

## **Evaluation of Crises in the Nigeria's Education Sector: Implications for the Nigerian State**

**Charles Okechukwu Iwundu<sup>1</sup>, Dorothy Chikaodi Inko-Tariah<sup>2</sup>**

Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt,  
NIGERIA.

<sup>1</sup> [iwunducharles@yahoo.com](mailto:iwunducharles@yahoo.com), <sup>2</sup> [doristariah@yahoo.com](mailto:doristariah@yahoo.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the crises rocking the Nigeria's education sector. It traced the genealogy of the decay from its lower level of education to its higher level: pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary level. The decay has been attributed to factors such as; wrong policy implementation and over politicization of the education sector, funding and corruption, injustice on the right to education, intellectual dishonesty among teachers, non-professionalization of the teaching profession, the pulling down of the social mobility ladder, lack of entrepreneurship education and curriculum review and war on its education sector by boko haram insurgents as well as incessant strikes by teachers. Other factors are; students' poor attitude to work, depressed reading culture, poor teaching, poor learning and research environment and low value placed on the education of boys and girls in some states. At the end, much adumbration was made towards a tacit evaluation of the crises in the education sector and implications for the Nigerian state. The study lastly recommended the need for conscientious planning and proper management of the sector, strong political will on the part of our leaders, sincerity on the part of stakeholders, stop corruption in the sector and wastages, encourage teachers, provide enough security against insurgents, encourage parents to send their children to school. This is because when people are not educated, they do not bother about social amenities, what matters to them most is food security. An undeveloped mind does not care about what government does with its resources or how corrupt politicians are looting its nation's treasury.*

**Keywords:** Crises, Nigeria's education sector, bad governance, non-professionalization

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education unarguably remains a vital instrument and sordid mechanism for social, political, economic, moral and technological transformation and development of any nation or society. There is no gain saying the fact that Nigeria's education system has been in long-term in decline. This assertion is supported by a recent World Bank study which revealed that employers of labor complain that the quality of Nigeria's university graduates especially their communication skills, has fallen continually for two decades (Ewuzie, 2014). The crisis being witnessed in today's Nigeria's education sector can be attributed to poor attitude of students to work, depressed reading culture, poor teaching, learning and research environment, low value placed on the power of education of boys especially in some, south eastern states and of girls especially in some northern states (Ewuzie, 2014).

The crisis rocking the Nigeria's education sector is not predominant at its tertiary level alone. The huge decay can be traced fundamentally from its lower level of education system.

Nursery, Elementary, Secondary and Vocational schools which are regarded as the building blocks and foundations of society's education system are not given adequate attention by the government in terms of stringent monitoring and supervision. A survey in Tanzania similar to what is experienced in Nigeria shows that, among children who have completed primary and secondary education, 50 percent could neither read nor write especially the English language which is the language of instruction. One reason being that teachers in public primary schools in Tanzania are absent 23 percent of time, but when present, they spend just over two hours of the day teaching (Devarajan, 2014). This ugly trend has crept crescendoingly into our university system. A situation where pigeon English has become a dominant means of communication among our under graduates.

## **DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### **Over Politicization of the Education Sector**

The term simply implies government incessant experimentation with the education sector. Non-Professionals are often appointed by government to direct the affairs of the ministry thereby bringing in quacks designed as round pegs in square holes. In addition, every successive regime has never left the sector un-experienced. Each successive government has always tried its own experiment by first meddling with the education sector. For instance, from UPE to UBE, from 6.3.3.4 system to UBE etc.

### **Intellectual Dishonesty among Teachers**

The term is used to subsume various forms of dereliction of duty exercised by teachers, ranging from frequent absenteeism to duty, frequent lateness to duty, sorting, non-challant attitude to work, wrong impartation of knowledge to students etc.

### **Social Mobility Ladder Pull it Down Syndrome**

The term represents the reckless abandon of the public owned primary, secondary and tertiary institutions to the patronage of private owned and foreign institutions. Those who are at the helm of affairs seem to have forgotten where they are coming from. Having climbed the ladder, consciously or subconsciously decided to pull down the ladder. It is like they no longer remember that they too passed through public schools.

### **Professionalization of the Teaching Profession**

The term is used for the purpose of re-emphasizing the need for teaching profession to be accorded its place of pride as done and practiced by other professions like engineering, law, medicine, accountancy etc. Where the award of degrees does not qualify one to practice but to undergo rigorous test or examination before being certified to practice.

## **THE ETHIOLOGY OF THE CRISIS IN NIGERIA'S EDUCATION SECTOR**

Globally, it is increasingly becoming critical and expedient for every nation to recognize education as an indispensable tool for national and human development. Nigeria as a fast developing nation cannot afford to be left out in this global race. Certain man-made factors seem to be responsible in jeopardizing the growth of the Nigeria's education sector since her gaining independence in October one 1960.

### **Wrong Policy Implementation and Over Politicization of the Education Sector**

The high turnover of the ministers of education since 1958, reports Obi and Ewuzie (2014) is one major reason Nigeria's education sector has remained troubled and turbulent, as she has had not less than 60 education minister since then, while Ghana, its contemporary, has had only 29 ministers. This development seems to breed policy inconsistency, poor sense of

direction, and lack of continuity in the education system, resulting in near stagnation of the sector. Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to a democratic rule to date, making it 15 years, Nigeria has had 19 ministers. It is on record that the longest served ministers, from 1958-1965 was Aja Nwachukwu followed by A.Y. Ekewho served from 1970-1975, and Jubril Aminu, 1985-1989. This trend which has brought a huge cost in uncommon stability in leadership is largely responsible for poor direction, and haphazard policy execution evident in several policy reversals that accompany the flux of ministers, the absence of pains taking approach towards leading education sector to a desirable status, rather to a glaring decay being witnessed today (Obi & Ewuzie, 2014). The over politicization of the education sector with its attendant debilitating effect has left stakeholders in the sector wondering whether it is only in that industry ``vulcanizers'' and ``carpenters'' come to do business. The ministry of education requires equal and fair treatment like the ministries of justice, health and works, where professionals are called to supervise. It is unfortunate that the ministry of education is a free for all entrants where non-professionals come to carry out experiments which are largely responsible for either non-implementation or haphazard implementation of the national policy on education.

### **Funding and Corruption**

There is no doubt that different tiers of government in Nigeria have been investing funds in the education sector to ensure that this critical segment of the society is put on a proper pedestal to contribute to national development. Nevertheless, the allocation to this sector falls far below the United Nations Organization for Education Science and Culture's recommended six percent of GDP. As at now, Nigeria allocates the equivalent of 1.6 percent of its GDP to education, leaving a huge funding gap which is manifested in inadequate facilities for both students and teachers, and lack of proper maintenance carried out on the available facilities (Ewuzie, 2014).

Apart from the budget not reaching the international benchmark, corruption in the system is behind the stunted growth of this very vital sector of nationhood. There seems to be pen-robbery in the name of pilfering imported into the system. Stories have often emerged where budgets need to be bloated and kick-backs need to be done before approval as was the case with one accused senator. Flagrant misappropriation of public fund seems to be the bane of our national development.

### **Justice-Ability in the Right to Education**

The national policy on education (1981), talks about the right of the Nigerian child to education. The question that has continue to bulge the mind of many stakeholders in the sector is ``how far has the policy been implemented?'' Out of the 17-million school aged children in Africa, 10 million Nigerian children are reported to be out of school according to the estimates by the United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO) 2014. Since 1970's when Nigeria began to experience oil boom, the number of Nigerian children engaged in child labour has increased steadily as children of different age grade are found in public places, carrying out all sorts of menial jobs to earn a living (Chiejina, 2014). The future of our nation depends on what we do with this army of children. A situation where an estimated number of 12 million orphans are found roaming the street without a place to rest, 360,000 living with the HIV pandemic, 138per 1000 involved in mortality rate, 15 million Nigerian children under the age of 14 are exposed to child labour (According to SOS village international) does not justify the amount of effort made by Nigerian government through the Universal Basic Education scheme to ensure every Nigerian child has access to basic education and right to education (Chiejina, 2014).If

government must drive up enrolment, it must reinforce its mechanism of creating awareness on the benefits of education, fashion out a carrot and stick approach to get parents actually send their children to school as well as give bite to the compulsory free education policy (Ewuzie 2014).

### **Intellectual Dishonesty among Teachers**

Demotivation and apathy which tend to define and characterize the attitude of teachers towards the teaching profession is adversely affecting the standard of education in Nigeria. A good number of our teachers at all strata of our education system are not teaching but cheating. Many factors seem to be responsible for this anomaly. They include poor conditions of service, poor facilities, poor recognition by government and the society. Most of our teachers are experiencing vocational maladjustment, they are becoming more indolent and frustrated than the children under their care. The truth is that many of the Nigerian kids in our primary and secondary schools are not learning. Little wonder when they eventually get to tertiary level they will not be sufficiently equipped in terms of literacy skills and end up becoming graduates with largely poor work related skill, having missed the basic requirements at the foundation level which is imperatively fundamental in the learning process (Business day, 2014).

### **Professionalization of the Teaching Profession**

There is a popular adage which says: "what you have is what you can give". The unjustifiability of government to make teaching an attractive authentic profession is hugely contributing to poor concept of it by the society, low-morale of teachers, wrong implementation and execution of its policy and its bastardization as all-comers affair. The partial professionalization of the teaching profession makes it unattractive. The whole negativity can only be undone if teachers are certified through test or examination as done in the law, engineering and medical professions.

### **The Social Mobility Ladder "Pull It Down" Syndrome**

One major factor ravaging our basic education today is the social mobility ladder "Pull it Down syndrome". As Gupta (2014) put it, "in Africa, private educational institutions score over government institutions, with the former providing better education, quality and safety. Most government educational institutions do not have well-equipped libraries, even classrooms fall short of expectations, and even books also are expensive to buy. Going by the strategic importance of solid education sector, government needs to look inwards and ask itself some pertinent questions. "what has happened to the public schools that is making it unattractive to high income earners?" Going down the memory lane, it is easy to point at "who is who today in Nigeria?" that did not benefit from the public institutions. Stating from the President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, literary icons like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe to Governors etc. These great men passed through public institutions, but today, the ladder that took them up there has been pulled down. The answer to the question on what went wrong is that your guess is as good as ours. There is no gain saying the fact that until and unless government stops paying lip service to education, it's standard at this moment will continue to dwindle.

The recent ranking index of 2010 shows that Nigeria ranks 145 in the world below African countries like Gabon (102), South Africa (102), Namibia (114), Botswana (120), equatorial Guinea (121), Cape Verde (123), Congo (130), Uganda (135), Kenya (137), Malawi (138). The top five countries are South Korea, Finland, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan, USA ranked at number 14. (Human development report, 2010). On world ranking of 500 universities by the 2013 Academic Ranking of World Universities included Harvard,

Stanford, Berkeley, MIT, Cambridge, California, Princeton, Columbia, Chicago, and Oxford universities without Nigeria being mentioned. Nigeria has what it takes to be there, but her misplaced priority seems to deal a death blow to our national growth and development.

### **Entrepreneurship Education and Curriculum Review**

A good number of employers complain about the un-employability of Nigerian graduates. Most of the employers of labor are seeking for collaboration between them and our universities. The need for a synergy between what we teach and what the employers want is now being canvassed. The truth is that most of our products can no longer stand the test of time. Our curriculum needs a total over-hauling in order to meet the market or labor demand. The clamour again is for there to be a workable integration of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of the nation's schools in order to stem the tide of unemployment among youths in the country (Ewuzie, 2014).

### **War on Education and Incessant Strikes**

The war being waged against the fundamental right of all children to an education is exemplified in the kidnapping of more than 200 girls in the Northern Nigeria by Islamist terrorist called Boko Haram. The war seems to be global, as similarly horrifying incidents in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia attest to that. Globally, there have been 10,000 violent attacks on schools and universities as reported by Global Coalition to protect education from attack. The terrorists no doubt see education as a threat to the destabilization of their belief. In view of the impending danger on the children's life, a good number of them remain locked out of school, giving room not only to moral crisis but also to a wasted economic opportunity. Therefore, providing a safe environment for learning is the most fundamental and urgent first step in solving the global education crisis (Brown, 2014). In addition, epileptic strike cases witnessed in recent times especially among our (Nigeria's) tertiary institutions to say the least are shambolic and disgraceful. A situation where Universities were shut down for five months and thereafter Polytechnics and Colleges of Education followed suit, remaining closed for ten months, puts a question mark on the proactive leadership style of our country's system of government. A fertile ground for breeding and nurturing criminals. Only GOD knows what would have happened to our teeming Nigerian students who stayed at home idling away. There is no doubt that the long period of inactivity must have affected the entire school calendar. No doubt parent these days prefers sending their children to private and foreign universities irrespective of the cost, leaving our own public universities to rot away (Iwundu and Thom-Otuya, 2014).

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NIGERIAN STATE**

Concerned Nigerians are increasingly becoming weary about the state of events as they are gradually unfolding in Nigeria day by day. Most have asked "Is the Nigeria political system promoting, festering and nurturing the indices of a failed state?" Political ideologists have succinctly adumbrated in its equivocal term that there are three major indices that determine a failing or a failed state such as: food security, social security and national security. Hunger, poverty, unemployment and depressed economy are clear epitome of a nation lacking in food security. Lack of basic social amenities like constant electricity, pipe-borne water, good schools, functional hospitals, good roads and bridges, good accommodation and housing etc. are standards used in measuring a failed or failing state lacking in social security. Social vices like kidnapping, armed robbery, terrorism, militancy, rape, arson, killings etc. are sure manifestations of a failed or failing state lacking national security. This is where Nigeria is gradually sliding into. There is one common saying which states that "if education is

expensive try ignorance''. Similarly, if the Nigerian government feels investing in education or in human development is expensive, let them attest to Boko Haram, kidnapping, militancy, and armed robbery. Just like in the words of our late renowned economist Prof. Sam. ``the poor cannot sleep because they are hungry and the rich can no longer sleep because the poor are awake''. The insensibility and disingenuous posture of our government is responsible for today's youth's dis-enchantment and restiveness. In the words of Bishop Kuka: "Each time youths meet government for the purpose of looking into their affairs, the reply they always get is that the plans are in the pipe line, and that is why the youth keep vandalizing the pipes, searching for the plans in the pipe line''. This reminds us of Chinua Achebe's most widely criticized book: "There was a country''. There is no gain-saying the fact that, once upon a time ``There was a Nigeria called a nation''. Today we can hardly and boastfully beat our chest with pride and assertion and say we have a nation not bedeviled and beleaguered with unguaranteed food security, unguaranteed social amenities and unguaranteed national security.

The question is: "what actually happened?" long and protracted negligence and reckless abandonment of the Nigerian state by successive governments that were after their own pockets helped to milk the nation regardless of what the future may portend: lootocracy, kletocracy, squander mania, all embedded in bad governance and maladministration got the citizenry marooned in corruption, nepotism, religious bigotry, ethnic chauvinism and political jingoism thereby putting Nigeria's education sector at cross-roads (Iwundu and Thom-Otuya,2013).In the north East (Yobe) over 15,000 children are (Amnesty) afraid to go school because parents are afraid, teachers are afraid also, all due to insurgency or Boko Haram. It is only when people go to school they are likely to be liberated from both poverty of mind and poverty of wealth. Insurgents are fully aware that western education helps to develop the individual intellectually by enlightening him to the point of knowing his right, which poses a great danger to early child marriage. This is part of the reason why they are attacking education. When people are not educated, they do not bother about social amenities, what matters to them most is food security. An undeveloped mind (uneducated) does not worry about what government does with their resources or how corrupt politicians are looting the nation's treasury (Brown, 2014).

## **EVALUATION OF THE CRISES IN THE NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM**

One way of evaluating a system or programme is by looking at the goals which are expected targets desired from the system to see if they are been achieved. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in 1977introduced the National Policy on Education which was revised in 1981 and predicated on the following goals which were to produce:--

1. a free and democratic society
2. a just and egalitarian society
3. a united, strong and self-reliant nation

It is therefore pertinent to look at these goals and how they have been attained in the education system. It is worthy of note that Nigerian children have not been able to access their right to education. Adamoleku (2013) observed that 10.5 million Nigerian children of school age do not attend school (highest in the world). Some States in his view have achieved just about 12% primary school enrolment. Six million of 36 million girls out of school worldwide are Nigerians and that the federal government had to lunch boy-child education campaign in some south East states. It is also worthy of note that Nigerian children in public and some private schools especially in rural areas are not well grounded in their educational preparation going by the concept and policy of egalitarianism. This is because most of the

teachers in these schools do not have adequate teaching skills for them to effectively impact the knowledge on to the children. One can easily recall the case of a female primary school teacher in Edo state who has been teaching for 20 years but during a screening exercise by the Governor, Comrade Adams Oshomole could not read her affidavit age declaration (Adebowale, 2014). Again in Kaduna state, the commissioner for education reported that in an interactive session with primary school teachers, 1,300 out of 1,599 teachers failed a simple arithmetic and basic literacy test for basic four pupils. Only one teacher he noted scored 75%, 280 between 50-75% while 1,300 scored below 25%.

The coordinating minister for economy and minister for finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala quoting figures on the national Bureau of statistics put the number of Nigerians living in destitution at 100 million, thereby putting Nigeria among the five poorest countries in the world (Our Reporter, 2014). The question now is "how is this problem being addressed in view of the large turnout of university graduates in Nigeria?". Land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens. A good number of Nigerian graduates in their 30s still live with their parents because they do not have jobs, as Odidi (2014) reported. These youths, he asserted, cannot rent a room for shelter except for a few. One wonders how bright the future will be in a country where Nigerian law makers (senators) according to Chanchit (2014) earn a monthly salary of #29,479,479 monthly and 353,756,988 yearly while a Professor as Akuka (2014) pointed out earns an annual salary between #4,580,549 and #6,020,163. The law makers seemed to give the reason for their huge salary as cost of living being high in Nigeria. Meanwhile it was difficult for the same law makers to approve the minimum wage of #18,000 per month for workers which according to Nwude (2013) are faulty as the decision cannot solve the problem of the Nigerian workers due to inflation. Nigeria education sector can only achieve its educational goals when the system begins to protect itself from infiltrators that have bastardized the system. Today any person can enter the classroom and teach irrespective of the area of study. This is about the only sector where one does not need to write a qualifying examination to become a member unlike what obtains in the medical, and judiciary sectors. So long as the education sector remains free for all sectors, achieving the educational goals may remain an illusion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria's education sector has really nose-dived in recent years. It has been at the cross-roads with its myriad of crises. The decay did not start just yesterday but has gone through excruciating long years of neglect, wrong policy implementation and execution, corruption and misplacement of priority. Conscientious planning and proper management of the sectors has been the bane of the country's journey towards actualizing the dream of our nation's founding fathers. If we must get out of this national embarrassment, bearing in mind, that education is the bedrock of any society, all hands must be on deck for us to begin to put our acts together and find a lasting solution to the myriad of crises plaguing our education sector. What is required is the political will and sincerity on the part of stakeholders and in particular the government to begin to address the several etiological indices enunciated in this write up.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Adamoleki, L. (2013). Education sector in crisis: Evidence, causes and possible remedies. *A paper presented at the 2012/2013 distinguished lecture at Joseph AyoBabalola University, IkejiArakeji, Osun state on January 24.*
- [2] Adebowale, S. (2014, Feb 5). *Edo teacher's test not witch hunt exercise; Oshimhole. The Eagle.* Retrieved May 10, 2015, from [www.theeagleonline.com.ng/edo-teachers-test](http://www.theeagleonline.com.ng/edo-teachers-test)
- [3] Adegode, G. (2013, June, 26). *Senator's salaries and allowances in Nigeria Films.com.* Retrieved May 10, 2015, from [www.nigeriafilm.com/.../senators-salaries](http://www.nigeriafilm.com/.../senators-salaries)
- [4] Awuzie, K. (2014, June 3). Non-implementation of National Policy, Style, Growth & Potential of Education. *Business day* P.30.
- [5] Awuzie, k. (2014, June 17). Experts see Enterprise Challenge Option in Education as Key To Curb Unemployment. *Business day.* P.29.
- [6] Awuzie, k. (2014, July 17). Expert Advocates Incisive Strategies to Address Education Shortfall. *Business day.* P.3
- [7] Awuzie, k. (2014, August 5). Driving millennium education goal requires strategic Partnership. *Business day* P.02. (2014, May 23). Nigeria Children and the Learning Crisis. *Business day.* P.08.
- [8] Brown, G. (2014, July 24). The War on Education. *Business day.* P.48.
- [9] Chiejina A (2014, July 22). Human Capital Development and the Nigerian Child. *Business day.* P.43.
- [10] Devarajan, S. (2014, August 5). Youth Employment in Africa. What to Do When Informal Is Normal. *Business day.* P.05
- [11] Gupta, R. (2014, June 23). Education in the Palms of Africans. *Business day.* P.31
- [12] Human Development Report (2014). World Ranking of Universities.
- [13] Iwundu, C.O., & Thom-Otuya, B.E. (2013). Security Challenges as Threats to National Unity in Nigeria: Causes, Prevention & Treatment. *International Affairs & Global Strategy, 14.*
- [14] Nairaland, (2014, July 18). Nigeria university lecturers salaries: How much. Career Nairaland. Retrieved from [www.nairaland.com/...../nigeria-universities](http://www.nairaland.com/...../nigeria-universities).
- [15] Nwude, E. C. (2013). The politics of minimum wage in Nigeria; The unresolved issues. *Asian Journal of Empirical Research, 3(4), 477-492.*
- [16] Odidi, G. (2014, April 6<sup>th</sup>). The challenges facing the Nigerian youth. Retrieved May 12, 2015, from [www.thenigeriavoice.com/...../the-challen.....](http://www.thenigeriavoice.com/...../the-challen.....)
- [17] Our Reporter, (2014, April 19). Nigeria grim unemployment statistics. *The Sun.* Retrieved May 10, 2015, from [www.sunnewsonline.com](http://www.sunnewsonline.com)