

**THE IMPACT OF NIGERIA'S POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
ON HER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (1960-1995)**

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ABSTRACT

It is common sense to state that the nature of political environment in a given society has a direct bearing on its education. However, clear thought regarding the analysis of the repercussions of political atmosphere on education, at a point in time, has never received a consensus of informed opinions. In Nigeria, like many other African nations that emerged from colonial experience, political and economic forces have been so powerful that they frequently exert influences that have far-reaching consequences on the entire nation's education policy.

Thus this paper, titled "The impact of Nigeria's political environment on her educational system", attempts to examine the effects of Nigeria's dynamic political development on her educational policies between 1960 and 1995. The paper is premised largely on the conflict theoretical frame work which perceives education as an instrument of manipulation by the political class in the society. It analyses the implications of this trend on Nigeria as a modern society. Finally suggestions are provided with a view to enabling a stable educational system and policy for quality control in national development.

INTRODUCTION

Opinions differs regarding the relationship between schooling and politics in relations to society. For instance, while the functionalists view education as an instrument serving the societal institutions (such as the economic, social, political, cultural etc.) through socialising students; the conflict theorists on the other hand, regard education as a tool for political class to perpetuate the inequality already existing in the society (Feiberg and Soltis 1985 and Hurn 1985). Modern political concepts like democracy, Freedom, capitalism, communism, socialism etc., as being practised today, carried with them different implications on their educational ideals.

Education and politics are expected to play a symbiotic role in shaping the modern society. Such expectations is more evidenced generally in the third world nations and particularly in African countries that have emerged from colonial experience. If Africa's underdevelopment is largely due to lack of modern education, then education is expected to assist in improving the quality of her political and economic development. However, in the word of Cutrona, "the role of education in the society is influenced by the society's political ideology" (Cutrona, 1977). While this view may be correct to some extent, a common feature peculiar to many African nations' education system as symbolised by Nigeria, is the fact that education is made to lean heavily on the political frame for survival.

With her independence in 1960, Nigeria, like many other African nations, faced numerous tasks of nation-building. The tasks include socio-economic transformation, national integration, and stable political development. These problems which successive Nigerian leaders have had to contend with were further compounded by ethnic-cultural pluralism and gross low literacy level that characterised the Nigerian society. Education was perceived as possessing a multi-faceted and most enduring tool(s) for effective national development. Experience from the colonial era indicates that education functions in Nigeria as a means of acquiring knowledge and skill by an individual citizen so as to fulfil the development of his/her potential which in turn

enables the citizen engage in productive tasks for the national transformation. This apparent functionalism view explains why successive regimes since 1960 have always accorded education among government priorities.

Paradoxically, in Nigeria, education gradually became interwine with changing political developments. It has become a political weapon at different periods employed by different regimes. This phenomenon, no doubt, has far reaching consequences on our nation's education as agent of societal development. Against this background, this paper seeks to examine the impact of changing Nigeria's political environment on her education policies between 1960 and 1995. This paper premised largely on the conflict theoretical base is of the opinion that Nigeria's education system is, to some extent, the direct result of her political policy at a point in time.

It attempts to answer two fundamental questions; Viz. (a) To what extent Nigeria's education policies are politically motivated? and (b) why have abrupt changes become a common feature in Nigeria's education system? Attempt is also made to identify the implications of this trend on Nigeria as a modern society. This precedes suggestions with a view to enabling a stable education policy for quality control and national development.

AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION INTO THE PRE-INDEPENDENT NIGERIA.

The introduction of modern education in what later became Nigeria, was the function of the Western Christian missionaries dating back to around the mid 19th C. Nigeria, as a modern nation, encompasses within her boarders more than two hundred different ethnic groups. The larger tribes include the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo located in the North, West and East respectively. It is with this cultural heterogeneity that the British colonial administration had to grapple until Nigeria's independence in 1960. However, inspite of the British awareness of the functional role of education in National Development, Effiong (1972) observes that throughout the colonial period, education in Nigeria was dually administered by the Christian missionaries - the principal actors, local private individuals and, to a laser extent, the colonial government. Yet the goals of their education did not reflect the actual needs of Nigeria. Effiong stresses that while the missionaries were very anxious of their educational needs for the local converts, evangelists, pastors and other allied Church workers, the colonial regime was mainly concerned with the production of minor administrative personnel suitable for colonial society. This, in part, explains the lack of any serious and concerted efforts by the colonial government and the missionaries to formulate an educational philosophy and uniform standard with a view to bringing the people from different backgrounds together as members of one nation, (Ojioku, 1982).

By 1913, primary school enrolment according to Fafunwa (1974) stood at 35,716 in the South as compared with 1,131 in the North. Thus the 1914 amalgamation which fails to portend national unification brought to the fore the problem of educational imbalance between the Northern and Southern regions. Yet the figures regarding the distribution of schools indicate that even within each region there was the problem of uneven distribution of schools. This, the conflict theorist would view is as a result of the influence of the political leaders of the time. However, the inadequacy that characterised the school system during the time under review is demonstrated by the dual administration it experienced from the colonial government and the mission. The schools of other (indigenous) agencies mostly in the south, were left under the mercy of their proprietors. Also th government did not see anything good in merging the

existing two educational departments of the south and the North being separately operated until in 1929. (Fafunwa, 1974). The overall effects of this educational imbalance has continued to rear its ugly head recurringly in the course of our national development.

The "divide and rule policy" inherent in the 'Indirect Rule system' equally seems to have appropriated this development feature in Nigeria's education. The disturbing public criticisms, elicited by this ambivalence of the colonial administration in inadequate educational development of Africa, led to the setting up of the Phelstokes Commission in 1919 (Taiwo, 1980). The commission was to, among other terms of reference, study the existing educational programme in African and provide appropriate recommendations that would improve African nations. In spite of the white papers in 1925 and 1935 based on the commission's reports, the colonial administration in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, was reluctant to formulate a national education policy needed by Nigeria

Education was, thus, operated in each region in the best interests of both the missionaries and the colonial government. This disjointed educational operation found expression in the 1956 adopted federal constitution which divided the country into three giant ethnic blocs; each being political dominated by a major tribe. The inter-regional mutual mistrust and suspicion among the Nigerian nationalist leaders as evidenced since 1953 Macpherson Constitutional Conference which was further compounded by the inherent educational imbalance between the regions clearly signalled the political importance of education in the post independent Nigeria. From this period education became perceived in Nigeria as an important agent for political and socio-economic advancement. In other words, the then regional political class regarded education as a potent force for achieving political and economic domination or resisting domination by others. This development, it seems, gave birth to politicisation of education along ethnic-inclined regional exist in Nigeria.

The significance of this development is demonstrated by the contrasting reaction especially among the regional governments towards the attainment of independence. The reactions manifested themselves in various aggressive educational policies adopted by the three regional governments. For instance, the Northern government, anxious to improve its educationally weak position when compared with its Southern counterpart, embarked on public enlightenment for Western education in its territory. The governments of the Eastern and Western regions, in their bid to outpace each other and perpetuate their educational leadership position, went further to introduce Universal free primary Education scheme in 1950s. Consequently, without regard to the already acute shortage of teaching manpower, primary school enrolment in Nigeria rose from 500,000 in 1946 to over 2.5 million (i.e. over 500%) in 1959 (Wilson, 1966). By the time the nation was attaining its independence in 1960, there were 3,062,799 Nigerians in all levels of education (Tradev, 1992:19).

Education in the Politics of the First Republic. (1960 -66)

The separate regional structure modelled by the 1945 Richard constitution was what Nigeria attained its political independence with in 1960. It also lay the foundation for regionalization of education as explicitly retained in the subsequent constitutions including that of Macpherson in 1951 (Taiwo, 1980). Yet as regard curriculum content, instructional methodology and administration, education in each region bore not much relevance to the actual needs of Nigeria but that of the political class (the colonial government)

Amidst the growing criticisms by the nationalists against this unproductive colonial education at all levels in Nigeria, the colonial government set up the Ashby Commission in 1959. It was to formulate a twenty-year (1960-80) higher education policy that would meet the economic, political and social demands of Nigeria. In spite of credibility for its assumed 'thorough work and good intention', the commission seems to have underestimated the educational growth and development in Nigeria. For instance, "within five years of its operation events that were scheduled for tenth year had caught up with it. The bulk of the report has thus "become important only as Library reference". (Lawrence, 1969:37). The commission's report also failed to divorce the curriculum of higher education from the British system. The report did not foresee the unwillingness of the post independent Nigerian Universities and educators to continue with the British based curriculum.

Still in search of educational focus for Nigeria, soon after independence (1960), USA, Britain and some other European nations came to our aid in fashioning out what they felt should be Nigeria's educational aim and objective. This, in part, brought about much foreign aid scheme as American peace Corps, Operation Cross Roads, The British Overseas Teachers scheme, the establishment of Advanced Teachers Training Colleges and the Comprehensive schools (Fatunwa: 1969). Since the scheme was built on no foundation i.e. the absence of any articulated focus, coupled with neo-colonial factors, the scheme crumbled soon after attempt with the exception of ATCS.

Considering the heated campaign by the Pan-africanists for the concept of exalted African personality and educational reform inherent in the course of nationalist movement, one would have expected that once the political independence is attained, Nigerian leaders would conceptualise the role of a uniform education policy in nation building. However, even if this idea was realised by the Nigerian political leaders, the prevailing politics of regional/ethnic loyalty as against loyalty to the entire nation had impeded the possible practicalisation of such idea.

This partly explains why the idea of using education to foster national unity and development did not receive desired attention of the national leaders. For instance, in the First National Development Plan, the objective of Education in this regard was vaguely stated as "Education which is useful to the individual and the society will be provided". (Adesina, 1988). Thus, schools operated different syllabuses at the regional levels at the peril of Uniformity in standard and quality. The concern of both Federal and regional governments centred primarily on the rapid production and indigenization of manpower which was the thrust of the Ashby Commission's report of 1960 (Harber, 1989:15-16). However, the climate of mutual suspicion and mistrust among the regional/ethnic politics as stated above, was further reinforced with education being used as a campaign issue. Education was thus perceived as an agent for domination of the groups economically and politically. It was this anxiety that pushes the Western and Eastern regional governments to embark on pioneering the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1950's. While opinions differ regarding the quality of the scheme, it was operated up to the end of the first Republic which was terminated by the first Military coup in 1966 and accompanied by the thirty-month bloody civil war from 1967-70.

Education in the First Phase of the Military Regime (1966 - 79)

The civil war, essentially caused by the leaders of political class was fought to keep Nigeria one against the Eastern Region's secession attempt. During this period, most efforts of both the Federal and regional (later State) governments were geared towards the prosecution of the war. Consequently, there was a lull in educational

expansion especially in the East, the main theatre of the war and where schools had to be closed completely throughout the period.

In May, 1976, the country was broken into twelve states. Although this was intended to decentralise regional might and foster national unity, the impact of regional educational imbalance quickly manifested itself. A one time Governor of the defunct North Western State, Usman Faruk, in a memorandum submitted to a National committee for arresting falling standard on education, lamented that the creation of the twelve state structure had had profound effect on lowering the standard of education because it caused acute shortage of, among other things, qualified and experienced staff to man the newly created ministries of Education in the new states and the teachers for the unprecedented educational expansion in the new states (Democrat, 4/5/95). The thirty-month war, in effect, did not only claim the lives of many innocent educated, brilliant Nigerians, destruction of school building and equipment etc., but also sapped the funds that would have been used to boost the nation's educational system. Also the Federal government programme of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation aimed at restoring hopes, peaceful CO-existence and national unity among Nigerians immediately after the war, displaced education in terms of priority.

One of the experiences arising from the civil war was the belief that "Unity" must be emphasised not only in subsequent educational programmes but also in most government measures (adenine, 1988: 193). For the first time, therefore government began to evolve policies that have direct bearing to the promotion of national unity and national integration. It was at this period that the Federal Government openly admitted the inadequacies inherent in the colonial educational programme still in practice in the country. This is what informed the federal government's decision to call for the 1969 National curriculum conference as contained in the second National Development Plan (1970-74). In it the importance of education as a weapon for achieving national unity and integration seems paramount to the government. This is because the government's policy statement indicates that "a country like Nigeria cannot allow education to be left to the whims and caprices of individual's choice". This was followed by the 1973 National seminar of experts all of which gave birth to the New National Policy on Education (NNPE) in 1977 and revised in 1981.

Several other unity and integration programmes were either expanded or newly introduced in the nation's educational system. Notable among these programmes include a policy statement in 1972 by the Federal government of taking-over and assuming full responsibility for higher education and the subsequent establishment of more universities in 1975; expansion of Unity secondary schools from 1973; the introduction of National Youth Service Corp. (NYSC) scheme; the launching of the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E) programme in 1976; the setting up of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (J.A.M.B.) In 1977 to co-ordinate University entry, to ensure uniform standard and quality control and to reduce regional enrolment inequalities through a number of 'affirmative' programmes. Other programmes include, the establishment of schools of Basic studies in each of the educationally disadvantaged states... and the establishment of Remedial programmes in all the then seven newly established universities as a measure to correct the imbalance. (Thompson 1981 and Daily Times, 21/8/1972 and 9/3/1979). The nation's schools curriculum was also redesigned to reflect the national needs.

It is, however, noteworthy that some of these programmes did not yield the targeted purpose. Instead, they regrettably tend to fan the flame of disunity among the nation's populace. For instance, the role of J.A.M.B. in the co-ordination of entry into the nation's institutions of higher learning was and is still being perceived by the educationally advanced states as an attempt to retard their hitherto educational

advancement to the advantage of their educationally disadvantaged counterparts in form of "bridging the gap and Federal character". The 1977 crisis in the (Unity) Federal government colleges, Kano and more recently that of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in 1995, which for instance tinged along ethnic axis were reflections of the disunity among the political class. All these suggest the double-standard of the policy makers as per the contradiction between the precept and practice.

Education in The Politics of the Second Republic (1979 - 83)

The politicians who had been kept in check by their Military opponents since 1966, received power again in 1979. This ushered in a new era not only for the nation's political environment but also for its educational system. The earlier parliamentary democracy gave way to the experimentation of presidentialism.

Five political parties which emerged for the Presidential constitution were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigeria People Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) and the people Redemption Party (PRP). Although each Political Party by the constitutional requirement, was to possess a national outlook as regards membership composition and manifesto, these parties were no more than replica of those in the first Republic (NPC, AG AND NCNC) characterised by regional/ethnic inclination. This period also witnessed an unprecedented open politicisation of education in Nigeria which brought an abrupt end to the unity of purpose and action in education policies started by the previous military regime. In their electioneering campaigns as contained in their manifestos, the political parties had different educational programmes as slogans. Each party promised to implement its own educational programme for its electorates. Except perhaps the PRP, almost all the parties had pledged for "Free Education" at all levels or some levels. This is to attract the support of the electorates.

The UPN, for instance, in line with the popular philosophy of its founder - chief Obafemi Awolowo - Promised that a UPN government would provide:

- a) A free and Universal Primary Education
- b) A free Secondary and Vocational Education
- c) A tuition free University Education among other things

The manifesto of the NPN, on the other hand, provides that, an NPN government would work towards "free and qualitative" primary education, vocational education and secondary education as enshrined in the then constitution.

The NPP and GNPP on their part, promised that, if voted into power, no child would be turned away from school, college or university on the ground of poverty alone. The PRP's educational emphasis was on "quality and egalitarianism". It states that, "Provision of adequate educational facilities at all levels and the creation of a system common and equal education opportunity and aggressive pursuit of technological modernisation". (Adesina, 1988:).

Following the results of the 1979 elections, no single party could form a government in all the states. Each party had its own area (State or states) of influence. Thus the parties, in order to fulfil their promises and ensure their control, went about implementing their various educational programmes in their respective states. This implies that the idea of pursuing the objectives of the new National Education Policies commenced by the previous Military regime had been shattered. The situation thus became chaotic as "Education was made a ready political bait for votes and drive for power" (Adesina, 1988:144). The vigour with which the parties pursued their various

education programmes in their respective states may be best illustrated by the unprecedented increase in the educational institutions and enrolment at all levels in Nigeria. For example, primary schools rose from 20,000 with an enrolment of 10.7 million in 1979 to over 16 million pupils in 40,000 schools in 1983 (Adesina, 1988:195).

A part from the corruption and indiscipline which characterised operation of the parties' educational programmes, inadequate funding and poor planning leading to lack of facilities and trained teaching personnel rendered the parties' lofty educational manifestoes a caricature of themselves as the parties had bitten more than they could chew. From the onset, none of the parties could draw up a meaningful and realistic scheme for financing its educational programme. The Federal government which the parties had relied upon as their finance could not provide the fund for some reasons. The revenue allocation formula in the 1979 constitution, has reduced the Federal Government's share from 70% to 55% while increasing the states' shares to 35%. Secondly, the very political atmosphere in which every party controlled its own state or a number of states mean that the party controlling the Federal power would not be willing to fund educational programmes of other parties in their states. This inter-political party conflict explains why in some states, primary school teachers went on industrial action due to non-payment of salaries for months. This phenomenon, in effect, accelerated the decline already set in motion in the nation's educational standard. The concern generated by this development led partly to the Federal Government's setting up two commissions to, among other things, examine the problem of funding education in the country in 1983. The commissions' reports were not tested as they were considered contradictory to the political interests of the day and therefore the reports remained a mere paper work.

As indicated above, proliferation in schools extended to tertiary institutions. While some states hankered after, some other eventually established State Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, or colleges of Technology, Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Universities. The excuse advanced by such States is that due to the admission policies of the existing federal Educational institutions, many of their students could not be absorbed. Even states that are yet to fulfil their quotas in the Federal colleges and Universities, were anxious to establish their own. Above all, most of the states that owned these colleges and universities did not really have the financial capability to sustain their viability. Also for some states that own their tertiary institutions, they often faced the political controversy regarding the locations of such schools. In most cases, as it was in the defunct Bendel State, the Governors would be anxious to site such schools in their home towns or villages. As result of the Federal government's efforts, almost all the states in the second Republic had a federal university each. A few that were not having, were compensated with Federal colleges of Education and /or Polytechnics. It was all to fulfil political promises rather than the actual demand(s).

EDUCATION IN THE MARCH TOWARDS THE THIRD REPUBLIC

(1983 - 95)

As a result of excedssived indiscipline and corruption which crystallised the administration of the second Republic as stated above, the Military struck back on 31st December, 1983, led by General Muhammad Buhari. This regime aimed, among other things, at sanitising the country by ridding it of all forms of the existing corruption. In its anti-corruption crusade, the Buhari/idiagbon administration launched its popular slogan; the "War against Indiscipline" (WAI) to revamp Nigeria's economic and socio-political image. Although the regime only lasted for about one and a half years (January,

1983 - August, 1985). the new environment meant to be created by the policy of this regime has had its own effects on the nation's existing education system.

In line with the goal of the new government, a number of practical measures were actively put in place. With regard to education, following a national committee's reported on the problems which have almost ruined our elementary education, the Federal Government approved the responsibility of 65% funding of the nation's primary education. In the same vein, this government embarked on curtailing the indiscriminate educational expansionist programme by the politicians of the second Republic. The measures taken include scraping some schools considered extremely inadequate, merging of some while debording others.

At the tertiary levels, government withdrew the feeding subsidy to the students (i.e. Cafertarian services system). This particular measure has in effect, inflicted untold hardship to our students in the nation's higher education. One such effect observably present in our tertiary institutions was the fact that no average Nigerian student could feed three times daily due to poverty. While awaiting research confirmation, it is reasonable to suggest that the effects of these measures may have had some negative consequences on the students' performance and thus, on quality control of such institutions.

In yet another Military coup which brought in the Babangida Administration between 1985 and 1993 the problems of Nigeria's education were further aggravated. The leadership of this regime confined political diplomacy with military cligarchy which spelt disastrous consequences on the entire facets of our nation's life including education. For political acceptance, this administration reversed the educational policy of the Buhari government. For instance almost all the tertiary institutions earlier scrapped were re-established and new ones were added in the face of the nation's crippling economy. The overall effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of this regime, arising from its policy of deregulated and free market economy and its compliance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities, brought an unprecedented hardship to Nigeria with severe repercussions on its education. The unabated inflationary trend coupled with corruption and indiscipline rendered the cost of adequate running of education by the government alone impossible. Consequently, government policies in relation to education were inconsistent form time to time. Thus industrial actions became a common feature in all sectors of the nation's economy and education seems worst hit throughout the regime. In tertiary institutions the end of students' demonstrations often marked the beginning of their teachers' and sometimes vice-versa, all in demand for better conditions of living standard. Among the results of these industrial actions and students demonstration was the loss of one whole academic seession (1993/94) in most of the nation's universities. Poor funding of education also accounts for increasing decline into the standard of our schooling industry for many irregulatities in our schools. It also ushered in a new era of "secret cultism" in our Educational institutions.

The short reign of Shonekan Administration (August, 27 - November 17, 1993) could not help the situation neither the economic policy of the Abacha regime, to date, seem to provide even palliative remedy to the predicament of our education. This partly explains why the nation's higher educational institutions are currently suffering from brain drain among other things. Perhaps the greater doom to the nation's education has had its seed planted in the 1995 constitution meant to usher into the third Republic. The constitution provides that each state government which cannot now manage its primary schools effectively, should assume full management responsibility of all educational institutions (from Primary to University) in its territory. Whether or not this option can really rescue our education from its present dilemma, only time shall tell.

SUGGESTIONS

Against the above analysis, the paper provides, the following suggestions. This is with a view to assisting in removing the present obstacles retarding Nigeria's educational progress.

While education cannot be removed completely from political frame work, it should not be too tied to the nation's political whims and caprices. Since our political development has been characterised by frequent changes in government, educational system should be depoliticized to allow a reasonable measure of continuity. The impact of frequent changes on educational plans is very destructive to the nation's educational development and growth. Once development rolling plan for the nation's education has been designed, it should be given enough time to be tested. Changes in the government should not absolutely means changes in educational system.

Similarly the government should avoid diabolical position between the precept and practice of educational policies. For example, the basis for national unity or integration via education which led to the establishment of unity schools and other federal educational institutions is being eroded by the policies that characterise the operation of state schools. In some states' schools there is differential treatment in entry admission conditions between the students from within the states and those from other states. If education is to bring about meaningful national integration, the practice of "states" being operated in state schools should be checked immediately by the Federal Government.

As for the issue of underfunding education, it is not enough to advise the government to increase the budgetary allocation to education. To some extent, both the Federal and State Government have been increasing their financial allocation to education since the past five years. What government has failed to do, is to check the indiscipline and corruption in the disbursement of the money meant for education. It is commonly observable that even 50% of the money allocated to education does not actually reach the target. If corruption in this process is removed and the money meant for the provision of educational facilities and teachers welfare could reach their target, the condition of our education will improve.

There should be co-ordination between the federal and state government's policies to ensure uniformity and standard in our educational quest for national development. For example, in pursuit of science and technology, the government should be conscious of quality control. This could be attained through actual provision of facilities and effective supervision by experts. Manpower development in this regard is vital and therefore, teacher education programme should be a priority to the government.

In view of the economic constraint besetting the state and Federal governments which is adversely affecting the funding of the existing educational institutions, proliferation of schools should be checked through law. For instance, states that are yet to fill their admission quot in the federal higher institutions need not establish such schools. This will, among other things, reduce the danger of haphazard funding of such schools. Similarly, some state governments could reduce such existing schools in their territories through merger to become a joint property for efficiency and quality control.

Where necessity calls for state higher educational institutions, two or more states could jointly establish such schools to cater for their peculiar demand. Apart from inter-state co-operation and unity of purpose which such joint venture can promote, it will ensure better funding and effective utilisation of resources.

There should be a rationalisation of educational programme in each state to avoid duplication of effort and waste of resources. For instance, in a state having a

College of Education and Polytechnic, it is not reasonable for the latter offering NCE courses. It is also a waste of resources and duplication of effort for a remedial school in such states to be offering NCE programme and Diploma in technical/science Education.

There should be a realistic teachers' welfare package. This should aim at retaining them on the job. Money should be made available for teachers' periodic training to update their knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The paper acknowledges the roles of both education and politics in shaping any modern society, and the symbiotic impact of the two (Education and Politics) on each other in our contemporary society. It has emphasised that in the context of African society in general and Nigeria in particular, the nature of political environment at a point in time, has dominant influence on its educational policies. The political instability in Nigeria occasioned by frequent changes in government policies and leadership since independence in 1960 has had traumatic effects on the nation's education policies.

The paper though largely inclined to conflict approach, pointed out that even when the government realised the need for education for national development, inadequate planning, corruption and indiscipline did not allow the government to achieve its educational goals. After the first Republic, successive regimes, with the exception of the Murtala and Buhari regimes, increasingly politicised education. This development has had severe repercussions on the nation's educational system as analysed by the paper.

Finally, the paper provides some suggestions including the depoliticization and proper funding of education with the sole aim of ensuring stable educational system for Nigeria. It is hoped that if the policy makers of Nigeria's education adopt these suggestions, the country would have the education she desires to graduate her into the 21st century.

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