

COMMERCIALIZATION OF EDUCATION: A THREAT TO QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the concept of commercialization of education and teacher education as it affects quality teacher education programme in Nigeria. It discussed various perspectives in which education is commercialized such as sale of low quality textbooks at high prices, commercialization of admission process, teachers' recruitment, buying of grades, etc. The reasons for commercialization of education and its implications were also highlighted. The paper recommended adequate budgetary allocation, upward review of teachers' salaries, remuneration, working conditions and environment. The need for proper monitoring of schools by supervising ministries and employing the services of economic and financial crimes commission and related agencies to investigate and punish financial crimes and irregularities in schools as strong measures to reverse quality of teacher education and the tone of education generally.

Introduction

Commercialization of education has become a disturbing phenomenon in Nigerian schools. It has weakened the foundation of the nation's education system. It has become common headlines on the national dailies. Commercialization of education is a scourge of shame, an enemy of progress and a major impediment to national development. This is evident in massive unemployment, high crime rate, moral decadence, frequent ethno-religious conflicts and other vices in our society.

Almost everything in our institutions of

learning is commercialized. For instance, admission of students, sale of textbooks, award of examination marks, recruitment into important positions have price tags attached (Odogwu, 2018). Teachers and stakeholders in education do all sorts of evil things to survive. The use of sex and money as yardstick for passing examination in our tertiary institutions has continued to make headlines in our national dailies. The current problem of commercialization of education illustrates the failure of the National Policy on Education and the failure of the country's educational practitioners,

policy-makers to look towards the realization of the objectives of teacher education as specified in the National Policy on Education.

Teachers by training, expectations and roles should be molders of character of the youths. But contemporary experience has shown that many teachers now introduce their students to the culture of cheating and lying with parents playing supportive roles (Okuroumu, 2004). Okoduwa (2005) expressed shock that bribery has taken the place of genuine academic life in our schools. He observed that the school system seems to have been privatized. According to him, there appears to be an unwritten code which dictates that everything in the school must be paid for, ranging from getting marks, buying of entrance examination papers and results. All these anomalies have made our teacher education programme defective and a laughing stock.

Conceptual Clarifications

Meaning of Commercialization

Commercialization is the act of commercializing something, like goods and services for maximal profit. Commercialization of education means using education as a tool for commerce and profit-making.

According to Sidhu (2010), education is the process of shaping behaviour of an individual for adequate adjustment in the society. It is a way of developing desired habits, skills and attitudes which make an individual a good citizen. FGN (2004) states that education is the most effective instrument of change as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by educational revolution. Ochu (2006) sees education as the training of the entire person to enable him not only to be able to read and write and calculate or to be proficient in a given job but also to enable him to fit himself for living in a society.

Quality Teacher Education

Akpata (2006) defines teacher education as the arrangement which helps in

updating the teacher's knowledge in their job of teaching and learning. Quality teacher education refers to that which produces the best of the teacher, morally, intellectually, physically and spiritually. The teacher must be developed fully to become relevant, honest, dedicated, committed member of his/her society.

Objectives of Teacher Education Programme

Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) emphasized the goals of teacher education programme as:

- (i) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- (ii) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (iii) To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to the national goals.
- (iv) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.

- (v) To enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

Perspectives of Educational Commercialization in Nigeria

Sale of Low Quality Textbooks at Exorbitant Prices:

Low quality textbooks are made compulsory to students and sold at exorbitant prices. Any student who refuses to buy is made to repeat the course attached to the textbook. Some lecturers no longer enter the lecture hall once the textbooks are sold to the students, and the students are made to understand that buying the textbooks is one of the conditions for passing their semester examinations. The officials of the ministry of education have not helped out matters. According to Okoduwa (2005), the textbook publishing business, like its bribe ridden approval system, creates an open avenue for various forms of commercialization. The process adopted results to high cost of textbooks. Sometimes, best materials are not selected if their authors refuse to bribe the approving officials.

Commercialization of Admission Process

Admission of students into our educational institutions such as unity secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities are highly commercialized. Reading professional courses such as law, medicine, engineering, etc could attract the sum of five hundred thousand naira and above. Merit and due process have been relegated to the background. Okurounmu (2004) observed that parents collaborate with the officials of the Ministry of Education and school authorities to commercialize the admission process by ensuring that their wards/ children are admitted into unity secondary school setting aside merit. Some even pay University Matriculation Examination (UME) officials to get their children special centres for unmerited grades. Okoduwa (2005) has expressed shock that bribery has taken the place of genuine academic in schools. He noted that the school system has been privatized. According to him, there appears to be an unwritten code which dictates that everything in the school

must be paid for ranging from projecting writing, assignment, quiz, grades and results.

Commercialization of Teachers Recruitment Process

Some of the teachers in our institution of learning were commercially recruited. They pay heavy amount of money to secure their teaching appointment. This has given rise to employment of unqualified teachers. This is because those that are qualified may not have required cash to procure their teaching employment. This has made the quality of our teacher education to be defective and a total mockery.

Buying of Grades, Results and Certificates by Cash or Kind

In our tertiary institutions, examination grades are sold either by cash or kind to the highest bidder. Some students pay as high as fifty thousand or more to secure A or B grades. The results or certificates of some students are not the reflection of their input or performance in semester examinations. Some female students offer sex to lecturers to obtain high

grades. In some cases, some morally deprived lecturers demand for sex from their female students as a condition for passing their courses. The case of Prof. Richard Akindele of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife who was caught on audiotape soliciting for rounds of sex from Miss Monica Osagie to upgrade her scores is still fresh in the mind. According to Ikeano (2018) Richard Akindele, a Professor of Accounting and Management was found guilty of illegal soliciting of sex from his students and was accordingly dismissed from the services of the university council.

Payment of Exorbitant School Fees:

Many federal and state schools have raised their school fees which many indigent students cannot afford to pay. School fees paid in federal institutions are no longer the same. These days, school fees are increased arbitrarily.

Reasons for Commercialization of Teacher Education in Nigeria

1. Problem of Low Funding: Government allocation to education has been steadily

decreasing. Between 1980-1995 government expenditure on education has dropped from 16.2% to 7.2% (Ofojebe, 2006). The implication is that the burden of funding teacher education now weighs more on parents and community, thus putting school education generally beyond the reach of children of poor parents. The provision of necessary facilities and equipment and infrastructure of teacher education thus become inadequate.

2. Inadequate Facilities: Mbakwem (2000) noted that the deplorable condition of classrooms and laboratories in most of the schools across the nation is certainly an impediment to effective teaching and learning.
3. Poor Salaries and Irregular Payment of Salaries and Allowances: Okorie (2001) noted that payment of teachers' salaries and other fringe benefits are delayed. Salaries and allowances

are not paid regularly to teachers. This condition has adverse effects on teachers' performance.

4. **Corrupt Leadership:** Corruption is a great problem facing teacher education in Nigeria. This is because when there is any approval of project to be carried out in any institution according to Sheidu (2013), the money voted for such a project would be placed on the table where politicians would elaborate on the sharing formula rather than the execution of such a project.
5. **Lack of Proper Supervision of Schools:** Supervisors in the federal and state ministries of education are not paying adequate attention to the school heads and teachers (Agu, 1996). Sometimes, the supervisors only visit schools and end up seeing the school heads for their "Brown envelopes" and every other thing they do after collecting the brown envelope is just for formality.

Implications of Commercialization of Teacher Education in Nigeria

1. **Poverty of Ideas:** Most teachers these days cannot contribute to any meaningful ideas or make useful contribution in their places of work. Some of the teachers in the educational system who passed their examinations through fraudulent means find it difficult to teach their students and when a teacher is bereft of requisite ideas, pupils or students will surely be intellectually deficient.
2. **High Rate of Student Dropout from School:** Thousands of indigent students drop out of school as a result of high school fees, some of them risk their lives across desert and turbulent seas to seek greener pastures abroad.
3. **Lack of Basic Skills:** Many graduate teachers lack the requisite intellectual, vocational and managerial skills for gainful employment in the public or private sector.

4. **Unemployment:** Millions of school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions have remained unemployed over the years. Many of these graduates lack character, employable skills to gain employment. Njoku (2004) observed that in April 2004, about two million unemployed Nigerians registered with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) just within one week.
5. **Increase in Violence and Crime:** Lack of employment encourages social vices such as theft, armed robbery, prostitution and spread of diseases. Where many youths are idle and under-fed, they constitute a serious danger and could be easily convinced to be used as touts and thugs for electoral manipulation and violence.
6. **Portrays a Bad Image of Nigeria's Education Abroad:** Many

Nigerians seeking admission into foreign based educational institutions for their post-graduate studies have been rejected on the ground of poor quality of Nigeria education. Those who are offered admission to study are subjected to all kinds of ridiculous qualifying examinations and tests.

Conclusion

Commercialization of education has become a disturbing phenomenon in Nigerian schools. Everything in our institution of higher learning is commercialized ranging from admission of students, school fees, grades, promotion and appointment of teachers into important positions among others. All these anomalies have made our teacher education programme defective and a laughing-stock. It is very imperative that government should improve the budgetary allocation to education, enhance teachers' salaries, remuneration, working conditions and environment. Proper monitoring of

school administrators and teachers and punishing culprits of financial crimes and irregularities in schools will improve the tone of education in colleges and universities.

Recommendations

1. Effective teacher preparation ought to be accorded much priority attention in policy formulation. Therefore, there is need for adequate budgetary allocation and community support for human capital development.
2. Teachers' salaries, remuneration, working conditions and environments among others should be continuously reviewed by the government.
3. Proper monitoring and supervision should be maintained by the supervising ministry to check against commercialization of education.
4. Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other

related agencies should extend its monitoring and investigative activities to colleges and universities. Culprits of financial crimes and unwholesome activities should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others.

5. Labour unions, students unions and non-governmental organizations should resist government privatization and commercialization of education through sensitization programmes such as seminars, workshops and conferences.
6. Admission of first class brains interested in teaching into teacher education programmes as against the present practice of making teaching a dumping ground for low achievers.
7. The Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) should certify, register and license teachers fully on yearly basis as they qualify from training

institutions.

8. Government should establish a strong political will to ensure the implementation of education objectives as outlined in the National Policy on Education.

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