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## STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING UNDUE POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Any policy on education that has no effect or poorly implement is no policy. The position paper therefore, focused on strategies for preventing undue political influence in the management of education in Nigeria with the view of improving the quality of the nation's education system at all tiers. Considering the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) to global educational development, political involvement in education becomes a topical issue especially in developing countries like Nigeria. SDG-4 is concerned with where global education should be in 2030 in terms of quality. Six (6) strategies were examined namely establishing independent education bodies, promoting transparency and accountability, strengthening community involvement, fostering professionalism, implementing a national education policy, and electoral reforms to bring education experts in the position authority, the presidency. The paper also highlighted concepts of politics and education; National Policy on Education, effects of politics on educational policies, scope of politics in education, political and social constraints in educational planning, philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria, and funding education in Nigeria. The paper concluded that although, political interference in every sector of the economy is inevitable, undue political influence on the management of Nigerian Education System has*

*been counter-productive, hence the prevalence of undue political interference could be reduced to the barest minimum if those who have a passion to serve the masses and genuine development of the nation's economy are given enabling environment to emerge as leaders in the polity. It was therefore, suggested that electoral reform, a single strategy that would make other strategies identified in the paper enforceable; enshrine that Nigerian political parties should give their presidential tickets to candidates who specialize in education, and compel them to be faithful to their programmes of action when they assume office as this would end the prevalence of successive Governments paying lip-service to Educational Management in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Strategies, Political, Undue, Preventing Undue Political Influence, Management of Education in Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Strategies for preventing undue political influence on the management of education in Nigeria have been a topical issue. While undue political influence means the negative interference by government, management of education refers to the administration of education system in which a group combines human and material resources to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures to execute an educational system. It has not been disputed that politics and education have a symbiotic relationship because the later is an institution governed by rules (the desire of educational administrators to have their own way to achieve quality ) but educational managers cannot have their way in this regard because educational institutions are subject to regulation by Government. A society is said to be politically organized when a body of people is clearly organized as a unit for purpose of Government (Appadorai, 2004). The author asserted that the essence of such a society is that a group of people called the government are clothed with authority to make laws and enforce them. In other words, every other constituent or sector like education of the nation state is under the influence of the government that determines the quantity and quality of what goes to that sector in terms of provision, funding, and allocation. This means that quality management of public education in Nigeria is largely dependent on the political will power of the Government however, the pertinent question has been on whether the political interference impacts positively or negatively to the attainment of the stated goals and objectives of Nigerian education. The obvious answer is that the nature of political interference is undue political interference which has been detrimental to the attainment of the stated goals of Nigeria education. This breeds conflict between the standard of education in Nigeria and global best practice, the template being the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4). SDG-4 is concerned with where global education ought to be in 2030 in terms of quality. In considering of the

importance of Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG-4) to global educational development, political involvement in education becomes a topical issue especially in developing countries like Nigeria. SDG-4 is a goal that aims to provide free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education as well as affordable technical, vocational, and tertiary education (UNDP, 2023). The source stated that SDG-4 also emphasizes the importance of the relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship, and aims to eliminate gender disparities in education. SDG-4 therefore focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality of education and promoting long-life learning opportunities before 2030. Unfortunately, effective and efficient management of Nigerian education system is marred with undue political influence which the paper sought to point out strategies to curb the overbearing influence of politics in the educational system. Five (5) strategies identified by Artificial Intelligence (Ai) overview were examined while the authors collapsed the 5 strategies into electoral reforms to bring education experts at the level of final authority, the presidency.

The strategies as streamlined by AI overview are as follows:

### **1. Establishing Independent Education Bodies**

2. create autonomous agencies or commission responsible for educational planning, policy implementation and quality assurance
3. examples include independent boards of governors for schools and universities and a National education standard agencies
4. these bodies should be free from direct political interference and staffed by qualified professionals with expertise in education.

### **2. Promoting Transparency And Accountability**

- . Publicize education budgets and spending, allowing for public scrutiny and oversight.
- iv. Conduct regular audit of institutions and programmes to address any irregularities or mismanagement.
- v. Ensure transparent and open procurement processes for educational resources and infrastructure
- vi. Implement robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the utilization of funds and resources.

### **3. Strengthening Community Involvement**

- vii. Encourage community ownership and educational programmes

- viii. Established schools best management committees with presentation from all stakeholders.
- ix. Empower parents, teachers, community members to participate in decision making, processes related to education

#### **4. Fostering Professionalism**

- x. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teacher and educational administrators
- xi. Promote a culture of meritocracy and discourage political appointment within the education sector
- xii. Ensure that educational leaders are selected based on their qualification, experience, commitment to education
- xiii. Involved stakeholders in the development and implementation of curriculum

#### **5. Implementing a National Education Policy**

- xiv. Develop and implement a comprehensive National Education Policy that at lines clear goals, objectives and standard education system
- xv. This policy should be developed through a participatory process involving all stakeholders and should be regularly review and to updated
- xvi. The policy should also address issues such as teacher training, curriculum development and resources allocation

By implementing the aforementioned strategies, Nigeria can create a more robust and resilient system that is less susceptible to political interference and better able to needs of its students.

In addition to the strategies streamlined by AI Overview, another critical strategy relevant to Nigeria environment in the effective and efficient management of her educational system is the need for Electoral Reform to bring education experts power at the level of final authority herein referred to as Mr. President in subsequent political dispensation. Political parties should be made to be faithful to their programmes of action; leaders should be critical humanists who have passion and interest in being servants of others and write the wrongs of the past (Ekwealo, 2002). The author stressed that those who have a passion for the wealth and happiness of the society as a whole should be encouraged to emerge as leaders in order to do that service and direct education to quality for national development.

## Concept of politics

Politics is defined as the struggle for power which is the capacity to influence behavior by threat of some form of sanction. Another conception of politics is its explanation as the act of government on any issue, which may necessitate decision making, policy formulation, and supply of funds. Politics involve the use and the regulation of power, influence and authority, especially in the allocation of 'goods' – the things which people want. No group of people could live together for long without effective controls over power. Rules have to be made and made known. In the nation state there must be some accepted machinery for legislation. The rule must be applied and this requires executive machinery. The conceptualization of politics as the activities of government in decision making on any issue and authoritative allocation of resources within the society is the basis of discussion in this chapter.

## Concept of Education

Education can be defined as the process of developing cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of individuals in order to make him or her acquire skills and knowledge that are relevant to him/her and to the society in which he/she lives. Socrates was of the opinion that education should probe into the environment. Aristotle was of the opinion

that it should shape the politics of the society and the moral value of individuals. To John Locke, it should make man to achieve justice, while John Dewey suggested that education should make the society to achieve democracy, equal rights and justice. It is against this background that education, at whatever level, is seen to serve both the individual and the common wealth. In an organized country, the idea of an educational system is for such education to be devoted to development of universalistic morality and attitudes and to the welfare of mankind as a whole. If this objective is to be achieved, education cannot be divorced from politics. One of the main functions of the national educational system is to confirm the authority of the government of the day. Respect for law and order means respect for decisions of office bearers whether politically, chosen or elected or holding offices in government. It is this belief that makes the governments at (Federal, State and Local levels take the lion share of the planning, development and financing of education at all levels in Nigeria.

## National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education is Nigeria's national guideline on the effective management and implementation of education at all tiers of the system. The National Policy on Education therefore is a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements for quality education in Nigeria; Develop a united and secure society underpinned by strong democratic principles and modern and industrialized economy. With this vision comes

the expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development, a tool of empowerment for the poor, and the socially marginalized groups, an effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of the human resources; as well as the development of a competent workforce through the acquisition of practical life skills relevant to the world of work; and as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies. Through the strategic and collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders qualitative educative education relevant to the 21 century will be provided.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS) recognize education as the vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socioeconomic empowerment. Its target is to increase the percentage of graduates of primary schools who acquire functional literacy and numeracy to 100 percent and adult literacy to 80 percent by 2012. This has been further strengthened by the UBE Act of May, 2004, global initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for all Goals (EFA).

### **Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria**

1. The National Policy on Education enunciates the objectives standards, structures, strategies and guidelines for achieving the national education goals in Nigeria. The policy must be situated within the framework of the overall philosophy of the nation.
2. The overall philosophy of the nation is to:
  - (a) Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, quality and justice
  - (b) Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.
3. Nigeria's philosophy of education is the following set of beliefs
  - (a) Education is an instrument for national development social change.
  - (b) Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
  - (c) Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
  - (d) Education is a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges;
  - (e) Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

4. This philosophy is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal schools system.
5. The five main national goals of Nigeria as stated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are the building of:
  - (a) a free and democratic society;
  - (b) a just and egalitarian society;
  - (c) united, strong and self-reliant nation;
  - (d) a great and dynamic economy;
  - (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens;
6. The goals of education in Nigeria are the:
  - (a) development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;
  - (b) total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world.
  - (c) provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
  - (d) inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity; and
  - (e) development of appropriate skills, mental, physical social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.
7. The specific goals of education in Nigeria are to:
  - (a) ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity education for the total development of the individual;
  - (b) ensure the quality of education at all levels;
  - (c) promote functional education for skill acquisition creation and poverty reduction;
  - (d) ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society world of work.
  - (e) Collaborate with development partners, the private sector and local communities to support and fund education;

- (f) promote information and communication technology capability at all levels.
8. In order to fully realize the goals of education in Nigeria and gain from its contribution to the national economy, Government take necessary measures to ensure that:
- (a) educational activities shall be learner centred maximum self-development and self-fulfillment;
  - (b) teaching shall be practical, activity-based, experiential and ICT supported;
  - (c) education shall be related to overall community needs;
  - (d) all tiers of government shall promote the establishment of Reading Clubs in schools, and Community Libraries;
  - (e) special provisions and incentives shall be made for the study of the sciences at each level of the education system;
  - (f) continuing education shall be part and parcel of the education system;
  - (g) every child shall learn mother tongue and language of the immediate community. In addition, it is expected that every child shall learn one of these three Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

The quality of instruction at all levels of education shall be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

- (a) respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- (b) faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- (c) moral and spiritual principles in inter-personal and human relations;
- (d) shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- (e) promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- (f) acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance

### **Education and Politics**

In the view of Bello (2000), political culture is transmitted in an education system hence, there is no such thing as a political education. The notion of political education distorts the connection between two essentially interrelated social processes. From whatever angle we look at education we shall see that it serving political purposes hence, there is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either function as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of



the younger generation into the logic of the present (political) system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes “the practice of freedom ; the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Conversely, the educational system derives its authorization and owes its continued existence to the support provided by the political system. The government invests in education by providing human, material and financial resources. It also determines the direction by formulating educational policies and controlling for quality. Moreover, the output of the educational system in developing countries are often the active inputs into the national political systems. The people in government as well as most national party leader are people who have passed through the educational system.

It will therefore be improper to ignore the interplay of politics and education in any diagnosis of the educational development of an emerging nation. .

### **Effects of Politics on Educational Policies**

Given the nature of education as a veritable instrument for national development, many people had wished that education be taken out of party politics (Bello, 2000). The author inferred that certainly there is something incongruous about the intention of political warfare into a domain dedicated to the upbringing of the children. One reason why there are more people who want education kept free of political is that today, more are conscious of the harm that can be done when school get involved in partisan politics or are made to serve dubious political purposes.

It is quite clear that the bureaucracy which administers the educational services in Nigerian has been the same instrument for making political and educational decisions. This has made education a reflection of the political system in Nigeria at all times. Ideally, political influences education through the policies and decisions that are made by the political leadership to ensure the realization of the national, state or political party objectives and to preach what they believe.

The formation of political parties and the regional and tribal rivalries that immediately accompanied party political in the pre-independent Nigeria had important consequences on educational development in the country. From that on, educational policy-making and decisions because tied to political party intensity as the autonomy of the region grew on matters of education

A close look at current development in politics and education in Nigeria will reveal the impact of political on educational administration. While some political parties declare free education in their state other parties concentrates on other aspect of education. Each political party, however, makes efforts to demonstrate their progression and concern for the welfare of the public by one from of educational innovation or the other.

## **Political and Social Constraints in Educational Planning**

Political and social constraints in educational planning according to Ruscoe in Bello (2000) are as follows:

### **Fusion of political and technical decisions**

Because so many of the top appointment are political competence, many individuals at the top are placed in situations in which neither political nor technical consideration seem to predominate with promotion through strict civil service procedure fairly, unusual, those who maintain or aspire to the top echelon of the educational system. From within see, rightly or wrongly that success depends on maintaining political rather than technical goodwill. In such cases, technical decisions are frequently deferred in order to make the correct political decision. In some instances, of course, decisions based on technical and on political grounds corresponds but in other instances political decisions are not supported and are perhaps even contradicted by technical evidence.

### **Lack of clear educational policies**

One of the most distressing results of the fusion of political and technical decisions is the lack of clear educational policies. There is little distinction made between those policies, which depend ultimately on normative agreement, and those, which depend on empirical evidence. Issues of how to evaluate and if necessary, change policies are frequently debated on the wrong grounds. One cannot productively seek normative agreement about empirical questions, since the answers to such questions require empirical evidence. Similarly, is not useful to seek empirical evidence for issues which to be resolved, require normative consensus. Such confusion of political and technical, of normative and empirical, issues in educational policy creates special difficulty for the educational planner.

### **Choosing among alternatives**

The planner often finds that the alternative means by which to achieve educational objectives are not treated as alternative techniques to be judged on the basis of technical criteria but they are treated as alternatives which are more or less good politically. This confusion is most commonly found in educational planner; attempts to formulate school construction programmer. All too frequently the sitting of school buildings is ultimately determined on the basis of political patronage rather than on such technical grounds as concentration of school-age populations, location and size of existing school is predetermined on political grounds and the planner is simply instructed on devise specific constructions programmers.

### **Politicization of knowledge**

In a highly politicized atmosphere, the reaction of decision-makers to evidence objectively determined may be to accept or reject such evidence on political grounds. Because of political leanings of the presenters of the evidence rather than, 'what is the value of the evidence presented? When knowledge is politicized, and data are often suspect, not because they are incorrect, inaccurate or inadequate, but because they have been presented by agencies or individuals whose political credential are not that moment valid. Some institutions for gathering research and data do, of course, remain fairly untouched by this problem. Even with frequent shifts in the political climate in which they work educational planning agencies, however, because they are intimately connected with government activity, seldom attain such isolation.

### **Public Opinion**

Political decisions about educational objectives normally do not reflect any prior assessment of public opinion. The technician who may be concerned with about the drift or direction of educational decision-making has little opportunity to fortify his position by appealing to public opinion. The initiation of educational planning has sometimes been accompanied by information programmes to acquaint the public with the intent of planning and its areas of concern. Such informational programmes are unidirectional however, and therefore do not provide means by which the public may express its will on educational matters.

### **Socio-Cultural Constraints**

Nigerian society according to Adejumobi in Bello (2000) is so complex and is so plagued by cultural differences and the disadvantages of not being technologically developed. The present educational policy aims at fostering the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies for an individual to live in and contribute to society. It furthers emphasizes the training mind for a better understanding of the world around us. Some of these aims and objectives can be acquired within the formal school environment. However, because a large percentage of parents are still illiterates, they fail to appreciate and take advantage of the educational opportunities provided for their children. The result is that there are still places where parents are being threatened with court actions for their refusal to allow their children to go to school.

### **Funding Education in Nigeria**

The statement of the problem in Nigeria education is that public education at all tiers is grossly underfunded contrary to 26% UNESCO recommendation. For instance, in this 2025, Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education was #3.5 trillion (three trillion five hundred million naira only) representing 7.3% of the nation's annual budget. This figure is in conflict with UNESCO'S recommendation of 26% to bring a nation's education system at quality level. This figure was the highest so far in the history budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria. Whereas poorer nations

in Sub-Sahara Africa like Rwanda, D R Congo among others invests about 40% of their annual budget to strengthen their educational system. These countries compete with the western world like Japan budgetary allocation to education hits 40%. These nations prioritize adequate funding of education because they knew the value of education to national development. Adequate funding of education is important because the whole of the school environment is part of education but, Nigeria relies much on textbooks and the internet to the detriment of Supervision and Inspectorate units, review of curriculum, and retraining teachers. Taiwo as cited by Amadi (2012) asserted that Nigeria has no difficulty in identifying her problems of qualitative education; the nation sometimes have no difficulty in suggesting solutions, but her difficulty is implementation. The source focusing on teacher education, pointed out that there has been very impressive analysis of the problems confronting those charged with production of teachers for implementing the National Policy on Education. Innovative and sometimes radical prescriptions were made on ways and means of achieving the nation's stated objectives of teacher education for the different levels of the education system. Perhaps, the heart of the matter, if not crisis, was identified as political and to judiciously manage the funds and other resources needed to implement the laudable policies and programmes.

The foregoing recognizes the prevalence of undue influence of political interference in the management of education in Nigeria though, as government policy and practice, bureaucracy is unavoidable, of course, but the central flaw in the need for structure and hierarchy is that policy prefers leadership characteristics above expertise. Appointing State Superintendents of Education and School Board Chair and members; people (governors & presidents) who have no or very little experience or expertise as educators or scholars attend leadership position responsible, forming and implementing education policies. In other words, the faces and voices currently leading the reform movement in Nigeria are appointees and self-proclaimed reformers who, while often, lack significant expertise or experience in education.

### **Scope of Politics in Education**

The scope of politics is the temporal wellbeing of a community as a whole hence politics is concerned with attracting, securing, and maintaining the wellbeing of a community. It is an instrument for finding solution to social, economic, technological and educational problems of a nation. The implementation of the concept of politics is that it is an unavoidable phenomenon in every society. In view of this, politics in the context of this position paper is a situation where political consideration is given preference rather than due process; in this case, educational management is influenced by the wishes of "those in power" rather than by established guidelines. Furthermore, it is a situation where due process is circumvented by pressure from groups of individuals in powerful positions. This undue influence results in managers of education deviating

from normal or formal administrative principles and guidelines hence, the management of secondary and tertiary institutions is influenced by government interference.

### Conclusion

Political influence in every sector of the economy is inevitable however, undue political influence especially on the management of Nigerian Education System has been counter-productive, hence the prevalence of undue political interference could be reduced to the barest minimum if those who have a passion to serve the masses and genuine development of the nation's economy are given enabling environment to emerge as leaders in the polity. In this wise, Nigerian political parties should give their presidential tickets to candidates who specialize in education, and compel them to be faithful to their programmes of action when they assume office.

In this wise, the Artificial Intelligence overview of strategies for preventing undue political influence in the management of education in Nigeria with the view of improving the quality of the nation's educational system at all tiers, would be implementable.

### Suggestions

It is based on the strategies to prevent undue political influence, an overview proffered by Artificial Intelligence that gives the audacity and temerity for electoral reform, a single strategy that would make other strategies identified here enforceable. This electoral reform will enshrine in part, "that Nigerian political parties should give their presidential tickets to candidates who specialize in education, and compel them to be faithful to their programmes of action when they assume office". Hence, campaign promises should no longer be reduced to mere poetic aspirations by successive Governments which pay lip-service to adequate funding and quality management of public education in Nigeria.

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