

## **TOWARDS A PRAGMATIC SYSTEM OF EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA 6-3-3-4 AND CHINESE 9-3-4 SYSTEM.**

**BY**

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### **ABSTRACT.**

This paper takes a look at the comparison of the educational policies of two countries: the educational systems in Nigeria and China. The challenges and problems encountered in implementing the national policy in Nigeria and the way out. Using the secondary data collection method, the paper critically examined the factors behind the success and failure in both countries in a bid to fortifying the system for positive result. It also analyzed and evaluated the challenges hindering educational policies of the two countries from development. This paper therefore seeks to look into the various activities of both countries towards the development of education in comparative and similarity perspective. The paper in conclusion, lunched the need for Nigerian Government to take responsibility of improving and strengthening the already existing educational laws and not changing and adding new things that may not be relevant in educational development of Nigeria. The current efforts appear not only uncoordinated but also totally inadequate to confront the challenges facing education in Nigeria hence the need for our government not only take responsibility to educate it's citizens but also to see it as the best way to drive away unemployment, youth restiveness, crime of all kinds and engaging the minds for a better life. The paper among other things recommends that some powers of the Federal Government and State should be ceded to the Local Authorities especially as it regards the Basic Education.

**KEY WORDS: Education, Challenges, Policy, Development, Nigeria, China.**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

There is no doubt that education is the foundation of growth and development in any developing countries like China and Nigeria. Although, Series of lectures have been delivered on education in Nigeria, books published, scholarly works done, conferences and other unpublished papers on education but not many have done a comparative study on the growth and development of education as it concerns China and Nigeria. Since education is all about cultural activity of the people, it can be said that every cultural system has its own educational process and the yardstick for measuring educational quality and standard varies from culture to culture. Nigeria has

witnessed a series of change in its educational policy making and implementation before and after independence. China on the other hand has also tackled educational reforms and has excelled in some of their educational policies and have made tremendous breakthrough in areas of information technology, biological engineering et cetera.

In Nigeria not much has been done to save the deplorable state of educational system. “The Chinese people according to China Intercontinental Press (2007 Edition) have since ancient times been cherishing the tradition of respecting teachers and prioritizing education. They honor Confucius (551-479BC) and respected him as a great thinker and educator because, about 2000 years ago, Confucius initiated and advocated freedom to education, a move that broke the monopoly of education by the government and made it possible for ordinary people to have access to education.” For these reasons Chinese named the institute in charge of Chinese language spread worldwide after the great educationist “Confucius Institute”.

In Nigeria the 6-3-3-4 system was introduced by Professor Babatunde Fafunwa primarily to train people to be self reliance and to separate students with academic capabilities from those with technical abilities so as to be able to create employment opportunity for themselves when they leave school. Another professor and former vice chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Professor Ayo Banjo pointed out that no Government has erected gateway to separate students of technical abilities from those with academic acumen. (Nigeria tribune, June 2012:26). Education system before the independent was sectional and subsistence in nature. This means that every tribe and section maintained their growth rate based on their capabilities. But after independent when religion became the order of the day, education in Nigeria started taking a national dimension which is now a means of developing people and contributing to national development. However, because of lack of commitment on the part of government, instead of maintaining an educational system that can take Nigeria into the realm of educationally advanced countries what we get is a declining system that has not added any inch to the overall development of the country.

This has become very imperative as Nigerians have reached a crossroad, bedeviled with weak management, poor implementation, labour unrest etc in our educational policy thrust. The search for an educational system best suited for Nigeria gave rise to the research on this topic with the following objectives.

### **1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

To analyze the policies and programme implementation of education development in the two countries.

To evaluate the effect of the programmes on the overall development of the countries.

To examine closely the factors responsible for success and failure in a bid to making amendments for a stronger educational policies.

### **1.3 METHODOLOGY:**

The research made use of secondary source of gathering data. This include library, books, journals, magazines and other periodicals, conference papers and other unpublished works relevant to the research topic. The internet was also very relevant for this topic. These gathered data were rigorously analyzed and we arrived at a logical conclusion and recommendations.

#### **1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY:**

As the topic suggest the scope covers the educational policies of two countries namely Nigeria and China in the recent past.

#### **2.1 DISCUSSION: EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA**

Since education, indeed is the means through which future generations are cultured, it is pertinent therefore that it is given all the needed attention. Any nation who treats issues on education with levity will certainly be digging its own grave.

Clement Kolawole, of the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, while speaking with National Tribune on the education system in Nigeria said:

“However it is unfortunate that Nigeria has not been able to get things right, so education standard has increased while quality has depreciated. The students are exposed to so much, but the infrastructure, which is the instrument to pushing learning, is not adequate. And that the country has experimented too frequently when talking about education policy and this is not too good .Historically, we inherited the colonial education policy which some people believe does not have provision for our needs. We then had a national curriculum conference, the first of its kind in 1969 and at the conference it was decided that every stakeholder in the area of education should come together and identify a way forward for the development of education in the country. The outcome of that conference was that 6-3-3-4 system was recommended to replace the colonial 6-5-4 system for the technological and scientific development of the country. The system would help us develop our industries, our potentials, so that we no longer serve as market for the developed countries.”(Nigeria tribune, June 2012:31).

Again, as a demonstration of concern for education , the Nigeria constitutions of 1979 and 1989 clearly spelt out the educational objectives in chapter II, Sections 19(1-3). It states among other things that:

- a) Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunity at all levels ;
- b) Government shall promote science and technology;
- c) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy, and to this end the government shall and as when practicable ,provide :
  - 1) Free compulsory and universal primary education.
  - 2) Free secondary education.
  - 3) Free university education.
  - 4) Free adult literacy programme and.
  - 5) Government shall promote the learning of the indigenous languages.

All these exist only on paper as only very few states in Nigeria have adopted these educational objectives of the federal government.

In pursuit of the set educational objectives, the federal government in 1981 came up with a new national policy on education, popularly known as 6-3-3-4 system of education (FRN, 1981).

The policy was designed to see an average Nigeria child spend six years in primary school before proceeding to spend 3 years in junior secondary school; 3 years in senior secondary school and 4

years for tertiary education. Educational system in Nigeria is guided by the broad national objectives articulated in the National Policy on Education.

At his inception in 1999 and in response to the challenges in the primary education sector, The President Obasanjo administration launched the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) for implementation of the programme which makes basic education not only free but also compulsory. In addition to these, as a signatory to the 2000 world education conference and the Dakar goals towards achieving education for all (EFA), the Federal Government also established a national Education For All (EFA) coordination unit under the federal ministry of education (Dibu, 2011). Despite all this however, the number of school drop outs and Almajiri children are on the increase.

Similarly, Section 59 of the 1989 constitution among other things states that:

All teachers in our educational institutions from pre primary to University will be professionally trained.

The aim was to ensure self-dependency and to wipe unemployment completely from our system. However, unemployment has been on the increase in Nigeria because not much have been achieved in the area of scientific, medical, agricultural and industrial breakthrough as it is in other countries like China.

It is noteworthy that Nigeria like every other country in the world has good educational ideology. It must be admitted that since independence, education in Nigeria has undergone several reforms. These reforms reflect our collective desire, as a nation, to fashion out an educational system that will meet the social, political and economic aspiration or objectives of the entire populace. The question now is why is the standard of education going up without a commensurate increase in the quality of education? This question will be answered in the next subtitle thus:

## **2.2 THE PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA**

President Goodluck Jonathan had, in October 2010, while speaking at a national stakeholders meeting on education sector said "the 6-3-3-4 system of education has failed and that its proponents should apologize to Nigerians" (Nigerian Tribune June 2012:31). In his effort to remedy the situation, the president set up a presidential task team on education to come up with the solution. The team came up with the 1-6-3-3-4 system of education. This policy differs from the 6-3-3-4 system by addition of early child education (ECE) for a child of 5 or 6 year before joining the primary school. The system was criticized for not showing any difference between it and the previous 6-3-3-4 system or 9-3-4 system as introduced in 2009 by the then President Obasanjo's Administration. The critics are also of the opinion that the new 1-6-3-3-4 system of education will not upgrade or facelift the deplorable infrastructures in schools. They are also of the opinion that it is neither going to provide text books nor order reading materials for the pupils and students. They continued by saying that minimum wage to teachers are not paid by any of this policies. What we need according to some experts is more of an enabling environment for both teaching and learning to thrive in Nigeria.

According to Nigerian Tribune (June 2012:31) statistics shows that Nigeria currently has over 10 million out of school children and about 9.5 million Almajiri children, in spite of the various educational policies churned out by previous administrations to address the challenges of education in the country. Another problem with the Nigeria education policy stems from the fact that professionals are not carried along when education policy is being handled. For instance in the appointment of Education Ministers, stakeholders in education sector like Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union Of Polytechnics (ASUP), Association of Vice Chancellors of Nigeria Universities (AVCNU) etcetera,

are not consulted or carried along for their inputs, instead political parties and politicians takes upper hand in nomination and appointment of the Minister.

Another problem with our education system is lack of funding: Teachers are not well treated. The motivation is lacking, and for these reason they do not put in their best and they often resort to industrial actions to press home their demands. In the past, the teachers command the greatest respect in our country but no longer so as they are classified as one of the lowest in civil service ranking (Nigerian Tribune June, 2012.26). The table bellow shows the capital expenditure of the federal government of Nigeria from 2009- 2012 as released by the Central Bank of Nigeria. There were no steady rising in the funding of education as it is in their Chinese counterpart. There are a lot of policy inconsistencies in Nigeria.

Federal government of Nigeria capital expenditure on education from 2009-2012 in billions.

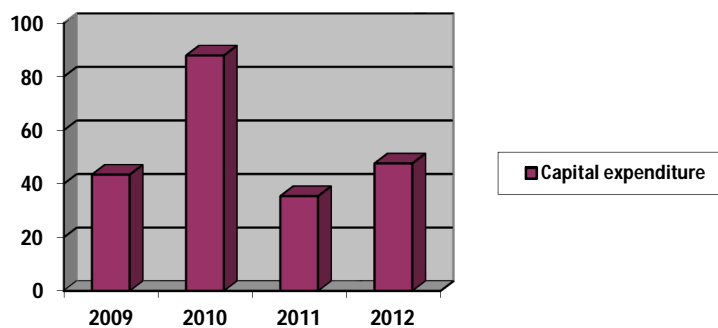


Table 1.

**Source:** Central bank of Nigeria annual report 2012 p 297.

Some experts argued that the wealthy knowledge of the colonial masters who introduced education was not adequately harnessed before they left.

In addition to the problems enumerated above, according to Fafunwa (1974: 93) the complete absence of colonial administration influence resulted in the lack of:

- A. A common syllabus, standard textbooks, regular school hours etcetera.
- B. Adequate supervision of schools buildings, teachers, pupils etcetera.
- C. A central examination system.
- D. Uniformity in the condition of service of teachers and
- E. Adequate financial support and control.

For these reasons, so many private schools have sprung up in Nigeria.

Dibu (2011) noted that one thing has become evident today in Nigeria as the collapse of the public educational system has given rise to the proliferation of private schools nationwide. This is because Nigerians have come to realize that good and quality education is very necessary and are prepared to pay for it no matter how costly it may be.

### 2.3 EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Before we take a look at the educational policies of the Peoples Republic of China, it would be proper to ask these questions: Has China any ideology? What are her cardinal ideological thrusts? How are these reflected in her educational policies? China is one of the socialist economies in the world with an economic system that can be described as Communism. It is a country whose people are traditionally stratified and whose economic system is characterized by restrained competition. In

other words, the country practices a parliamentary communism. This seems to be the main ideological thrust of the Chinese Government.

Education in the Peoples' Republic of China is a state-run system of public education supervised by the Ministry of Education. During the 1979–83, the government acknowledged the "9-3-4" system which means 9 years of basic education from primary to junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary education and 4 years of higher institution (Education in China, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015). The law made it compulsory that all citizens must attend school from primary to junior secondary school. Under the Law, primary to junior secondary school were to be tuition-free and reasonably located for the convenience of children attending them; which implies that students would attend primary schools in their neighborhoods or villages. Parents however pay a small fee per term for books and other expenses such as transportation, food, and heating and Chinese government has achieved a very high degree of enrolment since the new law.

At the secondary level, the educational reforms introduced stratification into four types of secondary schools:

1. Keypoint middle schools ( *zhongdeng zhongdian xuexiao* ).
2. Non-key general or ordinary middle schools ( *Putong xuexiao* ).
3. Specialized technical secondary schools ( *zhongdeng zhuan ye xuexiao* ).
4. Vocational schools ( *zhiye zhongxue* ).

In spite of the need for technically trained manpower for the economic reconstruction of China, the acceptance of technical and vocational secondary schools was slow, at least initially. The perception lingered that these educational streams were only for those not able to pass muster in the traditional streams. In 1978, enrollment in technical and vocational programs comprised only 5% of the total enrollment. However, by 1994, of the junior secondary graduates that continued their schooling, 44.1% entered key and general senior secondary schools (a total of 2,434,000 students), whereas 55.9% entered specialized technical or vocational schools (a total of 3,079,000 students) (Surowsky, 2000. www.math.ksu.edu. Retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2015).

However, there has been a tremendous and a sustained increase in the student's enrolment in China. The table bellow shows the proportion of students' enrolment in total population with different level of education in China from 2001-2004.

Year	University	High school	Middle school	Primary school
2001	4.09%	11.53%	34.35%	33.83%
2002	4.41%	11.66%	35.25%	32.74%
2003	5.15%	12.54%	35.68%	31.35%
2004	5.42%	12.59%	36.93%	30.44%

**Source:** China Intercontinental Press (2007 Edition) Table 2.

The table above shows that with the advent of the modern China, there has been on the increase the students' enrolment in China except in primary school level where agricultural business was very much remunerated thereby slowing down the students' enrollment.

As the students enrolment was on the increase so the funding was not left behind. Investment in education has increased in recent years in China; the proportion of the overall budget allocated to education has been increased by one percent point every year since 2001.

Below is a table showing the amount of investment in educational development in China from 2001 to 2004.



Units: 100 million yuan

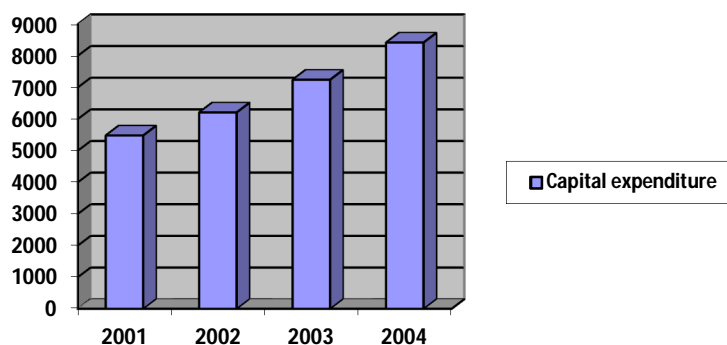


Table 3

**Source:** China Intercontinental Press (2007 Edition)

The table above shows a steady increase in the total budget of education funding in the Peoples' Republic of China since 2001 to 2004.

The Chinese Government has made so many laws guiding/regulating the educational policy in China they include; Laws on the Regulation on Academic Degrees, The Compulsory Education Law, The Teachers Law, The Education Laws, The Law on Vocational Education, The laws on Higher Education and The Law of the Peoples' Republic of China. (Education in China, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015). To further improve school enrollment, China adopts a shared-cost mechanism, charging tuition at a certain percentage of the cost according to the location/economic strength of that region. Meanwhile, to ensure that students from low-income families have access to higher education, the government has initiated effective ways of assistance, with policies and measures as scholarships, work-study programs, subsidies for students with special economic difficulties, tuition reduction or exemption and state stipends.

In 1985, the national government ceded responsibility for basic education to local governments through the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party's "decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure." In unveiling the education reform plan in May 1985, the authorities called for nine years of compulsory education and the establishment of the State Education Commission. In the same 1985, there were more than 1,000 teacher training schools, an indispensable tool in the effort to solve the acute shortage of qualified teachers. To attract more teachers, China tried to make teaching a more desirable and respected profession. To this end, the government designated September 10 as "Teachers' Day", granted teachers pay rise, and made teachers' colleges tuition free. To further prevent shortage of teaching staff, in 1986 the central government sent teachers to underdeveloped regions of China to train local school teachers. These schools, however, were unable to supply the number of teachers needed to attain modernization goals through 1990. Education in China, (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015)

### 3.1 COMPARISON OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The two countries under discussion (Nigeria and China) believed that education is a major tool to eradicating social ill. They rolled out policies to help them achieve their set objectives. Their policies were also effective as they have worked for so many other countries. However, the policy implementation may have differed and the nationalistic driving spirit may not be the same. In terms of financing; education financing in Nigeria and China indicates that there has been a steady rise in the educational financing in China and a staggering up and down style of financing in Nigeria.

Ozigi (1977) argued that no organization could carry out its functions effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal. Adedayo (1988) argued that although enrolment is increasing at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of Nigerian educational system, government's expenditure is decreasing proportionately. He observed a sharp drop in the total capital expenditures and remarked that this might not have been unconnected with the economic depression which was compounded by the structural adjustment programme. The UNESCO minimum standard for education funding is set at least 26% of the national budget.

It is only in the year 2015 proposed budget to national assembly, that education got the highest amount of 426.5 billion out of the total budget of 4.9 trillion proposed. In the development of curriculum, the Chinese primary school curriculum consists of Chinese, mathematics, physical education, music, drawing, elementary instruction in nature, history, geography and practical work. A general knowledge of politics, moral training which stresses love of mother land, love of party, love of people (formerly called love of Chairman Mao) are also part of the curriculum. A foreign language such as English is introduced at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Chinese and mathematics accounted for about 60% of the scheduled class time. From 4<sup>th</sup> grade, morality and ethics with handwork and production workshop are introduced (Education in China, Primary Education from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015). On the other hand, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in Nigeria with the aim of developing those with technical ability for poverty eradication. For this reason, Introduction to Technology was introduced in secondary schools but today there are no equipments to continue the subject in many schools. Hand work otherwise known as craft has been monetized in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Although, according to (Fabunmi, 1986) 6-3-3-4 system has assisted in the attainment of some of the objectives of National policy on education:

- (i). emphasis is now placed on yearning and aspirations of Nigerian society
- (ii). Students (both boys and girls) to some extent are now staying longer in schools
- (iii). The system has produced more matured youths who are able to take decisions on their own.
- (iv). The system has reduced to some extent the rate of dropout in schools as opportunities are made available for students to develop their talents to the fullest.
- (v). The system has helped Nigeria nation to develop technologically as we have various technical colleges, polytechnic and universities of technology in the country today that have produced more technicians and technologists.
- (vi). The system to some extent has helped in catering for individual differences which pre-supposes differences in intelligence, physical ability, interest and individual achievement oriented goal and aspirations.

This affords the individual learner the opportunity to develop his/her potentials

### **3.2 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE SYSTEM AND NIGERIA SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

1. In Nigeria, education system has changed from 6-5-4 to 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-4 and now 1-6-3-3-4 system of education. In China it has been known as 9-3-4 system of education since 1985 and they are not thinking of changing the policy instead, they think of strengthening it.
2. In China, the junior secondary is popularly called the middle school but in Nigeria, it is called the junior secondary school.
3. In Nigeria, Education is free from primary to secondary schools in few states in the government owned school though boarding fees, uniform fees and textbooks are to be paid for. In



China, primary school to junior secondary school in government schools are free all through although uniform fees, feeding fees, heating and transport fees are paid by the parents.

4. In terms of budgeting for education, China has maintained a one percent steady rise in the budgetary allocation to education since 1979, but in Nigeria there has been a lot of rising and falling style of funding.

5. In Nigeria, Private schools are more in number and people attend private schools more than public schools especially in primary and secondary schools. In China, private schools are seen as backup and not the bane of educational existence and, universities are state owned and controlled. It is only in primary and nursery level of education that one hears of privately owned school in China.

6. In China, there is devolution of management which gave local government more powers to develop basic education. In Nigeria, the development and management of basic education is that of the state and federal government thereby reducing the job of the local government to mere nothing.

### **3.3 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHINA AND NIGERIA SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

1. Both Nigeria and China have nine years of compulsory education from primary school to junior secondary school.

2. Both countries have same entry level of between 5 to 6 years into primary school and 12 to 15 for junior secondary school.

3. The control of educational system in both countries is in the hands of federal ministry of education though with a little different as local authority in China has a great input to the development of education in the local community.

### **4.1 CONCLUSION**

Looking at the history of education system and juxtaposing it with the current state of Nigeria educational system, it is obvious that the Federal Government is confused. Our parents who passed through the Universal Primary Education under the “form six” system of education during the colonial masters period would testify that the current system be it 6-3-3-4 or 1-6-3-3-4 system of education is yet to cure the problems in the sector. Then a form six student can write Advanced Level (A’Level) examination that would qualify him for university admission. Students who passed this examination were automatically admitted to 200 level of a three year programme in the university, except for medicine (The Nigeria Tribune, June 2012:26). The present Government new system style seen in Nigeria educational system can be said to be a contributor to the problems experience in the education system.

Nevertheless, the work has critically looked at the factors responsible for the success and failure of the two systems in an effort to borrow from each other for better result. The paper also analyzed the policies and programme implementation of educational development in the two countries and evaluated the effect of the programmes on the overall development of the countries. In summary, since 1985 when China introduced their 9-3-4 system of education, they have been strengthening it by making new laws and establishing institutions instead of changing from one system to another. The Federal and State Government contesting and claiming ownership of basic education like primary and secondary school is completely out of place. The local government in China is responsible for basic education though under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Education.

## 4.2 RECOMMENDATION

- There should be the political will to execute any policy be it educational or political. The body language of our leaders should be supportive in nature and not condemning the effort of the past leaders. President Goodluck's open condemnation of the 6-3-3-4/9-3-4 system of education and subsequently introducing 1-6-3-3-4 system makes no difference. Instead, there should have been a political will to strengthen the already existing system. There should be more monitoring and executing agencies.
- There should be a re-occurring Teacher training and retraining institutes in every local government and the need for establishment of special education assessment centers which would provide support for update in teaching and learning in line with the global best practices and standards.
- Primary education and secondary education should not be completely free as we have in some states in Nigeria. The parents should be given a chance to contribute a little to the development of their child/children. If not, some people will think it is their right to attend all school free of charge and can take to violence and student demonstration when asked to pay school fees especially in tertiary institution.
- The federal government should cede some powers in the exclusive list to the concurrent and residual list especially as it concerns Basic Primary Education with a more funding initiative and eagle eyed monitoring system.

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