



ANSU  
**Journal**  
Educational Research

**ANSUJER**

**SPECIAL EDITION**

A Publication of  
The Faculty of Education Anambra State University  
Uli

**VOL. 2 NO. 2 2014**

**ISSN: 2354-2772**

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE:  
THE CASE OF NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*Quality education and good governance are the hallmarks of development of all existing societies. It is therefore, the position of this paper to take a critical look at the relationship between quality education and good governance in Nigeria, and how quality education can be a veritable tool for good governance. However, this paper found that some factors such as: corruption, large class size, inadequate teaching resources, inadequate teacher to mention a few, have held our educational enterprise hostage. This paper further isolated, clarified and conceptualized key concepts, such as: education, equality education and good governance. The researchers' concern drove them to proffer workable solutions to the problems militating against quality education in Nigeria. This article closes with recommendations and measures to be taken to enhance the impact of quality education on good governance in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Education, Quality education, Good governance, Nigeria.

**Introduction**

Successive National and State governments in Nigeria have had to come up with one policy after another to improve on the education of the young ones in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The result of these policies have led to the creation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE), 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1976 and Universal Basic Education (UBE), 9-3-4 system of education in 1999. However, according to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The point is further buttressed by Fafunwa cited in Eboh (2004) that no effective teaching can take place without competent teachers to handle our educational programmes. It is an indisputable truism that the success of any educational innovation, policy and programme depends largely on the quality and caliber of teachers among other variables. In the light of the above, the focus on teachers in the educational process is imperative because they are the major actors in the process of programme implementation (Egbule, 2010). Anywhere there is leadership, we talk of governance. It could be in the

public or private sector, religious, educational and other institutions, the community or even in a nation. Another way of expressing governance or leadership is administration. It is after establishing and recognizing the existence of governance before we begin to determine or distinguish between the good or bad governance. According to the World Bank, good governance is the manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise the authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services. Kofi Annan (Former UN Secretary-General) explains that good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (Amanchukwu, 2011). The concept of good governance indicates the effort the government has made or is making to turn around the standard of living of the masses, the empowerment of the citizens to be able to cater for themselves through their knowledge and skills acquired at school or after school, and the involvement of all citizens in decision making concerning education of the people.

In recent years, the discourse on the relationship between quality education and good governance has attracted huge academic interest. Many of the discussions on good governance are concentrated on the desired objective of the nation's political development though the basic issues and principles of good governance, however, are not new. The most relevant aspect of good governance debate is on anti-corruption which often assesses the capacity of government to be accountable, just, fair, effective, efficient, participatory, transparent, responsive, consensus-oriented and equitable. These are the major characteristics of good governance as outlined by the United Nations (Amanchukwu, 2011). Quality education and good governance are veritable weapons for combating ignorance, poverty, disease, corruption and other social vices in our society.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

For better comprehension of this paper, the major concepts are clarified below:

#### **Quality Education**

The term, education, has no one universally accepted meaning or definition. But we do know and agree that it is derived from the Latin word *educare*, meaning "to raise", "to bring up", and "to teach". Hence, education is defined as a systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and develop skills in individuals. It is a process of changing the behaviour patterns of an individual in the desired direction.

Fafunwa (1991) sees education as an aggregate of all the processes by means of which an individual develops abilities, skills and forms of positive behaviour in the society in which he lives. This implies that education is a life-long process, leading to bring out the best in every human being. Education is the continuous construction or reorganization of experience, which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences. Education is investment in human capital.

Quality education benefits the individual, society and the world at large. Quality education can be viewed from different angles to bring out the meaning to the reader; it revolves around three key features namely: content relevance; access and outcome; and observance of individual rights. The hope of every seasoned parent is that the school system will help the child develop his/her potentials in life. This can only be achieved if the type of

education given to the child is of high quality. (Amanchukwu, 2011). Quality education is the education and experience that are able to meet the yearning and aspiration of people. It is the outcome that encompasses knowledge, skill and attitudes, and is linked to national goals of education and positive participation in society (UNICEF cited in Akporehe & Obielumani, 2013).

#### **Good Governance**

Simply put, governance is the act of maintaining order and justice in the society. The United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (2004) defined governance as the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state civil society and private sectors.

In his view, Shedrack (2007) defined good governance as the running of the affairs of government in positive and progressive manner beneficial to the governed and which delivers the public goods. Contributing to the definition of good governance, Atoyebi and Mobolaji cited in Agidi (2012) defined good governance as an antidote to eradicate corruption and reduction of investment risk environment, which guarantees sustainability and predictability of the nation's development efforts, makes a country investment friendly to foreigners who can promote economic growth and development in a precise form. Good governance implies efficient and effective public administration, good public policies and sound management of natural resources.

#### **Nigeria**

Nigeria as a country is located in West Africa. She is bounded to the West by the Republic of Benin, to the East by Cameroun, to the North by Niger Republic and to the South by the Atlantic Ocean. Based on the position, it is right to state that Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking countries with the exception of the south where a pool of water body exists. In terms of population, her population stood at 140, 003,000 (according to 2006 National Census). Geo-politically, Nigeria is divided in to six geo-political zones: South-South, South -West, South-East, North-West, North-East and North-Central zones. Today she has thirty-six states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. She is one of the "richest" and the seventh most populous country in the world. Nigeria is blessed with a variety of mineral resources (especially petroleum products), agricultural products, good weather and climate, and near-absence of natural disasters.

#### **Quality Education as a Strategic Tool for Good Governance in Nigeria**

Education has been the bedrock of civilization across space and time. Hence it has been identified by developed and developing nations as the instrument to be adopted to maintain national security, good governance and usher in development. In Nigeria, successive governments have been concerned with how education can be used as a tool to attain the goals of the nation. In view of the intents of the government, education is to serve as the pathway to equip the citizenry with the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to build a society that is stable politically, socially and economically strong to guarantee individual well being and its sovereignty (Ogonor, 2013).

It is not an overstatement to say that, there is a reciprocal influence between quality education and good governance. Quality education is a prerequisite for good governance and in turn good governance enhances quality education. In spite of the overwhelming challenges militating against the realization of equality education in Nigeria, it is imperative to note that quality education plays an essential role in actualizing the values of good governance, through: interpretation of the law of the land, participation in decision making process, active role in advisory capacity, and suggesting better policies and ideas in ensuring that development policy alternatives are not in any way jettisoned. It is correct to recognize that quality education would sustain democracy in Nigeria and make the leaders as well as potential leaders to know the principles of good governance and sustainable leadership.

Quality education is a sure way to prepare individuals to render quality services to the nation since individuals must have acquired skills, knowledge and wherewithal to live in a pluralistic society such as ours. Good governance could be achieved by providing for the welfare of the people; recognizing the feelings of the people and using the knowledge and skills acquired to serve as a good citizen and representative of a community. Knowledge is power. Obama (2006) succinctly stated that knowledge gives us something to build on. It tells us that more progress can be made. Authorities in power should be well read, well exposed to perform the task creditably. Where he is lacking in knowledge and experience, he is likely to be a failure in his area of leadership. He can only be advised by people of his like and nothing works out well. There is an adage which says that one cannot give what he does not have. Where schools are well equipped with suitable teaching aids, facilities and quality teachers, the products of such schools are expected to serve well in whatever capacity they find themselves. At the same time, it is the government that will make it possible for effective teaching and learning to take place if they equip the schools properly and supervision is taken seriously. It is obvious that the two concepts, quality education and good governance, complement each other.

According to Amanchukwu (2011) since quality education has much to offer, it becomes pertinent that it should be taken more seriously by the people in power. It is the duty of the power-that-be to make provision, to achieve results in our various schools and to ensure that discipline is the order of the day, among the officials who supervise projects and activities of various sorts. Good governance requires a lot of discipline in the three tiers of government. Its characteristics incorporate participation, rule of law, transparency, consensus-oriented, effectiveness and efficiency, equity, due process and accountability. Though it is a bit difficult to achieve this entirely, effort should be made to give it a serious trial. Increased citizen participation can take a variety of forms to bring about quality education. Parents and community groups can play the following parts: serve as education resource providers, advocate for education reform, monitors of teachers and school performance and school managers (USAID, 2002).

A typical example is Uganda's experience with Participatory Action Research (PAR) as one of the possibility of improving equality education by engaging the community in a process of inquiry, data gathering, and collective research for solutions (USAID, 2002). This exercise was aimed at development activity to support the primary education reform, in order to strengthen the education system to create opportunities for partnerships and dialogue among Uganda education policy-makers and practitioners, and to facilitate

international linkage between Ugandan and international research communities. By the use of PAR the participating Uganda communities were able to convene meetings, set agenda, widen participation, assess their situation systematically, analyze data and act on the findings in order to improve the quality of schooling. The use of PAR has helped Ugandan communities to achieve results particularly in strengthening democratic practices and at the same time improving educational quality. The educational policies have been laudable and capable of yielding the desired results for good governance.

**Factors Militating Against Quality Education in Nigeria:**

The major factors militating against quality education in Nigeria are briefly discussed below:

- **Inadequate Number of Teachers:** The focus on teachers in the educational process is imperative because they are the major actors in the process of programme implementation. According to Ukeje (1966) teachers are the limbs of any education system. If the limbs are weak, the system is bound to crumble. Teachers are the principal executors of whatever policy and programme that are planned for the education of young ones. Inadequate manpower is often listed as a problem area in the teaching and learning process. The quality of a product of an industry depends largely on the efficiency of the skills and materials employed in the production process. This is also applicable in the educational system of any nation. It is an acknowledged fact that no matter the amount of time and money spent in designing a curriculum, such programme is bound to fail if adequate attention is not paid to the recruitment of adequate teachers who will implement the programme.
- **Inadequate Instructional Materials:** Instructional or teaching aids are teachers' tools. Lack or inadequate teaching materials (aids) is a serious factor hindering teachers with initiative and zeal. According to Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) useful textbooks, especially those written with the Nigerian environment in mind are lacking in the field of social studies. An institution that lacks essential equipment/ materials cannot reasonably achieve its main objectives. Not only that the teaching materials should be of good quality but they should be sufficient (Eboh, 2004). Absence of these materials will have negative effects on the teachers' effectiveness and the consequences will constitute a great barrier to actualizing quality education in Nigeria.
- **Large Class Size:** In this study, class size is considered as the total number of pupils or students in a class at a given time. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) views class size as the population of a given class in terms of students/pupils. The above policy recommends a normal/maximum class size of 35 learners to one teacher, that is, teacher pupils' ratio (TPR) of 1:35 at the primary and secondary schools levels. Unfortunately, hardly is this attained in Nigerian schools. As a result of the "free primary education" under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, very many people have become interested in education, resulting in high increase in enrolment of pupils in public schools. For instance, according to Olubor and Unyimadu (2001) between 1996 and 2000, primary school enrolment in Nigeria increased from 14.1 Million to 16.8 million, representing 70.4% and 86% respectively (15.96% increase). The problem of large class become enormous where there is no commensurate increase

in the number of classroom facilities and teachers. The emphasis today seems to be on mass education rather than qualitative education.

- **Poor Implementation of Educational Policies:** Very good educational policies were introduced in the country but the problem has been poor implementation of those policies. The poor implementation has led invariably to non-achievement of the objective and goals of such policies. An example is the 6-3-3-4 system of education which is practiced in Nigeria. The implementation has left much to be desired. It has been so poorly implemented that the anticipated goals have remained unattained (Chiazor, 2012).
- **Corruption:** Corruption in Nigeria undermines democratic institutions, retards economic development and contributes to unstable and low quality educational system in Nigeria. Corruption is used here to capture a condition or state of falsehood, impropriety, illegitimacy, illegality or injustice geared towards acquisition of power, money or position for private and sectional profit. This continued to be the bane of the country's drive towards the attainment of quality education and economic development. The upsurge of corruption in Nigeria in recent time is disturbing. It seems the treatment and the damages it has done to our educational system cannot be quantified. It constitutes an impediment to the actualization of quality education in Nigeria.
- **Insufficient Funding:** For any country to attain meaningful development and quality education, she must give priority to the funding of the education sector. The low budgetary allocation to the education sector by both the federal and state governments have contributed immensely to the decadence of education in Nigeria. In fact, the less than 26% (UNESCO recommended) of the annual national budget allocated to the education sector is grossly inadequate.

#### **The Way Forward**

- **Recruitment of more Teachers:** Teachers are inevitable in the school system. The government should introduce courses into the teachers training institutions, to adequately train teachers to teach pupils and students in primary and secondary schools respectively. The trained teacher should immediately be registered and recruited into the teaching service. For instance, in order to professionalize teaching, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was formed. The council registers all the teachers in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The registered teachers are the trained manpower in the profession. Through this, the unregistered teachers are advised to go for Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) (Ogwuzor & Nwaham, 2008). Aside from the educational qualification of the teacher; quality teacher also constitutes quality education.
- **Provision of Instructional Materials:** Learners are captivated by the presentation of learning materials in concrete terms. Adequate teaching and learning aids should be provided for use in the schools. These facilities include adequate textbooks, laboratory equipment, chairs and desk, good play ground and so on. The government should also establish more Educational Resource and Information Communication Technology (ICT) Centres. The psychological effect of having these facilities in schools goes a long way in creating confidence in the learners to learn. Programme of instruction have their

specific demands for physical facilities and therefore should be available based on specification and maintained in a usable state (Ehiametalor cited in Akporehe & Obielumani, 2013).

- **Increase in the Annual Budgetary Allocation to Education Sector.** The annual budgetary allocation by the federal and state governments to the education sector particularly the teacher education institutions should be increased. This is to ensure that there is sufficient fund to provide modern technological media and instructional materials, such media include overhead projectors, filmstrips, transparencies, television, video tapes, slides, motion pictures etc. Teachers' welfare and remunerations should be constantly reviewed and be given a right place in the nation's budget. Other sources of finance include Parent Teacher Association (PTA) levies, school fees, donations, sporting activities, sale of farm produce, Education Tax Fund (ETF), rentals, etc.
- **A Normal Class Size:** A normal class size is more cohesive than large size. With a normal class size, each learner is able to interact with other members of the class, an opportunity which is less affordable as class size increases, particularly in discussions and similar intensive interactive tasks. Communication is effective if the class size is a normal one. Akporehe and Obielumani (2013) found a relationship between class size and internal deficiency of school. This is perhaps why the National Policy on Education (NPE) specified a class size of 35 students/pupils to a classroom. The stakeholders in the education industry should ensure that this policy is adhered to.
- **Discouraging Corruption in Nigeria:** Various attempts have been made to curb corruption in Nigeria, but have not yielded the desired result. The norms and values concerning acquisition of wealth should be re-examined. Hard work, honesty, integrity, moral uprightness should be rewarded while greed, selfishness, ethnicity, fraudulent acts should be condemned (Akpochofo, 2010). The authors expressed optimism that social studies education by virtue of its nature and content is able to bring about the desired change, because it places premium on corruption prevention, avoidance, resistance, non-indulgence or abhorrence via right character, propelled self discipline as against coercive discipline of the anti-corruption agencies or commissions.
- **Innovation of Curriculum:** To enhance quality education for good governance, the curriculum should be constantly reviewed. The standard of education can be raised through a well-structured curriculum, since the society is dynamic and not static. The curriculum should embrace viable and qualitative human resources geared towards quality education. In fact, what is needed is a revision of the entire curriculum to key them to the path that will support the accomplishment of the desired objectives of education.

#### Values of Good Governance

The values of good governance in any society cannot be overemphasized. This explains why it is necessary to seek its attainment. Hence, Agidi (2012: 92-93) examines the values of good governance, as follows:

- Good governance helps to diffuse tensions. In other words, it brings peace in the society.
- It helps to remove or solve problems as they evolve in the society. No society can boast of being problem free, but a society that has good governance has lesser problems.



- It helps to promote cohesion in the society. Good government helps to bring different groups in the society together for the common good of all of them.
- It enables the decision makers to take the right decision at the right time. In other words, good governance enhances national decision making.
- It enables the rulers in the society to gain the support of their citizenry. When the people are happy with the government of the day, they will not withhold their support for their leaders.
- Good governance brings overall development in the society. Development can only thrive in a place where the people are happy to a minimal level.
- Peace and tranquility become noticeable where there is good governance. All disagreement is always amicably resolved.
- It enhances equitable allocation of resources to every concerned groups, geographical area, states and local government.

#### **Conclusion**

Education forms the means through which good governance can be guaranteed in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. Since education promotes good governance, all hands must be on deck to promote it. It is the centre of manpower training and development. Education can make immense contributions towards achieving good governance in Nigeria, through the teaching of positive attitudes, appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness, justice and togetherness which are necessary for good governance. However, adequate infrastructural facilities can only attract quality education if they are properly used. Where the government spent fortune putting up structures and ensures that the classrooms are well equipped for effective teaching, and the teachers are not trained on the uses of these facilities and equipment, they become a waste. Nigeria cannot achieve the values of good governance without significantly advancing realistic ways of managing and improving the educational institutions. For good governance to emerge in Nigeria, problems such as insufficient funding, poor planning, inadequate trained teachers, insufficient classroom, corruption and poor implementation of educational policies should be addressed so as to produce men of conscience and knowledge who could take Nigeria to greater heights.

#### **Recommendations**

In view of the immense contributions of quality education in ensuring good governance, some recommendations were made as follows:

1. The Ministries of Education at all levels should organize seminars, workshop and refresher courses for teachers, to improve and update their knowledge and reposition them for greater productivity. These in-service training to align them with the current reforms in the education sector for improved performance and learning outcome of the students.
2. Education should be adequately funded to enhance conducive learning. The annual budgetary allocation should be reviewed and increased maximally. The government should pay serious attention to the welfare and condition of service of teachers,

- provision of instructional materials, repair and installation of educational infrastructure should be uppermost to the government.
3. Illiteracy is a major threat to good governance. Government should ensure that basic education is free and compulsory-the essence is to totally eradicate illiteracy.
  4. Parents should also ensure that children at early age are exposed to values, attitudes, mode of behaviour, leadership roles, and patriotism to enable them to resolve any disputes peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity and tolerance.
  5. The government should intensify her fight against corruption, injustice, fraudulent acts; through anti-corruption and other relevant agencies. These agencies should be well financed to achieve optimum performance.
  6. The Nigerian government should as a matter of urgency ensure proper implementation of policies as entrenched in the National Policy on Education (NPE).
  7. Good governance education should be accorded a benefiting space in the Nigerian educational system by including it in the school curriculum at all levels. It should be taught as a general studies course (GSE) in the tertiary institutions.

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