of where reform should focus on. The interventions needed are then planned strategically and implemented as an exercise in learning more about the education sector, its challenges and factors responsible for the degree of success of reform interventions. A review of the entire process then follows, leading to consensus on new directions for reform. In an ever changing real life situation, this cyclic process of learning from experience continues indefinitely.

AN ACID TEST FOR NIGERIA’S 6-3-3-4 REFORM

The 6-3-3-4 system is possibly the reform that is most discussed and subjected to critical scrutiny in Nigeria. We shall test the reform along the criteria of eligibility as outlined in the preceding section. Thus, 6-3-3-4 will be examined to the extent the reform has met the criteria of:

- Having a transformational goal
- Being system focussed
- Addressing a deep-seated challenge
- Involving strategic choices
- Being systematically planned
- Popular or Elite Participation
- Impacting on the entire system
- Being a Process and not simply an Event

Transformational Goal of 6-3-3-4

6-3-3-4 became the commonly used title for Nigeria’s National Policy on Education, first published in 1977. This is because it actually transformed the structure of the levels of formal education from A to B, as illustrated in table three below.

Table 3: Structural Changes of 6-3-3-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD STRUCTURE</th>
<th>NEW STRUCTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Primary School Leaving Certificate (Six years of primary education)</td>
<td>• Six years of primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School Certificate (Five years of secondary education)</td>
<td>• Three years of junior secondary education (Basic Education Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Senior School Certificate (Two years of pre-university education)</td>
<td>• Three years of senior secondary education (Senior Secondary Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bachelor’s degree (Three years of university education)</td>
<td>• Four Years of University Education (bachelor’s degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nigeria Certificate in Education (3 years of post school certificate teacher education)</td>
<td>• Non-university teacher and technical education (post senior school certificate, with length of study unchanged)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Policy however has goals for which the 6-3-3-4 structure is merely an instrument. It was intended as a change from an inherited colonial education system to a genuinely national one and its tenets were in keeping with the prevailing wind of political and social changes blowing all over Africa in the years following the attainment of political independence. To that extent, its goals were transformational.

The System Focus of 6-3-3-4

The National Policy on Education is anchored on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which in its Section 18 affirms that

Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. Government shall promote science and technology. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide

- Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
- Free secondary education;
- Free university education; and
- Free adult literacy programme

In addition, the Policy outlines government’s vision on all levels of formal education: primary, secondary, higher education. It goes further to outline policy directions for pre-school education, teacher education, adult and non-formal education and the funding of education.

The Policy in fact builds on a vision of a Nigerian State built on the pillars of

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation
- A great an dynamic economy
- A land of full and bright opportunities for all citizens

The Policy thus sees educational reform as an integral element in nation building. Its system focus is therefore a lot more than a mere focus on Education. The wider society seems to be the ultimate target.

Deep-seated Challenges Addressed by 6-3-3-4

The challenges are not apparent, nor are they clearly stated, in the policy document. This is mainly because the conclusions of the national policy dialogues that preceded the development of the policy were not reported. Subsequent reviews of the document have not rectified this anomaly. It therefore becomes difficult to pinpoint the real justifications for the policy choices made.

It is however to discern scanty references to the determining factors of educational systems (access, equity, quality, relevance, efficiency) in the following goal statements

- Provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system
• Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to society.

The deep-seated challenges addressed by the 6-3–3-4 reform have therefore not been clearly articulated. Such challenges would have been the logical springboard for the choice of reform interventions.

**Strategic Choices of the Reform**

Seven major types of strategic choices were made for the promotion of the 6-3-3-4 reform

*Structural*: the 6-3-3-4 structure, with diversification of opportunities at the senior secondary level

*Curricular*: integration of learning experiences (language arts, basic science, and introductory technology)

*Teachers*: National Certificate in Education (NCE) as minimum qualification for entry into the Teaching profession

*Learners*: Guidance and Counselling as normal school activity, to ensure learner responsive teaching

*Assessment*: Continuous assessment of learning (and teaching), to nip failure in the bud

*Language-in-education*: the use of the mother tongue, or the language of the immediate environment, for instruction in the early years of schooling, instruction in English from the fourth year, the inclusion of a second Nigerian language and foreign languages (French/Arabic) at the senior secondary level

*Re-structure of University Education*: change from a three to a four-year basic degree programmes, reflecting the top 4 of the 6-3-3-4 structure.

**Systematic Implementation Plan**

The publication of the national Policy on Education was followed almost immediately by the release of related ‘Implementation Guidelines’ that went into great details into the rationale for the policy, its detailed provisions, and suggestions on how it is to be implemented. It is not clear whether these guidelines were ever well circulated. One is not sure that the content was known, even to those responsible for implementing the Policy. In fact, very little reference has been made to that document in the past three decades.

The implementation of the Policy was delayed by political brickbats, especially during the Shagari regime of 1979-1983, when states governed by opposition parties simply went on doing their own thing. It took a return to military rule early in 1984 for the Policy to be enforced on all the States of the Federation. Since then, implementation has remained at best half-hearted, with more emphasis on the bare structure (6-3-3-4) rather than the real strategic focus areas of the Policy.
Popular or Elite Participation

The process that led to the emergence of the National Policy on Education was a series of policy dialogues - a national curriculum conference in 1969, sectoral conferences on primary, secondary and teacher education in subsequent years. Drafting the policy was itself the work of a committee involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

The time lag between 1969 and 1977 however meant a displacement of persona and loss of vital information links. There is no evidence of stakeholder consultations and policy dialogues at various (geo-political, Socio-economic and professional) levels. Official speeches have been made (and are still being made) on the Policy. Innumerable conferences have been held, and scores of academic papers written on it. Intensive curriculum development efforts have been made, to give vent to the Policy.

However, that public perception of it has remained 6-3-3-4 (its bare bones) is a pointer to lack of knowledge (talk less of internalisation) of its major provisions. It is not surprising then that Nigerians have come to blame the ills of the education system on 6-3-3-4.

Extent of System-wide Impact

Statistics compiled from a variety of sources (UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, etc), as presented in table three, show that there has not been any appreciable progress in education in Nigeria over the years, in spite of the reforms in the national Policy.

Table 3: Selected education indicators for Nigeria-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary completion rate</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females in primary education</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females in secondary education</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school age girls out of school</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained teachers in primary schools</td>
<td>49.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary netenrolment</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Gender parity Index</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy</td>
<td>48.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure on Education as % of GDP</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School life expectancy</td>
<td>8.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition from basic to senior secondary</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For failure to adhere to the tenets of educational reform, as discussed earlier, Nigeria’s National Policy has not had a system-wide impact. This is better illustrated by reference to the major indices of national education system performance, namely:

- **Access**: the country’s out-of-school population is still high - some ten million school-age children

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4[www.nationmaster.com/red/country/ni-nigeria/edu-educational](http://www.nationmaster.com/red/country/ni-nigeria/edu-educational) (assessed 12 September 2011)
• **Equity**: geographical imbalance in educational opportunities still persists between North and South as well as between males and females. Gender parity in favour of girls is a phenomenon of the South-East and has become an equity issue.

• **Quality**: the essential inputs are inadequate, while the goings-on in the schools are such that produce unsatisfactory results

• **Efficiency**: data on education has remained a serious issue; primary completion and transition rates to post-basic education have remained unsatisfactory and investment in education has not yielded the expected results.

**Has 6-3-3-4 been an Event or a Process?**

Under normal conditions, the implementation of educational would have a built monitoring mechanism that would provide empirical evidence to guide its constant revision, thus fitting into the reform cycle illustrated in figure five. The national Policy reform in Nigeria seems to have been a series of distinct events and did not transform into a continuous process of education sector development. This largely explains why it failed to exert a system-wide, positive and sustainable impact, as would have been the case if the tenets of educational reform had been adhered to.

There have been a series of revisions of the Policy, but the evidence base for such revisions is not clear. That also explains why there has not been any genuine overhaul of the Policy. The early revisions in the 1980s merely altered the mechanisms of its implementation to reflect changes from military to civil rule.

There have been a long series of education-related developments if education since the Policy came into being. These have featured in the latest in the series of revised versions. The developments include the global EFA (Education for ALL) initiative, the national UBE (Universal basic Education) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). The management of education in the country has, in the mean time been complicated by the mushrooming of parastatals. At the federal level for example, there is a primary and secondary division in the Ministry of Education, as well as an EFA Secretariat. There are, in addition three distinct parastatals working on basic education – the Universal basic Education Commission (UBEC), the Nomadic Education Commission, and the Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education Commission. With a multiplicity of agencies (compounded by inter-governmental disagreements on ‘true federalism’) workable machinery for driving reforms becomes difficult to operate.

In summary, the 6-3-3-4 reform has not perfected Nigeria’s learning curve on the development of Education. This could not happen as the essential tenets of popular participation in the articulation and the implementation of the intended reforms were not respected.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This discussion set out to demonstrate that not every educational change would qualify as a reform. Examples of Adhoc retouching of education structure and practices were cited. These were placed in contradistinction with examples of transformations that can have more lasting and sustainable positive impact on the entire education system.
The discussion went into some detail on what it takes to effect a reform and illustrated the tasks involved in the form of an educational reform cycle that sees reform not as an event but more as a process. These tenets were used to conduct an acid test on Nigeria’s most ambitious and most talked about reform, the 6-3-3-4, often mistaken for the flesh and blood of the National Policy on Education, first published in 1977 and revised several times since then. Our analysis showed that the national Policy, in spite of its laudable intentions, has failed to reform Education in Nigeria, as educational indicators have remained in an unsatisfactory state.

This unsatisfactory state indicates that educational reform in Nigeria is a desideratum. This must learn from past mistakes by going back to the basics. More importantly, popular policy dialogues must replace ‘education summits’ that do not have a base. Secondly, Nigeria must brush up the situational analytical studies carried out earlier in this decade - the Education Sector Diagnosis and the studies by the EFA Secretariat that would have given rise to national EFA Action Plan. Third, reform must devolve more responsibilities to the States and Local Governments, where the education action really. Finally, Nigeria has to adopt the culture of strategic planning of the education sector. Such plans always target reforms (based on deep rooted challenges) with interventions that positively transform content, methods and outcomes of education.