

Education System in Nigeria

Abdus Sattar Molla

NIGERIA is a federal republic (official name: Federal Republic of Nigeria) located in Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon. A series of constitutions after World War II granted Nigeria greater autonomy; independence from the UK came in 1960. Following nearly 16 years of military rule, a new constitution was adopted in 1999, and a peaceful transition to civilian government was completed. Nigeria is currently experiencing its longest period of civilian rule since independence. The total area of Nigeria is 923,768 sq km (over 6 times larger than Bangladesh) and it harbors about 146 million (146,255,312; July 2008 est.) people (slightly fewer than Bangladesh population). Population growth rate is about 2%, similar to Bangladesh. The per capita income in Nigeria is about US \$ 2,200 (2007 estimate), about 1.5 times of Bangladesh. The literacy rate is about 68% (male: 77%, female: 60%). No recent data on Nigeria's share of GDP spent in education is available, it was about 1% in 1991; less than Bangladesh's educational spending.

Education is the known way to enrich people with required knowledge, skills and values in any nation. Requirement for these qualities changes over time and curriculum requires periodic revision. Bangladesh completed the third revision of the primary curriculum and such a revision was due on the lower secondary few years back, need to start in no time and to be followed by upper grades. We can have a look into the education system of this African country influenced by the UK system- very like ours to find lessons for us. The description follows the usual format having Education Policy & Administration, the Structure, Program of Study, Assessment System and lastly Lessons for Bangladesh.

I-Education Policy & Administration

The Federal Government of Nigeria regards education as an instrument for effecting national development. Her philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal education

al opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. The language of instruction in Nigerian institutions is English. The Ministry of Education is the government body charged with the duty of regulating procedures and maintaining standards.

II-The Structure

With the introduction of 6-3-3-4 (+ 1/2 years Masters) system of education in Nigeria, students are required to spend a minimum of 6 years of Primary Education followed by another 6 years in Secondary School in two sub-stages: Junior (3 years) and Senior (3 years). Pupils who complete junior secondary school are streamed into one of the followings: senior secondary school, technical college, out of school vocation training centre or an apprenticeship. Technical secondary education is offered in secondary commercial schools which offer 6-year courses including academic subjects and specialization. Vocational education produces low level manpower and is offered in technical colleges or business and engineering skills training centers. Technical colleges are the only alternative to senior secondary schools as a route to further formal education and training after junior secondary education.

Higher Education

Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics, institutions of technology, colleges of education and professional institutions. University level Bachelor's Degree program is usually of 4 years' duration (3 years for students holding good GCE "A" levels), whilst professional degrees tend to last for 5 years. Degree courses in Medicine and Dentistry last for 6 years. Master's Degree courses usually last for 1 year after the Bachelor's Degree but, increasingly, where the qualification depends on research, it becomes a 2 year course. The Doctorate Degree is usually conferred 2-3 years after the Master's Degree. Some first generation universities require students to complete an M. Phil degree before being admitted to the PhD program.

Teacher Education

Primary/basic school teachers undergo 4 years

post primary study at a Grade 2 teacher training college leading to a Grade 2 Certificate / Higher Elementary Teacher's Certificate. Holders of the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) may teach in junior secondary schools and technical colleges. Senior secondary school teachers are trained at the universities. They must hold the B. Ed or a Bachelor's plus a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Since 1998, no teacher with a qualification below NCE can teach in any school.

III- Program of Study

Subjects taught at the primary level include English language, one of the three main native languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo), Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Religious Education is also provided in accordance with the syllabus and requirement of the Federal Ministry of Education. Personal Health, Social and Citizenship Education (PHSCE) forms part of our curriculum throughout the school and it includes a developing awareness of potential dangers and it encourages children to be confident. Private schools also offer Computer science, French and Art (Drama, Music).

The secondary curriculum is integrated up to the end of Junior Secondary (Grade 9). The subjects studied at this level are: English, Arabic, French, Mathematics, Integrated science, Social studies, Introductory technology, Business studies, Home economics, Fine art, Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba), Christian / Islamic religious knowledge, Agricultural science, Music, Physical education and Health education.

All Senior Secondary students are required to study English, Mathematics, one science subject and one Nigerian language. All the other subjects are electives and are selected based on the students' interest, be it in the Sciences, Social Sciences or the Arts.

IV-Assessment System

In Nigeria, there are three public examinations held up to the end of pre-university education. The first one is primary school-leaving certificate exam just on completion of the primary education at

Grade-6, the second one Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC) exam on completion of junior secondary program at Grade 9; and the third one is Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) exam at Grade 12. The JSSC and SSSC exam system replaced the West African GCE "O" level in 1989. To enter university, students have to pass the University Matriculation Examination (UME).

Nigeria follows mainly Grade Point Average (GPA) system of grading. GPA 3.50+ (Distinction); 3.00-3.49 (Upper Credit); 2.50-2.99 (Lower Credit); and 2.00-2.49 (Pass).

V- Lessons for Bangladesh

The major characters of Nigerian education system that Bangladesh can follow or adapt can be as follows: Nigeria spends only about 1% of her GDP in education. This explains why literacy rate is low in this African nation. Having a grasp of the essentiality of education, Bangladesh can try to reach the UNESCO standard of educational spending at 7% of GDP.

The duration of integrated Primary & Lower Secondary education in Nigeria is 9 years. But education is distinctly diversified as pre-university education during Grades 10-12. In Bangladesh, we have only 8-year long integrated and 4-year diversified education before specialized higher education. We can just follow the Nigerian plan that is also the most prevalent system all over the world.

Nigeria has provision for three public examinations before higher education. The first one is in completion of Primary (at Grade 6), second one in completion of Junior Secondary (at Grade 9) and the third one in completion of Senior Secondary (at Grade 12). Again, we can just follow this plan having rearranged our system up to Grade 12 as 6+3+3 structure. At present, we have no public examination before Grade-10 and we arrange two public examinations very close jeopardizing the actual study at the Higher Secondary level where students get only one year for actual study.

(The writer is a PhD Researcher in NIE, Singapore; e-mail: asmola1@yahoo.com.)