

POLITICS OF EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONFLICT INITIATION AND MITIGATION IN EDUCATION

Chinyere N. Alimba (Ph.D)

Center for Peace and Security Studies
Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola
Adamama State

ABSTRACT: *Politics is a critical issue for the development of humanity. The questions of who gets what how and when to get it are political issues that define and influence the wellbeing of people in a society. These issues are influenced and determined by the political behaviours and actions of the ruling class. As politics influences human being so also are the social institutions. Political actions and conducts are pronounced in the educational system. Thus, the subject of politics of education becomes essential in determining the nexus between politics and education. The symbolic relationship existing between them showed that they mutually reinforce each other for the growth of the system and society. In this study, the issue of politics of education was critically reviewed, bringing to bear its antecedents on education in terms of the political behaviours often exhibited by the ruling class in respect of education. The educational reforms were discussed, spotting politics as the underlining machine for determining its efficacies and performances. The implication of politics of education in inducing and mitigating conflict, lay the foundation for understanding the gravity of bad and good politics, and their antecedents on the growth and development of education in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: politics, education, politics of education, conflict initiation, conflict mitigation

INTRODUCTION

Politics permeates every aspect of human endeavor; it is inherently a common and constant phenomenon in the primary social unit, which is, the family, to the larger institutional level of secondary social unit in societies. The role of politics in these social institutions is non-negligible because it is a fundamental instrument for regulating and managing the affairs of people. In allocating resources to the various sectors existing in a country, political decisions are made to determine and influence what will be done, how it will be done and when it will be done. Therefore, politics is found to operate at all levels of social engagement, including the educational system. Education and politics enjoy a symbiotic relationship, which is a sign of how interconnected they are in the scheme of operations. For instance, the way the educational system is planned, organised, and administered are intrinsically linked to politics, while education has a functional influence on the collective intellect and values of the political actors and generally on the body of politics. Given the fact that the survival and growth of the educational system depends largely on the interplay

of internal and external forces, these forces are themselves subjected to the influence of the political will, strength and relevance of the governance mechanism of a society. Conversely, these forces have the propensity to positively or negatively impact on the governance system, which will directly or indirectly manifest in the educational system. The educational system, being a major social institution, can be shaped by politics, especially in terms of how political decisions are manipulated in favour or against education. In the same vein, politics cannot be effectively navigated without it being firmly rooted on the educational gravitational force. Karns (1970), writing on American schools, posited that “no segment of government is as thoroughly political as the schools. The effects of political activity are felt in every school system regardless of its size or composition”. This assertion reveals that the influence of politics is highly visible in the educational system in all its ramifications. This idea is validated by Oredein and Durojaiye (2013) that the relationship between the political system and the educational system is intertwined, the quality of the political system depends on the competency and proficiency of the leaders and this is determined by the quality of education the leader has acquired. They concluded that, the success of any system depends on the success of the education system. The relevance and the link of the educational system with other systems are revealed, however, the interconnectivity of politics with the educational system is a pronounced one that is acknowledged worldwide. However, there are variations in the manner in which political decisions play out in education in different terrains. This is the reason why political resolutions that are favourably disposed to education will stimulate the productivity and performance of the system.

This idea is validated by the patterns of financial and material allocations often provided by government to education in different countries. In societies where the allocation is favourable and satisfactory, the educational system will be more productive as it will radiate more creativity and innovation, than societies where the educational system is poorly funded. In Nigeria, the survival and the growth of the educational system seem to be totally at the mercy of the political class. As rightly posited that in Nigeria “education is used by the politicians as a tool for politics”(Oredein and Durojaiye, 2013) and when their goals have been achieved, they literally neglect it. The neglect, to a great extent, is attributable to the exposure and interest of the politicians and their roles in relation to the economy. Thus, the state of the educational system is consequentially a reflection of the behaviours and attitudes of politicians piloting the affairs of the country. The myriads of problems facing the Nigerian educational system, to large extent, are consequent upon the actions and activities of those in the political class (Odekunle, 2013). For instance, the issues of allocation of funds, provision of material resources and school siting are practically based on the influence and interests of politicians. According to Odekunle (2013), there is bias in allocation of finance and educational resources to certain regions or states where politicians are from even when such regions are not educationally disadvantaged. This kind of behaviour is much more obvious in school siting. Most of the higher institutions are sited in localities of the ruling governor and leaders at the central level. This has been the practice in this era of democratic governance in the country. It has implication for the promotion of inequality in the distribution of social services, overcrowding of educational institutions in a place, and resulting in developmental gap due

to uneven distribution of institutions and facilities. Most of the states of the federation house many educational institutions that they cannot actually cater for in their domains. This has resulted in the experiences of several challenges in the educational sector such as poor remuneration of staff, poor and inadequate facilities, moral problems and criminal activities. Attending to these problems often create ground for conflict initiation. This is the point where the issues of good and bad politics play up. Good politics will encourage conflict mitigation in the system, while bad politics will trigger conflict initiation and escalation in education. Event of this nature, explains why academic strike and students unrest are endemic in the educational system. However, where the relationship between politics and education are cordial, the conflict mitigation potential of politics will play out creating room for the existence of harmonious atmosphere in the system for the improvement of the country. In this study, therefore, a theoretical review of politics of education is undertaken, with the focus to insightfully bring to bear issues germane for its understanding for a new course of direction, in order to make positive contributes to the growth of politics and education in Nigeria.

Descriptions of Politics, Education and Politics of Education

Politics

Politics has been conceived in distinct ways by different scholars. However, certain variables such as power acquisition, struggle for resources, to wage influence, service to humanity and conflict resolution are quite clear in its descriptions. Easton (1981) described politics as the authoritative allocation of values for a society, while Millett (1969) defined politics as any power-structured relationship or arrangement whereby one group of persons is controlled by another. These definitions give insight into the issues of power, control and values and their relationship in terms of what people will get. It is thus clear that politics is centred on power acquisition for the control of a group of people as well as their resources to achieve set goals. The idea of power acquisition, which is a central issue in the definitions, signifies that it will be characterised by struggle. This is the reason why politics at all level is considered as a struggle. For instance, Nwolise (1997) considered politics— whether at the national or international level— fundamentally and ultimately as the struggle for the minds and resources of men and nations. The definition of politics put forward by Eldelman (1972) as “the power to allocate powers between individuals, communities, and nations” signals the fact that the essence of getting power is to ensure the proper organisation of a society by ensuring that powers are equitably distributed among the competing units to better the lives of people in a society. Politics can therefore be described as the process through which power is acquired with the concerns to improve the welfare and wellbeing of people. From the above illustrations, one can confidently argue that politics connotes power, authority, control and influence acquisition.

In line with this, Babalola (2005) posited that politics is the protection of domain, acquisition of power, support building, influence gathering and self-serving. Equally, politics has been defined as the process of conflict resolution. Bernard Crick, to whom this idea is credited, described politics as a distinctive form of rule whereby people act together through institutionalised procedures to resolve differences, to conciliate diverse interests

and values and to make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes (Crick, 1972). This thought was more pronounced in the interpretation of politics by Warren (1999), who defined politics as the intersection of power and conflict. This definition is highly relevant in this era of globalisation, in which the idea of political resolution or solution to issues is a constant phenomenon that often appears in the vocabulary of the political class, signifying that the idea of conflict initiation and mitigation are associated with the process of governance.

Broadly, the various conceptions of politics considered so far align with either the classical/institutional school of thought or the behavioural school of thought. The classicalists/institutionalists links politics with “government, “a legal body of people” or the “state”, while the behaviouralists perceives politics as revolving round the notions “power”, “authority”, and “conflict”(Anifowose and Enemu, 1999). The underlining impression created by these definitions is that politics is intricately an activity that is centered on human beings. However, the following basic elements can be deduced from the above definitions of politics.

- a. Politics is a social process which deals with the continuous affairs of people. It is concerned with the issues which affect the general populace.
- b. It involves the allocation of values in a society.
- c. It involves the use of legitimate authority (Fabunmi, 2005).

Heywood’s (2000) four-fold description of politics broadly and succinctly summarises the discussion so on the definition of the subject, which are:

- a. Politics as government - Politics is primarily associated with the art of government and the activities of the state.
- b. Politics as public life – Politics is primarily concerned with the conduct and management of community affairs.
- c. Politics as conflict resolution – Politics is concerned with the expression and resolution of conflicts through compromise, conciliation, negotiation and other strategies.
- d. Politics as power – Politics is the process through which the production, distribution and use of scarce resources is determined in all areas of social existence.

These basic elements essentially underscore the descriptions of politics and they reflect the fact that politics is about human beings in terms of how it can be used as a tool to better and improve the welfare and wellbeing of people in a place.

Education

Education is a continuous process by which a society makes its members to understand and imbibe its acceptable culture and values for their constructive development and to make laudable contributions to their societies and its sustainability in future. Otonti Nduka, in his classical book, *Western Education and Culture*, pointed out that education is a process of cultural transmission, and culture is seen as the total way of life of the people (Otonti, 1957). As implicated in the definition, internalising the cultural practices of a place will avail one the opportunity of knowing what do, how and when to do it for personal and societal development. The Cambridge Conference on African Education (1952) defined education as the united concern of a people for the right upbringing of the children and the

improvement of its national life. Based on this, education is the process of acquiring skills and knowledge for the development of the physical and mental abilities of people to enhance their personalities for the development of mankind. Also, O'Connell (1957) defined education as the social mechanism designed to bring about, in a person submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in his society. Mehta and Poonga (1997) described education as not only to equip the new generations with skills so essential for earning a livelihood but also to create among them an awareness to social and environmental realities and inculcate in them scientific temper, independence of mind and spirit which are of paramount importance for them to become responsible citizens. Considering these definitions, education can be perceived as a process that is established by a society for the transmission of its valuable values for the right upbringing and improvement of its members. The growing importance of education to the growth of people and their societies has made it difficult to separate it from politics. This is because politics is a central issue in human endeavour. Therefore, politics is often being displayed in the planning and effective delivery of educational services around the world.

Politics of Education

The analysis of political trends in relation to achieving set educational goals underscores the idea of politics of education. According to McGinn (1994), politics of education is any effort (consciously or unconsciously) to influence the education system, whether by legislation, pressure group or union action, experimentation, private investment, local transactions, internal innovation, or propaganda. Any effort made by people, whether on individual basis or collectively under a given name, through propaganda, lobbying, demonstration, petition, or boycott which are geared towards influencing political decisions concerning the educational system is regarded as politics of education. It entails the determination of policies meant to influence education. Okunamiri (2009) described politics of education as the social and political contexts of education, aimed at identifying the various social and political factors, influences, issues and problems which affect education production process. Precisely, the efforts directed towards influencing political decisions in favour of education are termed as politics of education. The influence can be steered by the Ministry of Education, the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary or even the public. Also, weighty individuals in societies can instigate appropriate bodies into exerting influence on education. Such motivations from well-meaning individuals can be such that will persuade the government to be sympathetic to the course of education by allocating more resources to the sector for its effective and efficient operations. Politics of education can also manifest itself when the public or private, even including insiders such as administrators lobby the government, or its agencies, or the national assembly to devote greater attention to a particular level of education or generally the educational system for its effective and efficient performance. Politics of education involves a complex inter relationship among interest groups, politicians and bureaucracy (Uchendu 2004). The complex nature of politics of education is associated with issues such as the people that should be in school, who and what should be paid for, what should be taught, who should run the school and nature of policy guideline for the school, which involve the cooperation and understanding of a wide range of groups in the society. Seeking cooperation and compromise from these groups for effective and efficient operation of education will

involve the display of political simulation, projection and reconciliation. According to Iannaccone (1975), politics of education is a subspecialty of educational administration in which scholars selectively apply political science methods and knowledge to teach and write about their core constituencies—superintendents, principals, teachers, and their communities.

Politics of education has to do with how divergent values and belief systems of interested parties are brought to bear to improve the practices of education in order to ensure its proper operations and regulation to achieve set goals. The likelihood of the emergence of conflicts among the interested actors is certain, especially when the diverse interests are irreconcilable and where they are reconciled, conflict is prevented. This kind of situation validates the description of politics of education as a mechanism for conflict initiation and resolution. Another perspective to politics of education relates to the sources/flow of influence (internal or external) in educational contexts or settings. When the influence is from within the setting, it is regarded as educational micropolitics or politics in education. As noted by Owen (2006), the term micropolitics of education was coined in 1960s by Lawrence Iannoccone. It categorically referred to as within-school politics or “politics that take place in and around schools”. According to Hoyle (1982), micropolitics refer to “those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests.” Owen (2006) argued that educational politics like politics in general, revolves around three entities: people, values and resources. Therefore, politics in education or educational micropolitics is effort made by people in a given level of education to influence the decision makers concerning the resources that will be devoted to the system. Like Layton (1989) observed, educational politics generally occur within the field of educational administration. This form of politics often determines what goes on in a particular level of education. The survival and productivity of the education system depends on the maturity and the nature of politicking often displayed by governments in allocating resources for its performance in a country.

Importance of Politics of Education

Politics of education is an indispensable area of educational administration that focuses on the best decision making process regarding how to allocate and distribute resources for the performance of education. This informs the need to take the issues of politics seriously, to ensure that it is not left in the hands of mediocre to prevent the defilement of education. This is because politics can influence education in various ways, which can be positive or negative in nature. When the influence is positive, education will grow and develop considerably as expected for the benefit of individuals and the society at large. However, when the influence is negative, education will be adversely affected. These illustrations are indication of how important politics of education is in any society. The importance of politics of education is as follows:

- (i) Politics of education will ensure that government agencies in charge of levels of education understand its condition in relation to the interest of the government. This will allow for the understanding of how issues should be presented before the government for action.

(ii) In terms of resources allocation, politics of education will help to determine the amount of resources that will be devoted to the educational system.

(iii) Since it regulates what goes into the educational system, politics of education determines the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. That is, the level of operations of the educational system depends on the nature of investment made by the political system. Hence, politics of education determines the level of investment in education.

(iv) Politics of education determines the pattern and direction of the educational system in the country. That is, the future of the educational system rests on the way the political system can be influenced in favour of education.

Education equally plays an important role in the political circle. The roles of education cannot be restricted to only its social function. The potency of education is central to the enhancement of the political ideology of a country. Therefore, the intricacies surrounding politics can be fixed based on the level of exposure of the political actors. The exposure of the political actors is based on their levels of education. Therefore, the roles of education in politics are as follows:

(i) Through education, the underlying political philosophy of a country can be learnt and articulated for the benefit of its people. The cultivation of political culture in a country depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system.

(ii) Through the process of education, the political behaviour of the country can be learnt, practicalised and changed where necessary.

(iii) Education empowers people to develop a solid political orientation for understanding the political climate of a country and how it can be sustained.

(iv) Political socialisation which entails getting to know what obtains in a particular political system can be achieved through education

Understanding the Relationship between Politics and Education

Politics bears direct, visible relationship with the process of education. The relationship is direct in the sense that the idea and orientation of education are determined by the political community in which the system is operating. In the light of this, there are variations in the ways curricula are designed and imparted in various countries of the world. In line with this thought, Ijaduola, Odunaike and Ajayi (2012) posited that no educational system can escape from the political community in which it operates. The system must reflect what the political community wants it to do. The idea and orientation formulated by the political community will be imparted on the populace by the educational system to moderate their behaviours and attitudes to reflect the acceptable way of the people. The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), which is the political document that gives direction to how education should operate in the country, stipulates in section 1 sub-section 9 (f) that “efforts shall be made to relate education to overall community needs”. The document further indicated, in the same section, that “a nation’s policy on education is government’s way of realising that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool” (p.1). This explains the importance of politics in education as well as the significance of education in politics. The contribution of one will influence the way the other will behave. The allocation of resources to the educational system by the political class will improve the productivity of the system, and lay foundation for the experience of qualitative education, which fundamentally will advance the course of political behaviour of the

people in the society. Thus, in the area of human and political leadership development, politics and education have a shared responsibility, which should be mutually enforced for the achievement of set goals. Fabunmi (2005) posited that political considerations often underlie the distribution of educational resources and decision-making.

Equally, Okunamiri (2005) observed that the political functions of determination and allocation of values (material or symbolic) in the society is carried out by the political system through several social institutions and agencies in the society, one of which is the educational system. This attests to the fact that the education system depends on the political system for its resources for production, while the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to function effectively in politics are gotten from the educational system. According to Dee (2004), the more schooling that one has, the more likely one is to vote and even to read newspaper. He added that, increased cognitive ability makes it easier to process complex political information, to make decisions and to circumvent the various bureaucratic and technological impediments to civic participation. Thus, the education acquired by the people, especially those in the political circle will influence their performance edge in the society. Fabunmi (2005) observed that :

a lot of politics is played in the educational industry. There is a lot of struggle for power and values. The political class provides the required resources for the educational sector. The sector in turns provides well trained elites for political system. Hence, the relationship between education and politics is bi-directional. It is bi-direction because both factors mutually reinforce each other.

This assertion shows that the relationship between education and politics create the platform for the educational system to service the political system through the production of elites for its effective operation. The political system services the educational system by providing the system with the required resources for production. This relationship has implication for educational management in the sense that it will serve as a basis for preparing educational managers and stakeholders to understanding what is expected of them to do, how they are to do it and when to do it concerning resources allocation and their utilisation in the system.

Issues of Political Behaviour and Education

The nature of behaviour exhibited by the political class towards the educational system will influence the way the system will respond to the achievement of its goals as well as the pattern of its outlook. Behaviour is an essential attribute of human beings that is exhibited in the process of interaction between or among people in a system. It is developed and sustained by people over a period of time and it also changes. According to Fabunmi (2005), political behaviour refers to the attitude of people towards the selection of leaders, formulation policies and distribution of values. He noted further that political behaviour represents the attainment of political power through the people. This implies that, power is derived from the consent of the people, in which those elected must act on behalf of the people. Unanka (2004) described political behavior as any political action or reaction by individuals or groups, which may or may not promote national development. This definition considers political behaviour as act of conduct by people that have the potential

to either advance the course of national development or mar it. It further revealed that political behaviour can be positive or negative in nature. When it is positive, it is constructively motivated and will produce functional outcomes, while when it is negative; it will result in dysfunctional outcomes. Thus, political behaviour is considered, broadly, to include all the ways in which people attempt to influence each other, for good or ill (Ryan, 1989).

With respect to education, political behaviour is rather a form of behaviour, exhibited by the political leaders concerning issues that have bearing on the educational system. When the behaviour of those elected strongly favours the educational system, productivity and growth will be witnessed in the system. However, when the behaviours of the leaders are disparaging to education, problems will circumscribe its operations, resulting in inefficiency in the system. Fabunmi (2005) pointed out that political behaviour can be categorised into three, namely; offensive, defensive and neutral political behaviours. He also maintained that:

offensive behaviour is such in which an individual take actions which will help to enhance his position in building a power based in the organisation through the formation of alliances, development of loyalties, exploitation others and recruitment of additional staff to boost support. The defensive behaviour aims at retaliating. It makes the opponents to appear to be bad, while the neutral political behaviour attempts to maintain the 'status quo'.

Following from Fabunmi's classification of political behaviour, it is imperative to stress that the exhibition of a particular form of political behaviour in relation to education will affect the system in a manner that will influence its productivity. The behavioural patterns have implications for the growth and development of education in the country. For instance, the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1976 in Nigeria as a mechanism for improving and expanding access to education is a bold step by the government in ensuring that illiteracy level is minimised. This form of offensive behaviour demonstrated by the government, in which school plants and teaching manpower were provided for the system's effective and efficient operation to achieve the objective is a commendable one. Also, the launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 is another robust attempt to revamp the educational system for greater productivity. By this action, material and human resources as well as financial resources were provided to augment the available resources for efficient operation of the system. The investment in education as a result of executing the UBE programme prompted Obanya's (2000) observation that is UBE is a gigantic national enterprise and in fact, a great national learning experience, the success of which will depend on how effectively it is managed". In some cases, certain proactive offensive behaviours have been demonstrated by the government to refurbish and overhaul the different levels of education in the country. An example in this regard was the declaration of a state of emergency on primary and secondary education by some state governors in the country. The reason for their declarations was to move the state from the status quo of deteriorated educationally system to educationally prosperous one. Equally, there are situations in which groups such as

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and Civil Liberties Organisation have called on state and federal governments to declare a state of emergency on education. In fact, ASUU has for long implored the various levels of government to declare a state of emergency on the education sector. The union has also demanded for the implementation of the 26 per cent of UNESCO's recommendation for education to the governments to improve the state of education in the country. These patterns of behaviours are proactive offensive ones that have the potential to revitalise the system for efficient performance. Offensive political behaviour often propels the desire to design laudable programmes and projects for education. However, it often results in abandonment due to corruption which appears to be endemic in the education in Nigeria. Defensive political behaviour is reactive and protective actions intended to reduce a perceived threat to or avoid an unwanted demand of an individual or group (Ashforth and Lee, 1990).

This type of behaviour is rather much more oriented towards protecting the condition or state of affairs that currently exist. It may not be creative and innovative, but will ensure that the status quo is not changed. Ashforth and Lee (1990) pointed out that defensive behaviour is exhibited to shield the status quo against some undesired stimulus. In Nigeria, the behaviours and conducts of those in governance often reflect the demonstration of this type of behaviour, in the sense that they tend to be protective rather than engaging and innovating to create new ideas and events that can better the conditions of the people. Defensive political behaviour has not, to a large extent, being favourable to the educational system of the country. This behaviour is reflected in the nature of budgetary allocation often earmarked for education, which is usually unbearably lower than the UNESCO 26% recommendation. Such meager allocation is often defended on the premise that there are so many sectors that are competing for the resources of the nation. The demonstration of defensive political behaviour is often geared towards the fulfillment of self-motive, meanwhile promotion of the people's welfare is often pictured to the public.

Although, the conduct of such behaviour may be true in some cases where things will be done for the right reasons, such behaviour is, however, more self-seeking. This attitude motivated the comment of Ashforth and Lee (1990) that reactive defensive behaviours are thought to provide defense against unwelcome changes to the status quo, thereby avoiding objectionable threats or demands. They noted further that defensive behaviours are characterised as protective, reactive and other covert (in the sense that their intent is masked). This explains that such behaviours are tinted with greediness and egoism in the name of providing educational facilities to the people. How does one explain the common practices among politicians in siting educational facilities in their localities rather than at the rightful location expected of such facilities to be situated for the common good of the people?

For instance, the location of a university in Ekpoma, Nigeria, was as a result of the political influence of the then Bendel State's Governor (Ambrose Alli) who hailed from that village. In similar vein, the Governor of Ondo State (Chief Adefarati, who hailed from Akungba) used his political influence to sway the location of Adekunle Ajasin University from Akure to Akungba, Akoko in Ondo State of Nigeria (Babalola, 2005). From another perspective,

Molagun (2006) stated that the various educational policies formulated over the years have always been found laudable and progressive in nature, but the unfortunate thing is that such policies have not been fully and practically implemented. The goals of such laudable policies were truncated for one selfish reason or the other. In the case of neutral political behaviour, conducts reflect a state of apathy in which a feeling of lethargy is expressed concerning projects. Neutral political behavior is a type of behaviour in which one feels indifferent about acting in a particular way at a point. Behaviour of this type can be described as a situation in which the political will of government to effect the needed change practically seems to be absent in a polity. This is one of the issues that have retrogressively pushed Africa backwards in the scheme of progressive move made in other continents in this era of globalisation. Mahler (1986) observed that the commitment of government in the promotion of policies and programmes in many developing countries is partially non-existent. Political leaders who exhibit neutral behaviour often undermine their will to act. Their body language and actions reflect their neutral position and their governance mechanisms in relation to educational system. They really do not care since their children are not schooling in the country; the state of education does not really border them. This is the reason why so much campaign promises are made regarding education, which always only turned out to be empty promises when power is finally giving to them.

Politics of Educational Reforms in Nigeria

Reforms are changes that often take place at the institutional level as well as at the societal level. Reforms occurring at the educational system are depicted as educational reforms. Educational reforms are programmes of educational change that are initiated and directed by government based on an overtly political analysis (that is, one driven by the political apparatus of government rather than by educators or bureaucrats), and justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial break from current practice (Young and Levin, 1999). Education reform comprises any planned change in the way a school system should function in order to meet the desires of the people. In Nigeria, the educational system has undergone several reforms, since its inception in 1842. The essence of these reforms is to make the educational system viable, efficient and qualitative. Right from the colonial days to the advent of regionalism in Nigeria, the educational system has witnessed several reform programmes targeted towards more viable educational system in the country.

The first educational reform experienced was the intervention of the colonial government in which grant-in-aid was provided as a source of funding for the missionary schools in 1872. Osokoya (1995) indicated that it was only in the year 1872 that the colonial government made available the sum of 30 pounds to each of the three missionary societies involved in the educational activities in Lagos-the C.M.S, the Wesleyan Methodist and the Catholic-to support their educational activities. This development was evidently the beginning of the system of grants-in-aid to education in Nigeria. After 5years, that is, in 1877, the grants-in-aid was increased to 200 pounds per year for each of the three missions. The essence of this assistance was to help improve the state of education in the country as at that time. In 1882, the first educational ordinance was passed.

The ordinance was aimed at controlling education by the colonial government for the purpose of maintaining quality, standard and uniformity in the system. From 1882 to 1916, series of educational ordinances were passed for the improvement of the system of education in Nigeria. This marked the second reform executed in the country's educational system. Between 1932 to 1948, tertiary institutions were introduced signifying the beginning of higher education activities in the country. The essence of this development was to meet the increasing demand of the country in respect of human capital development and expansion. Thus, the need to ensure that education is made available to as many that are willing to consume it led to the provision of free education. This was strikingly the commencement of a major reform in the educational sector of the country. In 1955 and 1957, the western and eastern regions respectively introduced universal primary education (UPE), while it was introduced nationwide in 1976. The reason for the initiation of this reform was to mass provide education to as many that are willing and ready to be educated in the country. The year 1977 welcomed the formulation of the first national policy on education, which stimulated the real development experienced in the educational system in terms of its definition and sense of direction towards achieving the collective goal in the country. This development made education to be responsive towards the attainment of certain objectives contained in the policy document. The emergence of the document gave birth to the transformation of the educational system from British pattern to American style of educational operation. Based on this, the national policy on education formulated in 1977 introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This marked the beginning of the operation of the American style of education in Nigeria. Equally, it is noteworthy to stress that, in the last five decades, Nigeria has changed its education system more than four times in the order of 7-3-5; 6-5-4; 6-3-3-4 and now 9-3-4. Consequent upon the growing demands for higher education, the National Open University was introduced in 1983. The politics of educational reform revealed that Nigeria has witnessed several educational reforms which started before independence, and which is still ongoing in order to make the system viable, relevance and fulfill its changing goals. It is imperative to note that for reforms to be implemented effectively demand for political will and support. The will and support are necessary in order to influence the ways the reforms will be implemented. Therefore, reforms are underlined by a lot of political maneuverings which often affect the way they are planned and implemented.

Implications for Conflict Initiation and Mitigation in Education

This study has implications for conflict initiation and mitigation in the sense that a constant phenomenon that often surfaces when politics is being displayed in education is conflict. This is why politics of education has been viewed from the perspective of conflict initiation and mitigation. The views are based on the fact that politics of education is centred on people, values and resources, and these elements are at the heart of conflict initiation. For instance, Coser (1956) described conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" The core elements that formed the baseline for the initiation of disagreement in Coser's definition are power, values, status and resources. These elements are at the nerve of politics of education. In dealing with the issues of power and status as they relate to people as well as the allocation of resources to the competing units in the

educational system is all about how politics is displayed in the system. The idea that education is a conflict ridden arena is based on the mismanagement of these dynamic factors. Ball (1987) observed that schools were better understood as “arenas of struggle” in which conflict rather than consensus was the norm. Conflict is a common incident in the school system because of how issues relating power, values and resources are practically addressed. The management of these issues is within the domain of politics of education. This perhaps was why Crick (1964) defined politics as ‘the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community. The ways these elements are shared will underscore whether conflict will be initiated or mitigated.

Conflict initiation is the stage at which conflict is being ignited. This stage is characterised by abuses, name calling, heated arguments, and verbal disagreements based on indifferences arising from their aspirations and goals. It is the point at which individuals vent their differences against one another. When conflict is initiated as a result of how politics is displayed in the educational system, it is considered as bad politics. Bad politics is a mere divisive politicking or politics in its raw form which is concerned with seeking power for self-aggrandisement (Obanya, 2011). Such politics is displayed to fulfill selfish interests rather than being employed to promote public good. Bad politics in education often creates a pathway for: the neglect of the system, low funding priority, poor infrastructural facilities and the bizarre of conflicts existing in education. Thus, bad politics is responsible for the rivalry, conflict, competition and struggling, while sharing scarce resources with damaging effects. In fact, it is a self-serving politics that result in ignoble popular preference (Babalola, 2005). The agitations of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) as well as the constant experiences of students’ unrest in the educational system are constant reminders of the consequences of bad politics, which are the antecedents of politics of education. The incidents of bad politics in education provoked the cry that political leaders should take politics out of education, as the continued neglect of the sector would lead to social paralysis (Dike, 2008). On the other hand, good politics is good for education (Obanya, 2011), because it results in conflict mitigation, which involves possible ways to dissolve the clash of values in resource use conflicts through the search for compromises and consensus (Bruckmeier, 2005). Conflict mitigation involves all strategies and activities undertaken in a situation of crisis to address the causes of a conflict in the medium to long-term by altering the structural, behavioral and attitudinal aspects of conflict, to change the view and attitudes of those fighting (INEE, 2012). It reduces friction and promotes collaboration among people as well as stimulating stronger work relationships. Considering the fact that the educational system is made up of people from different backgrounds, with diverse value systems and aspirations showed that it is easily susceptible to conflict. However, good politics emanating from internal and external sources will serve as succor in preventing conflict in the system.

According to Obanya (2011), in situations where good politics prevails, educational policies, programmes and delivery processes tend to produce the desirable outcome of

children passing through school and the school also passing through them. The point is that good politics will help to create the harmonious and peaceful atmosphere required for a stable collaboration within and from outside the system for its effective and efficient productivity. Good politics is fundamental to qualitative and quantitative education for fostering human capital formation for onward development of the country. When the appropriate political behaviour is demonstration towards education, it will promote equality, and justice which will engender peace and security. Thus, Good politics will naturally cause conflict to wither, thereby reducing the vulnerability potential of the educational system. This is because good politics encourages justice in the distribution of resources as well as ensuring that the right people are placed in positions of authority for public interest. Politics of education can result in the phenomenal of bad or good outcome. When politics of education is tailored towards the fulfillment of selfish ends, it will give birth to conflict. Equally, when politics of education is rightly projected and displayed, public interest will be catered for and the pathway for harmony and peace to reign in the system.

CONCLUSION

This study probed into the issues of politics of education, and its implications for conflict initiation and mitigation in education. In interrogating this subject, the issues of politics, education and politics of education were conceptualised with the insight to increase their understanding and easily establishing their interconnectedness. The imperativeness of politics in education as well as the relevance of education in the wider political landscape was elucidated to show to their importance for the greater good of humanity. The idea of political behaviour often displayed in education was examined, laying emphasis on the intricacies of the different political behaviours, namely: offensive, defensive and neutral forms and their antecedents in education. Politics is inextricably linked to education just as education underpins the efficacy and efficiency of the politics in the society. The performance of political leaders hinges on their training and exposure acquired through education. The bidirectional relationship between politics and education is imperative to ensure their mutual growth for the development of the society. This illustration brings to mind that the dynamic nature of the political behaviours often exhibited in relations to education should be such that will promote its productivity and performance in terms of fulfilling its mandate on people and consequently on the society. The nature of behaviour often displayed by political leaders has direct bearing on education. Thus, the level of neglect that characterised education is associated with behavioural deficiency of governance process in Nigeria. Education tends to gather prerequisite momentum when commensurate constructive behaviour is displayed to ensure adequate provision of funds, facilities, and human resources for its operations. The nature of political behaviour exhibited by leaders is the main factor that often thwarts reform programmes meant for the development of education in the country. Thus, the success or failure of educational reforms hinges on the attitudes and behaviours of political leaders. Educational reforms are essential to usher in the expected change that will create the template for the growth of the system. When reforms are frustrated due to the dimensions of the actions and conducts of the concerned leaders, the educational system will be adversely affected, and at the same

time it will create a ripple effect which will have dysfunctional outcomes on the society. The point is that the various agitations and unrest that characterised education in Nigeria are practically based on the bad politics, which is consequent upon wrong political behaviour. Bad politics is consequentially a conflict initiating outlet, while good politics, mitigate conflict and create a template for the growth of education. Thus, good politics is good for education to make it qualitative and productive for the polity.

References

- Alimba, C.N. (2007) Community Participation in the Management of the Education System: The Nigerian Experience. *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 3(1):97-110.
- Anifowose, R. and Enemu, F.(1999). Elements of Politics. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publication.
- Ashforth, B.E.and Lee,T.R(1990) Defensive Behavior in Organizations: A Preliminary Model. *Human Relations*, 43: 621-648
- Babalola, J.B (2005) Politics of Educational Management in Nigeria. *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*,1(1):83-98.
- Ball, S. J. (1987). The micro-politics of the school: Towards a theory of school organization. New York: Methuen.
- Bruckmeier , K.(2005).Interdisciplinary Conflict Analysis and Conflict Mitigation in Local Resource Management . *Ambio*, 34(2): 65-73
- Coser, L. A.(1956).The Functions of Social Conflict. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Crick, B.(1972) In Defence of Politics, second edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dee,T.S.(2004). Are there Civic Returns to Education? *Journal of Public Economics*, 88:1697-1720.
- Dike, V.(2008) The Universal Basic Education programme, the essence of Technology, and well trained Educators: Educating the Educators in Nigeria. Nigeria World, Friday July 14,
- Easton, D. (1981) 'The Political System Besieged by the State', *Political Theory*, 9(3): 303-325.
- Fabunmi, M. and Alimba, C.N (2005). Historical Analysis of Educational Policy Formulation in Nigeria: Implications for Educational Planning and Policy. *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 1(1):75-82.
- Fabunmi, M. (2005). Perspectives in Educational Planning. Ibadan: Awemark. Industrial Printers.
- Heywood, A.(2000). Key concepts in politics. London: Macmillan.
- Hoyle, E. (1986). The politics of school management. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Iannaccone, L. (1975). Educational policy systems: A study guide for educational administrators. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Nova University Press.
- Ijaduola K.O; Odunaike, O.K and Ajayi, V.B.(2012) The Interplay between Politics and Education in Nigeria: Any Symbiotic Relationship? *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(9):124-129
- Karns, E.A.(1970). Politics: A Vital force in Education. *Educational Leadership* 38-39

- Lawal, B.O (1999) Comparative Education. Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig) Ltd.
- Little, A.W. (2010). Access to basic education in Ghana: Politics, policies and progress, institute of education, university of London, UK.
- Mahler, H. (1986). Towards a new public health. *Health promotion international journal* 1(1)113.
- Mangham, I L (1986), Power and Performance in Organisations , Blackwell, Oxford
- Mark, I.T. and Sar, A.D.(2015).The Concepts of Politics, Education and the Relationship between Politics and Education in Nigeria. *Danish Journal of Sociology and Political Sciences*, (July):15-18
- McGinn, N.F.(2001) Politics of Education Planning. In Husen, T. and Pastlethwaite (eds) *The International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd Edition).
- Mehta, P.L. and Poonga, R (1997) Free and Compulsory Education, New Delhi: Deep and Deep publication.
- Millett, K.(1969) Sexual Politics. University of Illinois Press.
- Modebadze, V.(2010). The Term Politics Reconsidered in the Light of Recent Theoretical Developments. *IBSU Scientific Journal*, 1(4), 39-44
- Molagun, H.M.(2006). Adoption of Pragmatic Approach: A Major Avenue for Revitalising Education in Nigeria. *African Journal of Historical Sciences in Education*, 2(1):124-134.
- Nwolise, O.B.C (1997) ECOMOG Peace-keeping Operations in Liberia: Effects of Political Stability in the West African Subregion. *Africa Peace Review*, 1(1):40-4
- Obanya, P.(2000) Major Management Challenges of UBE. UBE Form Volume 1
- Obanya, P.(2011). Politics and the dilemma of Meaningful Access to Education: The Nigerian Story. CREATE Pathway to Access. Research Monograph No. 56. University of Sussex, United Kingdom.
- O'Connor, D.J. (1957).An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Odekunle, O. (2013) Analysis of Political Problems of Educational Management in Nigeria: Implications for Vision 20:2020. In Fabunmi, M.(ed) Explorations in Education: Selected Essays in Honour of Professor Pai Obanya. Ibadan: His Linage Publishing House.
- Okibe, H.B.(2000) Political Evolution and Constitutional Development in Nigeria (1861-1999). Marydan Printing Press, Enugu.
- Okunamiri, P.O. (2005) The Politics of Education: The Nigerian Experience. Owerri: FASMEN Communication.
- Oredein, A.O and Durojaye, T.G.(2013). Challenges of Tertiary Education in Nigeria. The Way Forward. In Fabunmi, M.(ed) Explorations in Education: Selected Essays in Honour of Professor Pai Obanya. Ibadan: His Linage Publishing House.
- Osokoya, I.O (1995) History and Policy of Nigerian Educational in World Perspective. AMD Publishers, Ibadan.
- Otonti A.N.(1975) Western Education and the Nigerian Cultural Background. Oxford University Press,
- Owen, J.C.(2006). The Impact of Politics in Local Education. Navigating White Water. Toronto: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Ryan, M.(1989). Political Behaviour And Management Development. *Management Education and Development* 20(3):238-253.

Uchendu V. O. (2004). The Optimum scope Politics of Education in African society. Ibadan: Pack and Prints Press.

Unanka, G.O. (2004) Political Behavior, Owerri: All Age Publishers

Warren M.E. (1999). What is political? *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 11(2): 207-231.

Young J.and Levin B (1999). The origin of educational reforms: A comparative perspective. *Can. J. Educ. Admin. Policy*, 2.