

Toxic Wastes and Leakages in the Nigerian Educational System: A Catalyst for further Reforms

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Abstract

This paper is an argument for the review of Nigeria's national educational system to position the country for rapid socio-economic development. The presentation argues our educational system is no doubt degenerating. On this premise, the paper looked into the causes via detecting the toxic and other wastes as well as leakages which have cataclysmically contributed to this. Some have injected poison into the system, some have created severe/chronic and acute damages that must be flushed out in order to reduce and subsequently eradicate the loss in quality and quantity of our educational system. The paper therefore addressed these under: the present educational system, toxic waste in the educational system, leakages in the educational system, impact of policy implementation on the educational system, impact of technology on the educational system, human capital development and employment policies, the role of whistle-blowing and transformation in the educational development. A critical review of these confirmed that the system is fraught with the existence of wastes and leakages as a result of which necessary reforms should be occasioned to ensure that the following proffered recommendations are relevant in developmental strides – they include; intensifying exchange programmes in Africa and Nigeria in particular, intensifying portfolio experiences for students and organizing workshops and inaugural lectures for Professors and Chief Lecturers to groom younger lecturers five to ten years (5-10 years) before their retirement; among others.

Keywords: *toxicity, leakage, catalyst, waste, values transmission, Total quality assessment, knowledge management, whistle-blowing*

1. Introduction

The concerns expressed over the dwindling educational system in Nigeria and indeed in Africa are not a farce. Efforts have been made by governments and people but it appears our Generation X is only interested in education for a different purpose than hitherto was the case. The sporadic technological changes have only triggered up quest for more games, more films, more music and other time killers rather than creativity and innovations. Although game can be considered as work, as in the case of professionals in All African Games, Olympics, etc; it has been described by Wittgenstein (2002) and Caillois (2001) as structured playing which is usually engaged for fun/enjoyment. Sometimes, games can be considered as educational tools but it usually attracts no remuneration except in future when the aims of education is achieved or a medal or laureate is won with attached financial benefits.

The use of whistle-blowing mechanisms has only yielded negative influences (www.thefreedictionary.com/whistleblowing). The mechanisms can however, be utilized positively when tailored by the teacher to create educational portfolios for students. In this way information is exposed that can be utilized for positive outcomes. Instances are information on time of meeting, conferences, transferred knowledge from people to others. Whistles are not only blown when misconducts, frauds, dishonesty or

illegality are perceived; it can also be done when good things are perceived and the intention is to notify others or the public. The need for value-added outcomes in education, science, technology and innovation is very essential.

The teachers are poorly groomed as a result of lack of facilities and environment. Fear of failure has paved way for misconducts of different types, thus injecting and ingesting toxins and leakages into the educational system. Because of the interest in certification, the lots of manpower available appear to be clearly unusable as they lower productivity instead of the other way round (Achilike, 2005). To some, the challenges of the numerous changes in technology have occasioned confusion and falling standard. The products of the system then culminate into lowered productivity and poor economy, for which everyone is now suffering. Local contents can only be useful when they have been researched into and their usefulness ascertained so that we do not beat about the bush trying to enforce a law that is not economical to the nation. Investment in human and institutional resources if adequately harnessed would yield much fruits for the nation.

Based on the above concerns and affirmed existing problems in the system, the paper reviewed opinions on the following subheadings: The present educational system; Toxic waste in the educational system; Leakages in the educational system; Impact of policy implementation on the educational system; Impact of technology on the educational system; Human capital development and employment policies; The role of whistle-blowing and transformation in educational development; and Necessary reforms as a way forward.

2. The Present Educational System

The strengths in education cannot be fully expressed in one text. In education, the individual is equipped for life; the family is financially, emotionally and materially assured; the nation's growth is secured. The fact that vision 20:2020 cannot be achieved (for any nation) without real-sense education is but a subtle way of stating the truth (Achilike, 2012). Many have described education in many ways, but summarily, it is the instrument for achieving all life's desires for all. At designated centers (school environment, conference centers) or on-line, the motive of education does not deviate from grooming individuals and groups for the world of work where the ideas, skills and values would be beneficial to self and society. Education could be in business, science, technology, engineering or arts; but every education is meant for business because the individuals and/groups would have to make their ideas, skills and values available to the consumers (users of their products) and earn a living.

Education has come a very long way. This can be seen in the creation of man, the directive not to eat of some fruits and to eat of others. Not excluded is the need to produce covering for man and preparations for wars, midwifery in Egypt, and so on. The system has not been static, hence it has changed so frequently that researchers have often lost count of the varied technologies employed along the line, as some have not been properly documented. Technology, here will be seen as the procedures of human, equipment and processes evolved and involved in the execution of a project. The role of technology therefore has been that of boosting the process of education towards growth of human and materials. ASUU, COASUU and ASUP (unions of tertiary institutions in Nigeria) have insisted on the improvement of technology and associated equipment with relevant accessories in order to take the educational sector to greater heights. These demands should be commended especially as increased internet broadband and improved equipment and infrastructure would improve students' ability to utilize technology and innovations for better educational outcomes.

3. How Far Have We Thrived?

Our educational system and indeed any system at all are aimed at value creation and service delivery. We

have encountered new philosophies, theories, concepts, policies, collaborations, peer reviews for different destinations in order to imbibe creativity and solutions creation through entrepreneurship and leadership changes. These are challenges with which this country has been confronted over the years in the sector called 'education.' The contemporary education now metamorphosed into an all area programme, thus enlarging her coast and her problems/challenges.

Are we at the breaking point or are we just basking in the banquet of consequences, after messing up our system for several years? According to Okebukola (2013) and Osundare (2013), Nigeria has always gloried in zooming of her growth without commensurate sectionalization in relevant areas, and thereby encouraging poor policies and implementation. Desperation appears to have forced down our educational backbone, lowering the standard for many to meet up. Prof Osundare, in assessing the educational system, blamed its fallen standard on actions and inactions of the publics that make up the system as unscrupulous tendencies towards wealth by these persons (especially politicians) have made them neglect their role towards the growth of the Nation, thus increasing the wastages and leakages witnessed in the system. As a result, the institutions are seriously lacking universality.

The government transitions have welcomed different and new policies/agenda to handle while abandoning previous ones to make an impact. These have embraced lots of wastages and leakages along the line. Has the sector grown as a result? Incidentally, all these policies and agendas that have been structured have shown incapability of pacifying the yearnings of the consumers (parents, students, employers, society). Parents desire jobs for their children, pension when they retire and cannot work to earn a living, light, water, healthcare and so on; students desire good educational environment that would not stress them much; employers desire to hire employees who can move their businesses to greater heights to ensure higher profit; the society desires security and quick service delivery. For all these, the need for skills acquisition in problem-solving is the KEY (Achilike, 2013).

On another hand, bureaucracy seems to have rubbished our implementation strategies (Nwosu, 2012). Where bureaucracy is to checkmate excesses, then it is laudable, but when it is aimed at creating and increasing bargaining power for corrupt practices, it becomes outrageous. This is the bane of our implementation policies that has so far crippled the economy and may subsequently mar our quest for meeting the visions of falling within the 20 biggest economies in the year 2020. Consider the state of our Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), NITEL, NNPC and others.

4. Toxic Waste in the Educational System

Toxic (waste, debts, lack of results) stands for any of such situations that can cause death, injury, defects, and hazards amongst other negativity in human or systemic life. The educational system has witnessed numerous of such toxic situations. Instances can be seen in unqualified teachers who inject poisonous knowledge into students; examination misconducts of different types being introduced into many educational systems in order to register good results and attract more students as a way of prospering in educational business. They spread their contaminating tentacles very fast and consistently if not checked.

Wikipedia (2010) has described this medically as the degree to which a system or environment has been contaminated. It can also be seen as the degree to which a substance can damage an organization. In the metaphorical sense, toxic effect can fall on larger or more complex situations such as in cases of groups like family unit, education or society. In education, we can identify toxicity as that degree to which the educational system of a city, school, local government, state, nation; has been so affected by the hazards of educational dishonesty of different types injected into it that its functionality is heavily and negatively affected. Newer paradigms and metrics are still evolving on the issue of toxicity for better understanding and knowledge impact.

Whereas there could be domestic, hospital, industrial, chemical, biological, agricultural and radioactive toxicity; there could also be educational toxicity/waste manifested in brain drain, outdated materials, rustic

behaviour, poor implementation policy, moribund equipment as affecting manual dexterity, among others. Factors of influence show that pathway of administration could be applied, ingested, inhaled or injected. Its effect could be acute severe chronic or continuous while some can cause irreversible effects.

5. Leakages in the Educational System

Leakage here will be taken to mean loss of strength, energy, and former status. Has education sustained its original strength, added or reduced? From records of poor performances in the West African School Certificate examinations (WASCE) and National Examinations Council examinations (NECO); it is obvious that there have been leakages. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has recorded experiences of graduates who could not defend themselves with regard to their areas of study. Some cannot even write an application letter or prepare a resume, unless someone else does it for them. In leakages, there could be loss in quantity or quality. We have often witnessed quantum leap in number not commensurate with growth. A proper planning could help in ensuring an avoidable nature for leakages.

Insecurity is not only restricted to politics, life and property. It exists in the educational sector. Documentations are no longer secured. Knowledge is no longer secured, hence students are often starved to death of knowledge they desired and paid for. Grades and positions are stolen from students and traded while jobs meant for them are taken away by the old who refuse to retire when tired. Students are short-changed in all ramifications and put in danger of their future. On the other hand, educational pacts funded by governments are now heavily restricted for the domain of Chief Executives who can hardly have time for transfer of such knowledge. Have the intelligentsia failed us? No, they have only misdirected their wisdom or are not given the opportunity at all to perform on the 'dance stand'. Situations where instruments and equipment are purchased and installed but cannot be used is a clear but critical evidence of colossal wastefulness.

In other to checkmate these attitudes, Eruanga (2006) advocated intensification of values transmission and development through education and the role of teachers. On the other hand, Olafintila (2006) saw a mirage in pursuing national development and survival devoid of strategies (mostly educational which is longer lasting and ensures adaptability competence) that can intensity and radiate the existence of confidence and independence in the citizens and the nation as a whole. These, are veritable tools for bridging wastages and leakages.

6. Impact of Policy Implementation on the Educational System

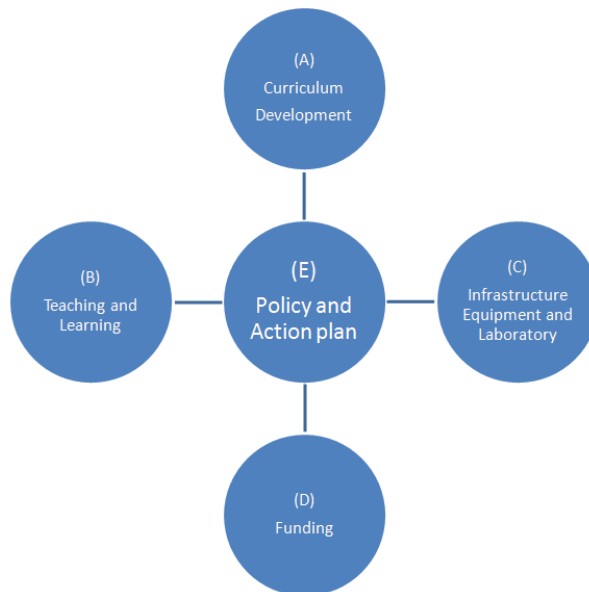
Every new government regime (tenure) in Nigeria has come up with new policies, different from the previous policies. Some of these die a natural death as soon as a new Minister of Education is appointed. Such changes are capable of creating serious toxic effects in the system. Achilike (2012) revealed the fact that Nigeria has always scored low in the area of implementation of national policies, especially in the educational sector. Efforts have been made by government to stem the tide to avoid further lowering of the standards of education. These efforts appear not to have yielded fruits yet.

Although the awareness to acquire education has expanded, the standard threshold is yet to be attained. Higher number of people still basks in the euphoria of certification with or without knowledge and skill. Incidentally, Amaewhule (2004) was pungent in the assertion that the educational quality of a nation determines her level of development. Standard is that threshold, parameter or benchmarks which determines acceptability or rejection of a quality as being up to or lower than; given all the variables required to meet the goal(s). While NUC (National Universities Commission), NBTE (National Board for Technical Education) and NCCE (National Commission for Colleges of Education) are trying to assess the performance of institutions in order to ensure standard, there is need for independent assessors for the same purpose in order to avoid the

situation where these people will assume too much powers that could lead to gratifications (corruption) which the world is battling with today to stop.

Because change is constant, standard cannot help but be constant as it must change with trend of change to meet current demands, hence the need for education to step up the strategies for eliminating leakages and closing the waste pipes (gaps). Quality assurance, teaching/learning friendly environment, appropriate recruitment and placement are necessary ingredients for solving the toxic, wastage and leakage problems in education.

Total Quality Management (TQM) and Total Quality Assurance (TQA) are both tools that would be very relevant in the avoidance and eradication of wastages and leakages. According to Okoro and Okoro (2004), TQM was conceptualized to admit a zero tolerance for errors in management or in our case, education and other sectors as it is meant to assume a holistic picture.



When each through Total Quality Management (TQM) and teamwork is properly managed, then our quest to achieve vision 2020 will be achieved.

Students Quality (B)	Methodologies (A)
Staff Quality (B)	Facilities And Resources [©]
Learning Conditions [©]	Evaluation Of Programs(E)
Leadership (D)	

Efforts in all the above should be geared towards the marketability of education. It must be realized that science, technology and innovation must be marketed for it to be meaningful to any nation. Perhaps this is why our economy appears to be growing very slowly. Neglect of this will would only render education worthless in its bid to meet the yearnings of the consumers. Thus standardization would help in order to have an all round growth and development.

Innovation in addition to science and technology should be encouraged in order to create knowledge economy worthy of emulation. The three (3) technology information centers set up have bandwidths that are so low that only very few can access information at the same time. When added to hotspots it becomes very difficult for Research and Development (R&D) to thrive. Human skills base is being paid lip-service. Despite

implementation of policies (political, educational, economical, etc.), our roads are still not comfortably pliable, our water is still not drinkable, our educational system is not performing creditably, our hospitals are not functioning beyond the average, our politics is not accommodating women and the less privileged and joblessness still prevails unabated. These are Key Indicators Indices (KII) that all is not yet well. Except the educational system is revamped, the indicators will drop further. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

7. Impact of Technology on the Educational System

Technology, which is the study of or a collection of techniques using different tools and procedures to achieve a goal has played a great role in the development or otherwise of a person, group or nation. This idea, according to Achilike (2006), is evidenced in the sporadic changes in technology being witnessed since the last three (3) decades and which has entailed improvement in equipment and accessories, materials, training, market demands, skills required by employers of labour. Thus, the former sequestered environment that hitherto impacted positively on education has gradually been removed by development and technology. New technologies have emerged yet we are far from acquiring and utilizing them in our educational system. Training and re-training necessitated by these developments are yet to be robustly undertaken for the educational system to take full advantage of global developments.

Technology in recent times appears to signify the spring of hope and the winter of despair (at the same time) to nations and people, especially in the Nigerian educational system. While some nations develop the technology, upgrade and improve upon them at a very fast rate, others like mad people are trying to match them in consumption, thereby discarding at a fast rate too and wasting their God given resources in so doing. This is in consonance with Okwuanaso (2004) view that the "tale of two cities" seem to be addressing our generation.

The litany of reasons advanced for poor standard in education abound; faulty teaching methods, dearth of teachers, un-teachable students, funding, lack of equipment and facilities, changes in technology, among others although contributed significantly, they are mostly there basically due to poor values (value orientation). Nigerians see their occupation as avenues for amassing wealth and not to improve the system or to make significant contributions to her growth. Equipments donated are often stockpiled to decorate institutional stores rather than utilizing them for teaching, learning and research. On the other hand, funding often meant to close gaps in the disadvantaged in different zones of the nation have often been misappropriated (spending them on the wrong group through diversions), thus expanding the gap rather than closing them. Politicized recruitment is gradually being entrenched in our governance as the norm. Can we call this educational meltdown?

8. Human Capital Development and Employment Policies

The need for well developed and deployed human capital is very crucial to a nation, more so in the bid for the race towards the vision 2020. Many nations are at it, hence the need to put all machineries in action. Employment policies need to be reviewed by seeking the best hands in critical areas while others can then take the Federal Character policy. Here knowledge management is in dire need to ensure innovation, creativity and problem-solving in our Human Relation (HR) environment.

Zubairu (2006) in differentiating between knowledge and information/data described it as information or ideas to which meaning, use or intent has been attached; while she viewed data as structured/arranged information without interpretation. Information, on its own was seen as any message which has sender and receiver. Whether knowledge, information or data, they are capable of being stored or captured but only knowledge exists in the heads of humans and often times it directs their actions and reactions to events around them. The need to manage knowledge is obvious since it shapes the values of a people and

generates attitudes capable of creating more knowledge and sharing ideas for organizational and national growth via intranet and internet metadata transfers for global use.

The knowledge-based giants of United States of America and Europe and Asian Tigers are still clamoring for better action plans for possible improvements. Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind else she will be out of the vision 20:2020 race. In all, education should aim at improved and prompt service delivery to the consumers. Our workforce should be equipped with improved knowledge through training and retraining in addition to teaching/learning for students who will later join the workforce.

9. The Role of Whistle-Blowing and Transformation in Educational Development

Education can be fertilized in order to make it more active and proactive by all the individuals and governments involved. The use of whistle-blowing techniques has been intensified by nations worldwide. Such media as Linked-In, face-book, 2go, twitter, what-sap, Skill-pages, among others have been employed for the purpose of whistle-blowing. Sometimes, however, these have generated negative outcomes, although their usefulness cannot be ignored. It can be made more useful and meaningful if our youths are groomed on how to use them so that they do not see such media as a place to settle scores with government or other people. Many researchers have accessed literature and ideas through them and these have been very useful benchmark in adding critically to knowledge. It would then not be out of place to develop skills for the use of these social networks for positive outcomes, especially for our students and teachers.

Transformation here means change for improvement in outlook or character (Wikipedia, 2012). We have proposed many transformational moves and yet are scared of changing outlooks, forms or character. The inertia is killing and so must be killed. A starting point is a group (control) and another retaining the status quo ante. That way, decision-making on the degree to which transformation would be taken will be ascertained/determined and implemented. The situation whereby NASS (National Assembly) tried to quash JAMB (Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board) Pilot study (2012) aimed at using e-examinations in some designated centers across Nigeria is discouraging. These are situations that have revealed the extent of toxicity experienced in the educational system. Tackling the problems headlong would better be that of ensuring that enlarged broadband for networks in our secondary schools and even primary schools are guaranteed so that the students learn early to use internet for their studies.

10. Necessary Reforms as Way Forward

- Researches should be encouraged to identify ways of reducing and subsequently eradicating the toxins already injected into the educational system.
- Exchange programmes with West African countries and subsequently developed countries for Nigerian students of universities and polytechnics should be commenced; thus intensifying globalization.
- There should be greater intensity for portfolio demands from students of higher institutions. These should also be showcased in Exhibitions from time to time to encourage innovations and initiatives.
- Outstanding portfolios should attract reward or award to Institutions and students, from government funding. Case studies in addition to portfolio would help in education for purposes of retention.
- The educational sector should be deregulated with intensive monitoring, especially in structural facilities and human capital development with emphasis on teaching staff.
- Multi-national companies, which appear to be more and properly automated, should be used for industrial training ground for tertiary undergraduates.
- Professors and Chief Lecturers should be made to host inaugural lectures and workshops for more junior lecturers five to ten (5-10) years before their retirement. That way they would be transferring some unique knowledge they have gathered during their years of experience.

- A lot of journals exist and these should be registered and information from them should be gathered and data-banked for STI Information Management purposes (acquisition, storage and dissemination). The information can be authenticated and used for research purposes and information sharing.

I hope we shall all contribute our quota individually and collectively in reducing and eradicating the toxic wastes and leakages in our educational system

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