

PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM: CRITICAL ISSUES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Pedagogical reforms in Nigeria refer to the changes and improvements made in the educational system to enhance teaching and learning processes. These reforms aim to address critical issues in the Nigerian education system and provide a way forward for better educational outcomes. One critical issue in Nigeria's education system is the outdated teaching methods that focus on rote memorization rather than critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Pedagogical reforms seek to introduce innovative teaching techniques such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and the integration of technology to promote active student engagement and deeper understanding of concepts. Another issue is the lack of qualified and motivated teachers. Pedagogical reforms advocate for the recruitment and training of competent teachers who can effectively deliver the curriculum and support students' learning needs. This includes providing continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills. There is a need to address the issue of overcrowded classrooms and inadequate infrastructure. Pedagogical reforms emphasize the importance of reducing class sizes to ensure individualized attention and creating conducive learning environments. This involves the construction of more schools and the provision of necessary educational resources. This paper explores the way forward for pedagogical reforms in Nigeria which involves a multi-faceted approach. It requires collaboration between the government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Adequate funding and investment in education are crucial to implement these reforms effectively. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the reforms' impact are necessary to ensure their success and make necessary adjustments along the way.

Keywords: Pedagogical reforms, Critical issues, and way forward

Introduction

The education system plays a crucial role in the development and progress of a nation. It is responsible for shaping the minds and skills of future generations, which in turn determines the growth and success of a country. In Nigeria, there has been an increasing demand for pedagogical reforms in the education system to address critical issues and improve the quality of education provided to students.

Historically, Nigeria's education system has faced various challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, outdated curricula, and limited access to quality education. These challenges have hindered the effective delivery of education, resulting in poor learning outcomes and a significant education gap between urban and rural areas. In response,

several pedagogical reforms have been initiated to address these critical issues and improve the overall quality of education in the country.

Pedagogical reforms are essential to enhance teaching and learning practices in Nigeria's education system. They aim to improve the quality of education by adopting innovative teaching methods, enhancing teacher training programs, updating curricula to meet current needs, incorporating technology in classrooms, and promoting learner-centered approaches. These reforms are crucial as they provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills.

Beginning of the Crisis in Educational Reform in Nigeria

Crisis in education started manifesting itself when government went all out to implement 6-3-3-4 system without adequate planning put in place. By planning, according to Segun Adesina (2008), is the process of applying scientific or rational procedures to the process of educational growth and development so as to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system. The lower education specifically primary education was the first to suffer the effect of inadequate planning. Free Universal Primary Education was launched in 1976 but the policy on education itself appeared in 1977 one year after implementation of the programme. In this kind of situation where implementation is ahead of policy, confusion would certainly emerge. Needs assessment was not properly done; the end result was absence of adequate statistical data. For example, on the launching of UPE three million children showed up as against 2.3million prepared for, a 30 percent underestimation. This has implications for classroom spaces, teachers, and equipment (Akpa, 2008). The exercise triggered phenomenal rise in pupil population from 8.7million in 1976/77 to 12.5million in 1979/80 and reaching 15million in 1982.

Notwithstanding absence of correct data to implement the UPE, the Federal Government went ahead and took over all voluntary and mission schools and assumed full financial responsibility of running the scheme throughout the country. This was the period of boom; the government is a washed with petro-dollars. Ismaila (1988) commented, that 1975-1983 witnessed the launching of the gigantic educational programme in Nigeria. Above all it was a period of unprecedented financial imprudence, irrational planning, large scale corruption that culminated in a steep decline from boom to doom. In the absence of any comprehensive planning, the implementers of the programme have their leeway; they chose what was important and what was not important. Emergency contractors executing fictitious contracts became the norms, substandard buildings in the name of UPE scattered all over the country, half-baked teachers populated the teaching force, ghost workers were made part and parcel of the UPE programme.

The enormous responsibility Federal Government of Nigeria took in respect of the UPE programme cannot be sustained. The financial burden became too great that government began to shy away from its undertakings. As a face saving measure the then Obasanjo administration placed Primary education under joint control of States and Local Governments in the 1979 Constitution, where Local Governments had direct control over primary schools. To worsen the situation some states in the federation started reversing the policy by returning back voluntary and mission schools to their former owners. The falling prices of petroleum in the international market pass a death sentence to UPE programme. States and Local Governments could not fund primary education as such began to charge fees and what was left; UPE programme was neither free nor universal. It was simply a political expediency designed to impress Nigerian masses lacking nothing in substance.

Free universal primary Education was not designed to succeed and so destined to fail. The Military Government of Yakubu Gowon that announced the plan and the successor Government of Murtala/Obasanjo that went ahead and executed a defective educational programme with much noises and fanfare were the same actors that engineered the collapsed of UPE. The infamous burial ceremony of what was Free Universal Primary Education that met its untimely death was left to Shagari Administration. One cannot imagine that such ambitious programme as free universal Primary education could not be sustained by a nation washed with money. At least the military prepared the 1979 constitution, if at all they believe in the programme, UPE should have been made sacrosanct and enshrine it as a national programme thereby protected from political and economic fallouts.

To notify Nigerians that UPE is dead, the revised National Policy on Education 1998, p15 stated:

Government welcomes contributions of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary schools alongside those provided by the states and local Governments as long as they meet the minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government.

Challenges and Critical Issues

a. Inadequate Teacher Training: One of the major challenges in Nigeria's education system is the lack of qualified and adequately trained teachers. Many teachers lack the necessary pedagogical skills and knowledge to effectively teach students, resulting in ineffective teaching practices and poor learning outcomes.

b. Outdated Curricula: The existing curricula in Nigeria's education system are often outdated and do not align with the current needs and demands of society. The curricula need to be regularly reviewed and updated to equip students with relevant and practical skills that can prepare them for the future.

c. Inequitable Access to Education: There is a significant disparity in access to quality education between urban and rural areas in Nigeria. This issue needs to be addressed through pedagogical reforms that focus on bridging the education gap and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of their geographical location.

d. Limited Integration of Technology: Technology integration in classrooms is crucial for fostering innovative and engaging learning experiences. However, Nigeria's education system faces challenges in this area, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of digital literacy among teachers, and limited access to technology resources. Pedagogical reforms should focus on addressing these challenges and promoting the effective use of technology in education.

Some of the critical issues on Pedagogical Reforms in Nigeria are as follows:

Teacher Training

One of the key issues affecting pedagogy in Nigeria is the inadequacy of teacher training programs. Many teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver quality education. The professional development of teachers should be a priority, focusing on improving pedagogical practices, subject knowledge, and teaching methodologies. Continuous training and capacity building programs should be provided to ensure teachers are equipped with the necessary skills for effective instruction (Ukeje, 2005).

Curriculum Development

Another critical issue in pedagogy in Nigeria is the outdated and rigid curriculum. The current

curriculum does not adequately prepare students for the demands of the 21st-century workplace and society. There is a need for a curriculum overhaul that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. The curriculum should also be flexible and responsive to societal needs and technological advancements. (Ukeje, 2005).

Learner Centered Approach

A learner-centered approach is an educational philosophy that places the learner at the centre of the learning process. This approach focusses on the individual's needs, interests, and abilities of each student, rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching.

In a learner-centred approach, the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide rather than as the sole authority figure in the classroom. The teacher encourages active engagement from the learners, allowing them to explore and discover knowledge for themselves. This approach recognizes that learners have different learning styles and preferences, and strives to accommodate these differences. In a learner-centred approach, teachers act as facilitators guides, helping students to actively engage in their own learning by providing opportunities for exploration, discovery, and problem-solving. The goal is to empower learners to take ownership of their learning and develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

This approach emphasizes the importance of student engagement and active participation. Learners are encouraged to ask questions, seek answers, and collaborate with peers. The role of the teacher is to provide guidance, support, and feedback, rather than simply transmitting information.

Learner-centred approaches can be implemented in various educational settings, including schools, colleges, and universities. They promote student-centered activities such as group work, project-based learning, and individualized instruction. This approach is believed to enhance critical thinking skills, creativity, and motivation for lifelong learning.

A learner-centred approach is an approach to education that places the learner at the Centre of the learning experience. It focuses on the needs, interests, and abilities of the learner, and aims to empower the learner to take control of their own learning. A learner-centred approach aims to create a positive and inclusive learning environment that fosters the development of well-rounded individuals who are actively engaged in their own learning journey (Teacher Development Programme: Teachers' Guide, 2015).

Use of Technology

The integration of technology in teaching and learning is crucial for effective pedagogy in Nigeria. Technology has the potential to enhance teaching methods, engage students, and provide access to quality educational resources. However, there is a significant digital divide in the country, with many schools lacking basic infrastructure and internet connectivity. Efforts should be made to bridge this divide by investing in infrastructure, providing internet access, and training teachers to effectively use technology in the classroom (Omolewa, M. 2007).

Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping pedagogical practices in Nigeria. The country's diverse cultural landscape and multi-lingual society pose challenges for effective instruction. Pedagogical reforms should take into account the cultural context and language diversity of students. The inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices in the curriculum can foster a sense of identity and improve student engagement. (Omolewa, 2007).

Economic Factors

The economic challenges in Nigeria have a direct impact on pedagogy. Many schools lack the necessary resources to provide quality education, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and teaching aids. The government should increase investment in education by allocating more funds to infrastructure development, providing resources to schools, and improving teacher salaries and welfare. (Ukeje, 2005).

Organizing activities and Managing Time

In organizing activities, you need to decide whether pupils should work alone, in pairs/group or as a whole class. This means that they can become more independent and also learn to work with others. They do not get bored because things are done differently in each lesson.

Time management is also an important part of a teacher's role otherwise we cannot achieve our learning outcomes for each lesson. If you plan an activity with your class, then you need to know how long it will take and allow time for pupils to complete it. If not, they may miss an important learning opportunity. (Teacher Development Programme: Teachers' Guide, 2015)

Low cost and appropriate teaching aids

Teaching aids are useful for helping pupils to learn. They are good for encouraging pupils' activity and, because they are practical, they help children to learn more easily. For example, if you are teaching the topic 'adding up' in a mathematics lesson, you could use counters or bottle tops to help children see what it means to add in real life. Teaching aids also make learning more fun and motivate pupils to participate in learning. Sometimes you might think that finding good teaching aids is difficult or expensive, but many teaching aids are available for little cost, or even no cost.

Using teaching aids in your lessons does not guarantee that the pupils will learn. It is more important to use the teaching aids appropriately and effectively. For appropriate use of instructional materials, the following instructional goals must be met: instructional materials and instructional strategies must complement each other; while using instructional materials, the teacher must have the ability to observe, monitor, supervise, advise and support pupils' learning; and the teacher must use material with gender-neutral language and no stereotypes (Teacher Development Programme: Teachers' Guide, 2015).

Observing

Have you ever watched the way it rains? The act of watching the way it rains by paying close attention to it is known as observation. Observing is one of the most important science process skills which is needed for learning and development, as such, you must be able to prompt your pupils to use this skill effectively in learning about the world around them. Observation help us to gather important information that can be used to answer questions. Example: How many pupils brought in water bottles? What colour is the apple? Is the rain heavy? These questions can be answered by gathering the water bottles together and counting and using your sense of sight, to observe the apple and how heavy the rain is.

Observation requires the use of our five senses, namely: sense of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing to closely look at something in order to gather information. By so doing, we can discover new and exciting things that are worth noting. For example, by paying close attention to the way Usman writes, we can discover that he is left handed. Similarly, by observing Aisha's drawings, we may discover that she is a very good artist. Observation is more than seeing with the eyes, you may have noticed a blind person crossing a road at a time when there

are no cars close to him and crossing a gutter. He/She makes use of the sense of hearing and possibly, hand or other object (stick) to assist him or her. Sometimes we make use of tools as rulers, scales, microscopes, hand lenses etc. to assist us in making good observations. These are some of the things that make observing very important in science (Teacher Development Programme: Teachers' Guide, 2015).

The Way Forward

To achieve sustainable pedagogical reforms in Nigeria, a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is required. The government, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders must collaborate and work towards a common goal. In addition to stakeholder collaboration, policy support is crucial to drive pedagogical reforms. The government should develop clear policies that address the critical issues in pedagogy and provide the necessary support for implementation.

Teacher training should be a priority, with a focus on continuous professional development, mentoring, and peer learning. The curriculum should be revised to align with 21st-century skills and societal needs. The integration of technology in teaching and learning should be prioritized, with investment in infrastructure and teacher training.

To address the socio-cultural factors, a culturally responsive approach to pedagogy should be adopted. Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices should be integrated into the curriculum to promote inclusivity and engagement.

Addressing the economic challenges will require increased investment in education. The government should allocate more funds to the sector, support infrastructure development, and provide resources to schools.

Recommendations

Government need to focus on effective pedagogical reforms in Nigeria, focusing on learner-centered approaches, technology integration, teacher training and professional development, and investment in infrastructure.

Government should set up an independent committee made up of experts in the education to study various reforms in the education since independence and come up with a strategy that will enable the nation move forward.

Government should accord every education segment its rightful place; in the sense every segment in the education sector should have codified objectives that are subject to periodical evaluations.

Government should establish secondary education commission as a watchdog to secondary education in the country. The essence is to give secondary education the deserved priority that aims at making our youth arm with sellable skills and knowledge to continue with their studies.

Policy haste in education never gives desired result. It would be better if policies are made in such a way that changes can be accommodated without disturbing the overall system in operation.

Nigeria education should aspire for manpower training. Mass benefit approach to education has been heavily politicized and it is on its way out, and cost benefit approach is too sophisticated for the country.

Students at tertiary institutions do suffer due to cost of feeding. It will be in the best interest of the nation if government could revisit tertiary institutions feeding scheme aims at subsidizing food at affordable rate to students.

Government should work toward finding solution to incessant strikes at the tertiary institutions by academic staff. How would Nigeria hope to belong among 20 economically strong nations if its institutions of learning are paralyzed by strikes?

Government should revisit licensing of universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is to ensure the quantity of these institutions match the quality of tuition. A sort of guided establishment, expansion and development.

Conclusion

Pedagogical reforms are critical for improving the quality of education in Nigeria. The issues in pedagogy, such as inadequate teacher training, outdated curriculum, lack of infrastructure, and socio-economic factors, must be addressed holistically. A comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving stakeholder collaboration, policy support, and investment in teacher training and infrastructure is essential for achieving sustainable pedagogical reforms in Nigeria.

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