

Political Violence: A Bane on the Implementation of Tertiary Education Policies in Nigeria.

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Abstract

No organization or institution can survive in a society that is bedevilled with violence, as its aims of existence will be undermined. This paper investigated political violence: a bane on the implementation of tertiary education policies in Nigeria. The broad task of this study is to ascertain the consequences of political violence on the implementation of tertiary education policies in Nigeria. Conflict theory stresses that country overridden with violence cannot attain development as the process geared towards its development is always thwarted. This study therefore observed that political violence has impinged greatly on the implementation of tertiary education policies as there are little or no education/teaching facilities in tertiary institutions and government's inability to pay lecturers' salaries as at when due and this has hampered greatly on the students as they find it difficult to create jobs for themselves after graduation. This has increased the level of unemployment in the country and out of frustration which the problem causes, some of these graduates end up being used as stooges by politicians to prepare violence in the country. With this anomaly, it can be said that the policy of tertiary education has not been met. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that since tertiary education is a public good and its responsibilities are left in the hands of the government, government should try as much as possible to avoid politics that could throw the nation into turmoil or crisis; this could be achieved through peaceful resolution.

Introduction

In Nigeria today, tertiary education is seen as a formidable tool for the citizens' socio-economic advancement, their political survival, and for the optimum realization of their aspirations and potentialities. In buttressing the importance of tertiary education, Ajayi and Afolabi (2009:12) affirm that "tertiary education could be perceived as an indispensable tool which would not only assist in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspiration, but would also inculcate in the individual, knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that would foster national development and self-actualization.

In his own contribution to the importance of tertiary education in Nigeria, Ojerinde (2011:175) declares that “in Nigeria, tertiary education plays a critical capacity building and professional training role in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”.

Tertiary education is therefore a formidable tool for the nation’s economic buoyancy, political stability, reconstruction and cultural integration. The goals of tertiary education, as clearly spelt out in the National Policy on Education (2004:30) are to: contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment; acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; promote and encourage scholarship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Consequently, in order to achieve these goals of tertiary education, there is a document provided by government which provides a general guide that facilitates educational decision-making and activities, this document is known as educational policies. Educational policies are documents that ensure the ways of operating the education system as well as guiding principles and courses of action that are adopted by relevant governmental authorities to influence and determine educational decisions. According to Okoroma (2000:190), educational policies are initiatives mostly by governments that determine the direction of an educational system.

Successive governments in Nigeria consider education as the most priority and thus set up educational policies for its smooth functioning. However, despite these educational policies for the actualization of the goals of tertiary education, there has been a persistent outcry in our tertiary institution and this is evident in lecturers’ non-challant attitude towards the profession as a result of governments’ inability to pay their salaries, dilapidated school plants, dearth in educational/teaching facilities etc. which have resulted to graduates’ inability to defend themselves. As such, employees complain about graduates’ low performance in their areas of specializations and wonder if they are truly graduates. In supporting this assertion, Akindutire, Ayodele, and Osiki (2011) posit that in spite of the governments’ efforts since independence, Nigeria still harbours the fifth largest number of illiterates in the world. According to Awe (2006), out of the number of illiterates in the world, Nigeria has a 2.7 percent share of world total in 1990, but recorded a 2.9 percent between 2000 and 2004. It has therefore been observed that Nigeria is good at policies but weak in implementing them.

The failure of implementing these educational policies has made the Nigeria’s tertiary education to be at a crossroad. What could have been responsible for the above? While a number of factors could be hypothesized to be responsible, the political trends in Nigeria since independence may suggest that the political violence could be responsible. It is therefore based on this exposition that this paper tends to examine political violence: a bane on the implementation of tertiary education policies in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, some sub-headings are orchestrated as follows: concept of political violence; concept of educational policies; factors that fuel political violence in Nigeria; implications on tertiary education policies implementation; theoretical framework and the way forward.

Concept of Political Violence

Political violence is the breakdown of consensual norms, political alienation and the cohesiveness of a ruling group and a response to frustrating circumstances (Azeez, 2005). Anifowose in Akapn (2015:150) defines political violence as:

the use is threat of physical act carried out by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals, and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property; and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behavior of others in the existing arrangement of a power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

Denen (2013:41) succinctly puts:

Political violence is the use of destructive means or methods in an unlawful manner against persons, property, institutions, in order to publicize grievances, coerce or intimidate a government, opponents, the civilian population, in furtherance of political, socio-economic, religious objectives. It is terror and destruction that is systematically, planned and executed, to achieve political goals. The targets often include; Government functionaries and institutions, identified individuals or groups, innocent public-bystanders, traders, and so on.

In all, political violence is a tool used by opposing party or institution to distract or warp governmental institutions such as the educational sector and other spheres, thereby making it impossible if not difficult to ensure its smooth functioning as a result of selfish interest.

Concept of Educational Policies

Education policies are proposed government's document that stipulates agreed ways of operating the education system. They also refer to the framework within which education is administered in a given place within a specific period of time. In supporting this view, Babalola (2003) avers that education policies are general statements containing principles, regulations and rules, which govern, influence and determine the decisions on how to educate the children, where to get them educated, where to get them employed; who to teach them, and how to finance their education.

According to Awokoya in Okoroma (2006:247), the following are necessary to guide the formulation of adequate educational policy:

it should be formulated and adopted through a political process which acknowledges the reality and legitimacy of conflicting interests and desires among its participants; it should portray some elements of guidance for properly directed an coordinated action towards the attainment of the desired goals; it should contain information on the broad objectives that should be reached; it should be binding guide on the actions of those implementing it; and it should be enforceable and enforced by the society which formulates it.

In developing nations, like Nigeria, new educational policies evolve to meet the demands of individuals and interest groups (providing private benefits); meet the demands of the larger society (providing social benefits), e.g. 9-3-4 educational policy for self-reliance, and to meet the world technological change and development.

Factors that Fuel Political Violence in Nigeria

Since Nigeria gained independence, no regime or administration can be said to be free from the ‘syndrome’ of political violence, both military, and even more in the civilian regimes. Individuals seeking for political power have institutionalized violence to the point of subverting the constitutions through the dictate of their political godfathers and sons. Today, what is prevalent in our country is that the various levels of governments fail to invest public funds into institutions that can be productive to the country such as “education” nor do they allocate funds to the development of both social and economic infrastructure.

Roger (2009) identifies social problems as one of the causes of political violence. Social problems at different levels of group inequality and youth unemployment have increased the propensity for violence. The dominant discourses in the conflicts refer to political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion. Roger (2009) asserts that a key element of dispute is over which groups are represented in government, and have access to state, with much controversy over how state and local governments exercise power. Denen in Denen (2013) summaries the causes of political violence to include: domination, and marginalization of sections, groups, and persons; and falling apart of sponsors and sponsored over contracts, appointments or methods of management of the states.

Another reason for political violence is supplied by Mohoshin (2009), in his study of “Youth Development in Bangladesh”, which tallies with the situation in Nigeria, is the issue of what he termed “blind support for party politics”, replacing the glory of knowledge base debates, with incisive statements resulting to violent contest; especially now that hooliganism has replace constructive exchange on part of youths/students, and the contending parties on the other hand. At a point in history, Bangladesh, as was the case in Nigeria, students/youths, workers’ communities (unions) were the educated section of the society that could fight for the rights of the people, playing leading roles. These days, students, workers, and whatever unions are used as wings of political parties. Civil societies are no longer agents of socio-economic and political development of their affected communities. Instead they perpetuate the agendas of politicians and godfathers.

Similarly, viewing the preponderance of political violence from both the military and civilian rule in Nigeria, it can be said it is as a result of internal democratic structures and

processes within the individual political parties – leading to imposition of candidates on party members and the syndrome of seeing politics as a do-or-die affair.

Implications on Tertiary Education Policies Implementation

Political violence has impinged greatly on the implementation of tertiary education policies as no institution can perform well in an unstable polity. In supporting this view, Akindutire, Ayodele, and Osiki (2011) posit that lack of political stability since independence has been exemplified by occasional premature or forcible termination of governments which has eventually led to discontinuity of long term or systematic policy planning or policy implementation in Nigeria.

It has been observed that when political violence is used as a machinery to usher in a candidate into power, such candidate gets into office without any focus and agenda for his administration and because he wants to favour those who stood by him to perpetuate this act, the wrong people are therefore selected for various ministerial positions and other government parastatals such as education. The resultant effect of this incongruity has led to getting the wrong hands to formulate policies that can't be implemented and this issue has always been prevalent in Nigeria's political system.

Political violence has hindered the effective implementation of tertiary education policies by inadequate provision of wherewithal which is evident in lack of educational facilities and has resulted to producing graduates that cannot solve problems of their immediate environment. Education is a public good and its survival rest on the hands of the government. This must has informed Akindutire, Ayodele, and Osiki (2011) to say that because of the huge government financial involvement in education and other unavoidable responsibilities it owes both the immediate societies and the nation at large, it determines direction of the education system by formulating and interpreting educational law and policies and also establishing standards for measurement of educational quality. Therefore, when there is violence in the polity, development is always undermined as the wherewithal which is supposed to be invested in implementing the tertiary education policies are used to curb the problems that led to violence thereby leaving the educational system to deteriorate.

Njoku (2009) avers that political disruption makes it impossible for students to remain in their schools and this has led to production of graduates that highly relied on governments for jobs instead of gainfully employing themselves after their university education. Ndu and Ohikana (2005) aver that no profession including teaching can function satisfactorily in an environment of crisis. Osuji (2008) opines that the country is not economically strong as a result of political crisis and could not afford to pay her workers especially teachers. As a result, academic institutions are close down and this hampers greatly on the school's calendar because of industrial actions by the teachers. Uwazuruike (2005) asserts that a nation ridden in crisis, disillusionment, corruption, violence among others cannot be expected to produce disciplined citizens. A stable polity devoid of crisis or violence will increase the productivity of lecturers and enable them contribute meaningfully to actualizing the goals of tertiary education which germane to fostering the growth and development of a country.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory

This theory was propounded by Karl Marx in 1971. The opinion which this theory sheds is that societies comprise of different groups that have different interests. In this regard, they believe that social arrangement will tend to benefit some groups at the expense of others. Because of existence of the different interests, the potentials and the likelihood of conflict is always present. According to this theory, some groups come to dominate others and to win for themselves a disproportionate share of the society's political power, which includes wealth and privileges in the society at the expense of the less powerful ones. They also

incriminate the activities of the less powerful while they protect that of the powerful persons such situations according to this theory creates violence.

According to the theory, the nature of politicking in Nigeria abridges the basic right of citizens as the various institutions of society such as the legal and political system are instruments of ruling class domination and serve to further its interests. However the activities of citizens aimed at maintaining the resistance leads to increased escalation of political violence in Nigeria. Consequently upon this ugly menace politicians in Nigeria used to create many social problems to the society especially when the masses attempt to fight back for instance the elections held in 2003 was preceded by widespread intra-party violence that continued on the polling days (Human Rights Watch 2004).

From the above background it has clearly been demonstrated that conflict or violence is fuelled by some groups' ability to dominate others which brings about instability in the polity and thus development is thwarted and this has also affected the effective implementation of tertiary education policies as its goals cannot be met in a country that is overridden with political violence.

Conclusion

The promises made by government (both military and civilian) on the policies of tertiary education can only be found in the pages of the official document of the proposal as most of them are not implemented which has made tertiary education in Nigeria to remain at a crossroad. Today, there is record of tertiary institutions graduating millions of students every other year and good numbers of them find it difficult if not impossible to defend themselves and meet up the present challenges within their immediate environment. It was also observed that political violence has threatened the existence of our tertiary education policies as there are always incessant strike actions by lecturers as a result of dearth in educational facilities and delay in their salaries and those who are mostly affected are the students.

Way Forward

Since tertiary education is a public good and its responsibilities are left in the hands of the government, government should try as much as possible to avoid politics that could throw the nation into turmoil or crisis; this could be achieved through peaceful resolution. Citizens should desist from being used as tools to perpetuate political violence by greedy politicians; rather they should strive to ensure a peaceful coexistence among each other.

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