

# Ever Increasing Circles: The Nigerian Education Roadmap and Policy Regeneration

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## Introduction

There is always an element of risk when an attempt is made to analyze a new policy that has barely been implemented. On the one hand there is the danger of predicting its failure based on certain previous benchmarks. On the other, there is an expectation that with a newer perception of the cynicism of the civil society, the new policy might actually work out after all, as more efforts would be made to ensure its workability.

*The Roadmap for Nigerian Education Sector* (2009) is the latest in the circle of modifications, adjustments and tweaks on the national policy on education that has resulted from years of participation in international efforts to ensure Education for All by whatever year happens to be in vogue by international development agencies such as Unesco, Unicef, World Bank who it seem always initiate these strategies.

The term “roadmap” was actually borrowed from conflict studies, and became in vogue as a strategy only when the then US President, George Bush announced a “road map” for peace as a plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict proposed by a "quartet" of international entities: the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. The principles of the plan, originally drafted by U.S. Foreign Service Officer Donald Bloome, were first outlined by U.S. President George W. Bush in a speech on June 24, 2002, in which he called for an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace: "The Roadmap represents a starting point toward achieving the vision of two states, a secure State of Israel and a viable, peaceful, democratic Palestine. It is the framework for progress towards lasting peace and security in the Middle East..."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the term roadmap became concatenated into a single word to refer to a long-term strategy for development or negotiation.

*The Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector*, or the Roadmap, was released by the Federal Government in April 2009 and was expected to guide the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) to address the many challenges confronting the education sector in the country. Specifically the Roadmap was released under the Minister of Education, Dr. Sam Egwu (whose name on the document gave the impression that he wrote it) and who on being appointed the Minister of Education in December 2008 pledged to fashion out new policies that would enable the sector emerge from its declining status, especially on issues pertaining to Nigeria's Education for All (EFA) policy, infrastructural decay occasioned by institutional and legislative constraints. The Roadmap was expected to improve on accessibility to education, reduce marked

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<sup>1</sup> Roadmap For Peace in the Middle East: Israeli/Palestinian Reciprocal Action, Quartet Support' U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs,16/7/2003.

disparities in educational provision across and within zones and states, create a better policy consensus and funding. It is a strategic plan for responding to the challenges in the sector and encapsulates inputs from the various parastatals, educationists and initiatives by those who have served in similar capacities in the Ministry. This discussion document looks at the document from critical perspective, situating it within the context of previous reform efforts.

### **Understanding Recent Reform Efforts in Nigerian Education**

Education has been at the top of the priority lists of some previous Nigerian governments yet the education system is still far from being ready for the challenges of the 21st century. Nigeria is not the only country whose education system is unprepared. A closer examination of many systems, especially in a developing context, indicate that most of the educational systems in developing countries are not yet ready to prepare students for the contemporary global world. The education needs of an emergent Nigeria are well articulated by Pai Obanya<sup>2</sup> when he suggests that Nigerian education should be marked by a continuous search for excellence supported by the political will for good governance and transparency.

The *National Policy on Education*, published in 1977 was revised in 1981 and 1990. The policy document has been revised to ensure that the policies address the perceived needs of the government in power and to try to ensure that the education sector is supportive of government development goals. Over the years, The government acknowledged the need to revise and update the National Policy on Education once more to ensure that the education system meets the needs of a new democracy. This therefore saw the re-structuring of the educational system into a 9-Year Basic Education structure from 2008.

The entire education system would benefit from coherent national policy development rather than piecemeal reforms. The revision of educational policies is being considered as a long-term goal, due to other pressing needs. The discussion of new policies would benefit from careful attention to the recommendations made and adopted at international meetings hosted by Unesco and other donors for the various sectors of education. New policies have to address the needs of a new democracy, its role in the new global order, while reflecting the realities of Nigeria's economy.

Nigerian government has already demonstrated its political will in working to rebuild the Nigerian economy. Education is once more a priority in its broad national development strategy. The work done thus far would benefit greatly from internal and external support by foundations, business, NGOs and international development agencies to ensure that the goals set are realistic, meet the needs of a new democracy and are economically sound. It is quite clear that the challenges the country will face if it is to reform the education system will include financial constraints, the need for new expertise, and a broad range of technical assistance. In addition it must be recognized that funding needs for education compete with a range of other critical needs in health, public safety, and social welfare. This presents enormous challenges for the government and to the donor community.

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<sup>2</sup> Pai Obanya (1999): Higher Education for an Emergent Nigeria. 50th Anniversary Lecture at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Universal primary education has been a stated priority of every Nigerian government since its introduction in the seventies. The actual commitment of the different governments to the scheme, however, has varied substantially. The economic problems encountered have also contributed to the difficulties experienced in its implementation. Successful implementation will depend on the availability of adequate resources, the sharing of responsibility amongst different levels of government, greater community and student participation. In recognition of the need for greater participation of the stakeholders in the implementation of the scheme, the previous government passed legislation that spells out the responsibilities of different levels of government and those of various stakeholders. Other initiatives included the re-instatement of the National Primary Education Commission and other management structures from 1993. The objective at that time was to improve the management of the education system. A number of initiatives have also been taken as basic steps to promote increased access to education since 1990.

In 1999 the Nigerian government re-launched the Universal Basic Education Scheme as one of its top priorities. The government has also committed itself to implementing international agreements such as the implementation of “Education For All by the year 2015,” adopted at the “World Declaration on Education for All” at the Jomtien (Thailand) World Conference in 1990. The funding and management of primary education have also been changed. The functions of the National Primary Education Commission have been restructured to exclude the management of the primary education budget. The new role is more professional in nature and includes planning for the implementation of universal primary education and the need to address issues of quality, equity and access in the system, with emphasis on gender issues. The National Primary Commission itself was re-designed Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and all states in the federation established State Universal Basic Education Commission to network with UBEC at the federal level.

Other priority areas have been identified through a Nigeria-UNESCO collaboration mission in October 1999. The areas targeted for immediate attention and the estimated costs of the projects have been listed as follows:

- i) Access to basic education
- ii) Massive reduction of illiteracy as part of a strategy for poverty alleviation
- iii) Improvement of quality in higher education
- iv) Technical and vocational education
- v) Teacher training

Long-term goals were identified as: the urgent need to revise the national education policy document, curriculum reform, and improved access to higher education through distance education.

The system of education at all levels has undergone rapid changes and growth within a context of an unstable economy. The education sector continued to expand even though there were substantial economic setbacks. The economic crisis has had a negative impact on the education system and played a major role in the decline of the quality of education offered. New policies have to address, *inter alia*, issues of equity,

access, funding, quality and management of the educational system. This is where the Roadmap comes into the picture.

### **The Roadmap for Nigerian Education Sector**

The Roadmap revolves around essentially four components: Access and Equity, Quality Assurance, Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Funding. Each becomes a variable with which the broad spectrum of education in Nigeria is compared. The structure of education in Nigeria is recognized in the Roadmap as consisting of Basic Education, Post-Basic Education, Tertiary Education, Institutional and Legislative Issues.

Basic Education is the education which every Nigerian receives between the ages of three (3) and fourteen (14) years. It consists of the Early Childhood, Primary, Junior Secondary, as well as Adult and Non-Formal Education. The agency which coordinates the affairs of this sub sector is the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). It is significant that this understanding of Basic Education incorporates the primary and junior secondary school segments into one single 9-Year Basic education program launched in 2008.

Post Basic Education refers to the education received after successful completion of nine years of Basic Education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). It includes

- 3-year Senior Secondary School
- 3-year Technical Colleges
- Continuing Education provided in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs).

Post Basic Education is aimed at producing a community of Nigerians well prepared for higher education, sustainable national development and global competitiveness. From the Roadmap however, only about 16% of the Basic Education students are expected to be absorbed into Senior Schools; while 84% would expect to be in the Technical and VEIs colleges, as shown in Fig. 1 from the Roadmap document (p. 11).

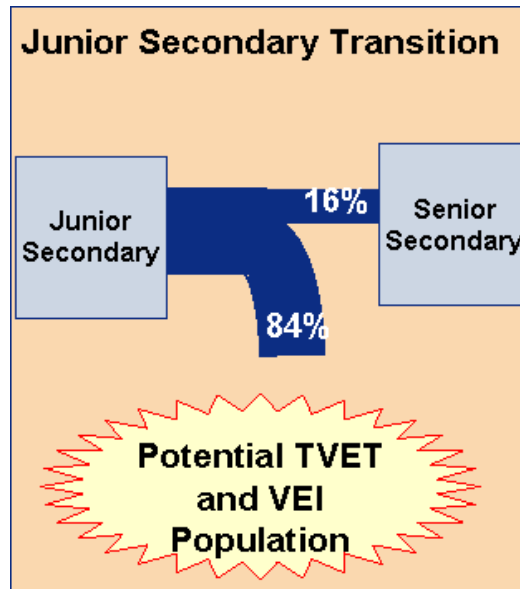


Fig. 1 – expected transition rates in Nigerian education

Tertiary Education in Nigeria is classified into Universities, Polytechnics and Monotechnics, Colleges of Education and Innovative Enterprise Institutions. Tertiary Education is the education which is obtained by choice, after successful completion of Post-Basic Education. The entire structure and its components is shown in Fig. 2.

ECCDE/ Basic Sub-Sector	Post-Basic	Tertiary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Care and Development</li> <li>• Primary Schools</li> <li>• Junior Secondary Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Technical Colleges</li> <li>• Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs)</li> <li>• Vocational Schools</li> <li>• Open Apprenticeship Centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Polytechnics/Monotechnics</li> <li>• Colleges of Education</li> <li>• Innovative Enterprise Institutions (IEIs)</li> </ul>

Fig. 2 – structure of Nigerian education in 2009 (Roadmap, p. 6)

It acknowledges it was not the first serious attempt to reform the sector but that the problems with past efforts has been with implementation. For this, the roadmap places a lot of emphasis on implementation.

For each of the education levels, the four parameters of Access, Quality, Technical and Funding are applied, as shown in Fig. 3.

Access & Equity	Standards & Quality Assurance	Technical and Vocational Education and Training	Funding, Resource Mobilisation and Utilisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Access</li> <li>• Quality Access</li> <li>• Economic Access</li> <li>• Equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Teacher Quality, Motivation and Retention</li> <li>• Curriculum Relevance and Review</li> <li>• Learner Support Services</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preference for University Education</li> <li>• Academic Staff Availability</li> <li>• Infrastructure &amp; Teaching Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary Allocation</li> <li>• Access to Budgeted Funds</li> <li>• Funds Management and Budget Implementation</li> </ul>

Fig. 3 – the parameters of Nigerian education, 2009 (Roadmap, p. 7).

Under the first theme the challenges posed by Out-of-School Children, Lack of Essential Infrastructure, Gender Disparity, Poverty and *Almajirai* were considered. Under the second theme, factors considered include - infrastructural needs, teacher development, motivation and retention, curriculum relevance and review, and Information and Communication Technology. With regard to Technical, Vocational Education and Training, the dearth of qualified teaching staff, low societal estimation of vocational education and inadequate number of technical and vocational colleges were considered. And under funding and resource utilization, factors examined include: budgetary allocation, inadequate funding of schools, poor management and utilization of funds were undertaken. All these are summarized in Fig. 4.

Access and Quality	Standards & Quality Assurance	Technical & Vocational Education Training	Funds & Resource Utilization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Out-of-school children</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of essential infrastructure</b></li> <li>• <b>Gender disparity</b></li> <li>• <b>Poverty</b></li> <li>• <b><i>Almajirai</i> Challenge</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructural needs</b></li> <li>• <b>Teacher development, motivation &amp; retention</b></li> <li>• <b>Curriculum relevance &amp; review</b></li> <li>• <b>Information &amp; Communications Technology (ICT)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dearth of qualified teaching staff</b></li> <li>• <b>Low societal estimation of vocational education</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequate number of technical and vocational colleges</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inadequate budgetary allocation</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequate funding of schools</b></li> <li>• <b>Poor management and utilization of funds</b></li> </ul>
<b>Institutional and Legislative Issues</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inadequate capacity for policy formulation</b></li> <li>• <b>Low private sector involvement</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ineffective, obsolete and outdated policies and legal framework</b></li> </ul>	

Fig. 4 – summary of issues and challenges facing Nigerian education

### Basic Education Challenges

In terms of *Access* there are deep issues of physical access, quality access and economic access. Provision of uniform access to quality basic education presents a big challenge to the sector in view of economic, cultural, urban-rural dichotomy, public-private schools and other disparities across the country. These disparities have implications for provision of infrastructure, instructional materials, supervision and monitoring of learning achievements, and teacher morale, especially those deployed to rural schools, etc. The children in our schools need to be guaranteed quality education in learner environment that results in high learning outcomes.

*Equity* issues have always played a significant role in measuring the success or otherwise of basic education delivery. To provide equal opportunity to all children of school age irrespective of gender, location and physical attributes is a major challenge. Apart from gender disparity, other factors of exclusion include: urban-rural dichotomy, access to school from home, aversion to western education by some communities, poverty, vulnerable groups such as nomadic and migrant fisherfolks, out-of-school children, almajirai, street children, non-literate adults, children with special needs and in difficult terrains, persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, etc.

Specifically, the document established that wide disparities in enrolment still exist. It stated that in *Early Childhood Care and Development Center* (ECCDE) only two million children find their way there, with 20 million others excluded. Under primary education, the document noted that while 24 million children were already enrolled, 11 million others were not. In junior secondary schools, six million children were still roaming the streets while only three million are in school. Under the Nomadic Education Scheme, according to the document, over three million nomadic children are still out of school.

In view of the wide disparities between expected and actual enrolments, the document listed three turnaround strategies. The first is the unleashing of a national campaign on access. This is intended to create national awareness, with the timeline fixed for between May and September. The second is "sensitization, advocacy, and mobilization in support of enrolment and funding including using such initiatives as READ Campaign." The last is a review of the Universal Basic Education Act, to enforce provisions on compulsory enrolment and retention. The timeline is 2011, and the target is to have 3.1 more children in ECCDEs based on an estimated 54 per cent enrolment this year at 3.67 per cent growth rate, and 27.9 million children in primary schools, from a projected 92 per cent enrolment this year, at one per cent growth rate.

With regard to Nomadic Education, the plan is to have 1.379 million nomadic children enrolled in 2009, based on an anticipated 30 per cent increase, and a projected growth rate of 2.32 per cent. For Mass Literacy, an increase of 50 percent in enrolment is anticipated, but, curiously, there is no mention of what the role of the National Mass Literacy and Non Formal Education Commission (NMEC) will be.

### ***Standards and Quality Assurance***

Quality Assurance in Education is a paradigm shift from the current practice of school inspection to a monitoring and evaluating process that provides a new operative mode of evaluation. It ensures that inputs, processes and outputs of the education system meet set standards to bring about improvement in teaching and learning. This involves

the process of monitoring, assessing and evaluating according to set standards and communicating the outcomes to all concerned in order to ensure quality with integrity, public accountability and consistent improvement. Thus, the process is open and the findings are valid, reliable and consistent and inform national and state planning, training and policy formulation

To maintain quality standards in the basic and post basic sub-sectors, there must be in place an effective and efficient organ for quality control with a mandate similar to those of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in the financial sector, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) in the health sector and regulatory bodies of the tertiary education sub-sector. It is important to note that some states have already established autonomous agencies for Quality Assurance while others are in the process of doing so.

On *infrastructural needs*, about 4,000 classrooms are to be provided per annum for the pre-education sub sector, while 22, 000 classrooms per annum would also be provided at the primary school level over the next two years. At the Junior Secondary School level, some 10, 160 classrooms will be provided, while 714 classrooms are anticipated for nomadic education also within the next two years.

Interestingly, the document showed some concern about the distance pupils have to cover to get to schools. It stated that the establishment of neighborhood and open schools will be encouraged, and that schools would be established within three to four kilometers radius of pupils' homes.

On *Teacher Development, Motivation and Retention*, the challenges discovered include lack of adequate staffing in terms of quality and quantity. According to the Roadmap, of a total of 180,540 teachers in the secondary schools, only 141,517 are qualified, while 39,024 weren't. The plan therefore is to recruit teachers for Colleges of Education from the pool of secondary school leavers, through recruitment campaigns that would depict teaching as a honorable profession. Incentive structures to motivate teachers and attract the high quality students to take up teaching are to be established. For this aspect, the timeline is between 2010 and 2011, and the anticipated achievements include the attainment of: 124,696 care-givers for ECCDE by 2010, 797,166 teachers for primary schools also by 2010, and 110,177 teachers for the JSS segment.

Other challenges include: poor staff development schemes at all levels; difficulty in attracting and retaining top talents in the teaching profession; little or no relevant skills in ICT; and low utilization of modern educational technology for instructional purposes.

To tackle the challenges, the FME and states are to immediately commence the implementation of relevant provisions of the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) recently approved by the National Council on Education (NCE). The National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) are to ensure that Faculties of Education, Institutes of Education (in Universities),



Polytechnics and Colleges of Education upgrade their teacher education programs, in line with the newly approved Senior Secondary School Education Curriculum. The FME also intends to reactivate the Technical Training Programmes (TTTP) in selected institutions by 2010. For the Federal Government Colleges, an additional 2,811 teachers are to be employed, at the rate of 937 per year between now and 2011. The 13,396 identified unqualified teachers in the Unity schools are to be re-trained. The FME will ensure that 70 per cent of all Unity school teachers are exposed to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), just as they would be required to participate in local and overseas bridge programmes.

Both the FME and States are to re-instate the moribund Teacher Vacation Courses (TVC) in science and technology, while the FME, State Ministries of Education and the Federal Capital Territory are to reinstate the special bursary award for teachers as an incentive. The time line agreed upon for all the activities to mature is 2011.

On *Curriculum Relevance and Review*, the Roadmap acknowledged that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has completed the review and upgrading of all extant Senior Secondary School curricula, and has also developed 35 entrepreneurial trade curricula as approved by the NCE. The NBTE has also completed the curricula for technical colleges.

The curriculum and instructional materials have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The major challenges include: effective implementation of the new 9-year Basic education curriculum; lack of regular review and updating of existing curricula to meet changing societal needs; low capacity of curriculum developers and implementers; lack of digitization of curriculum including the use of computer simulation and inadequate funding for curriculum development and review.

On *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*, one of the challenges identified is the teachers' phobia for computers. Another major problem is power. But the Roadmap is confronting all challenges with radical remedies. Part of the plan is to provide ICT laboratories in all schools with requisite infrastructure and services. A mechanism for mandatory training of teachers and education administrators is to be established, to enable at least 70 per cent of teachers at the post basic education level attain computer literacy. A computer acquisition scheme will also be established for teachers, just as the policy on compulsory computer education at all levels is to be implemented. An interesting aspect is the plan for the provision of alternative power supply such as solar panel in schools. There will also be an increased budgetary allocation for ICT deployment.

On *Funds and Resource Utilization*, the Roadmap states that there are no accurate data on public expenditure in education in Nigeria because of a lack of information on the education expenditures of state and local governments. This has been partially addressed in a recent work done on Public Expenditure Review in nine (9) States but gaps still exist in collating the total expenditure in Education from both the Federal and State Governments. Within the existing structure, there is no constitutional obligation for State Governments to provide funding information yet transparency in funding is critical in order to obtain a broad picture of funding.

Commitment to education can be judged by its resource allocation. There is often significant discrepancy between, political pronouncements about the importance of education to human capital development and actual allocation of funds to the sector. For instance, during the years 1997 to 2002 when the UBE program was supposedly receiving government's attention, the recurrent expenditure on education as a share of the total federal expenditure declined from 12.3% to 9.1% and the share of capital expenditure has remained unchanged.

Tracking of expenditure also helps to ensure that funding allocations goes to where it is most needed in the education system. An improved system for collecting, collating and analyzing information on expenditures in the States is certainly needed as recommended in the 2004 World Bank Report. The responsibility of achieving this should be shared between the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry of Education (specifically PPMR and ETF).

The role of PPMR in monitoring and evaluation is critical to the success of the reform of the Education Sector and needs to be strengthened to ensure greater accountability. Another area that needs urgent attention is the fact that the FGN- UBE Intervention Funds are not being accessed by the States. As at January 2009 a total of 28 states had not accessed their 2007 intervention funds totaling N12.513bn, and 34 states had not accessed their intervention funds for 2008 totaling N29.551bn. A strategic plan for addressing these weaknesses in the funding mechanisms is necessary.

In summary the major challenges include inability to access and judiciously utilize funds; inefficient resource mobilization and utilization; lack of transparency and accountability; low political will, low commitment on the part of States in funding basic education, inadequate planning, weak implementation of Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) and Annual Work Plans, weak synergy between funding agencies and alienation of LGEAs in the implementation of Basic Education.

On this score, the FME and states are to commence immediate implementation of existing policies on PPP in funding secondary education and the TVET. And for this, the Roadmap states that the "Federal and State Government should increase budgetary allocation to education to at least, 25 per cent,"

### **Post Basic Education Challenges**

A situation analysis of current *standards and quality* in our post basic institutions reveals that standards and quality of our schools and products are low. Quality assurance mechanisms are weak and inadequate. There is a need to improve the capacity of school leaders and the Inspectorate Services (at the three tiers of government) to deliver better supervision and monitoring.

**Teaching** in Senior Secondary Schools and Technical Vocational Colleges is characterized by: lack of adequate staffing in terms of quality and quantity. Out of a total of 180,540 teachers in the secondary schools, only 141,517 are qualified teachers, while 39,023 are unqualified; poor staff development schemes at all levels; difficulty in attracting and retaining top talents in the teaching profession; little or no relevant skills in ICT; low utilization of modern educational technology for instructional purposes.

On *Curriculum Review*, the Roadmap states that the NERDC has completed the review and upgrading of all extant Senior Secondary School (SSS) curricula as well as developed thirty-five (35) entrepreneurial trade curricula as approved by NCE. The NBTE has completed the curricula for technical colleges (35 Trades) and they have been reviewed to make them competency-based, demand-driven and relevant to the world of work. NABTEB has developed examination syllabi for the conduct of the National Technical Certificate (NTC) and National Business Certificate (NBC) examinations.

However, the document recognized that since society is dynamic, the need to keep pace with societal changes puts pressure on the curriculum, as a result of which constant review is inevitable. Dearth of relevant textbooks and other instructional materials were also identified as challenges. As part of the turn - around strategies, a system that aligns updated curricula with an articulated and timely teacher-training program is to be designed.

With regard to *Learner Support Services*, which are provided by schools to enhance teaching and learning, it was established that many schools have inadequate Guidance Counselors or Counseling Units. There is also a lack of awareness on the part of parents, teachers and even learners of the importance of proper nutrition in the overall mental and physical development of the learner.

To deal with the lapses, the Roadmap advocates an adequate number of Guidance and Counseling Units in schools, at a ratio of 1:500. The teaching of culture, music, dance and character development is to be encouraged.

To tackle this set of deficiencies, the FME will, by 2010 produce uniform quality standards instrument for the post basic level; strengthen collaboration between and among relevant government agencies responsible for quality assurance; implement the Converged Examination Management Technology Platform (CEMTP), and introduce a frame work for school development, planning and self internal evaluation.

Besides, the recommendations contained in the 2006 Operation Reach All Secondary Schools (ORASS) are to be implemented. Standardized assessments and ranking of schools by performance levels are to be conducted, and incentive schemes for promoting excellence in post basic schools will be introduced.

On *Technical and Vocational Education*, the document stated that there were 159 recognized technical colleges, made up of 19 federal, 137 state and three private, with a total enrolment of 92, 216 as at 2005. Currently, there are 32 Vocational Education Institutes (VEI) programs that have been granted interim accreditation, with a total carrying capacity of 2, 880 students.

The challenges here are daunting. One is the lack of standardization and development of non-formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Another is the dearth of qualified teachers. The ability of the formal system for producing technical teachers is also very limited.

To confront the challenges, the National Council for Vocational Education, to facilitate the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework will be

established before December 2009. Private sector involvement will be expanded, and the capacity of teacher education programmes is to be enhanced.

On ***Funding and Resource Mobilization***, the Roadmap noted that the steady decline in funding relative to explosion in student population in Secondary and Technical/Vocational Schools has resulted in limited access and equity, inability to attain set standards, disproportionate student–teacher ratio, among others. These, in turn, have led to steady decline in the quality of curriculum delivery and overstretching of available facilities and infrastructure. The following are some of the challenges posed by funds and fund utilization in the Post-Basic Education sector: inadequate budgetary allocation; bureaucratic bottlenecks in accessing the budgeted funds; poor management of accessed funds and lack of coordination of budget implementation among the tiers of Government.

### **Tertiary Education**

The challenges of ***access*** in tertiary education remain formidable. The current rate of admission of 6% into tertiary level education as against the generally accepted minimum of 16% for meaningful economic development brings out the challenges clearly. This is as a result of the low carrying capacity of tertiary institutions which stands at 150,000 for the Nigerian University System (NUS) while annual demand is about 1 million. For the Polytechnic system, the gross carrying capacity is 158,370 while the actual is 340,535 (more than 100% over-enrolled); and for the Colleges of Education 118,129 while the actual is 354,387. The situation is further compounded by preference for university education. On the other hand, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are having difficulty attracting qualified candidates. For instance, in 2008/2009 academic session, a total of 957,172 applied for placement in universities as against 232,598 and 58,819 for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education respectively through JAMB. Other challenges include: poor quality of prospective entrants. Only 23.7% of candidates passed SSCE with credit in Mathematics and English between 2000-2004; Inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and equipment as well as poor library facilities. About 15%-30% of the infrastructure, equipment and books are non-functional, obsolete or dilapidated. These have adverse consequences on the quality of teaching, learning and research.

There is severe shortage of very senior ***lecturers*** in tertiary institutions. For instance, over 60% of academic staff in the Nigerian University System (NUS) is in the category of Lecturer I and below and less than 40% of academic staff in the Polytechnics have higher degrees.

The existing ***curriculum*** in our tertiary institutions is out-dated and not relevant to national needs and therefore not globally competitive. It also, does not adequately cover critical and relevant aspects of science and technology and is not project-based. Other challenges include: absence of benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for post-graduate programmes in the NUS except for MBA program and low capacity of curriculum developers and implementers.

Nigeria is experiencing a severe shortage of ***ICT*** skills and personnel necessary for taking advantage of new and emerging technologies in the knowledge society. This is compounded by a weak ICT backbone in the country, poor and expensive bandwidth provision as well as poor and obsolete ICT infrastructure and services in the

educational system. Other challenges include: inadequacy of qualified ICT teachers and other ICT personnel; low retention of ICT staff, low ICT and ICT-related Research; inadequate funding of ICT for development and deployment as well as implementation of government policy on ICT and problems of power and energy

Government policy in the past had not accorded *polytechnic education* its rightful place within the tertiary education sub-sector of the country. This can be seen in the placement of ceiling on career progression of polytechnic staff and graduates, relative low level of funding, despite the expensive nature of TVET, and poor conditions of service for staff.

The tertiary institutions draw a significant part of their funds from the proprietors (Federal Government, State Governments and Private proprietors) while the remaining part is internally generated from levies/charges/fees (for Private Institutions), international development partners, support from alumni associations, and linkages with industries in Nigeria and abroad. The bulk (80%) of what was appropriated for tertiary education especially from 2005 to 2007 was for personnel cost and the remaining 20% took care of maintenance, development and other areas of overhead. The table below illustrates the level of funding for tertiary education from 2005 to 2007.

Over the years, funding of tertiary education has been on the increase. However, the funds have not been adequate for the institutions because the allocation from the proprietors fall short of what is actually required. For example in 2004, the sum of N 216,622,706,206.00 was requested by the federally-funded universities. The Federal Government however released the sum of N53,466,287,486.01 representing 24.7% of the budget request from the universities.

### **Problems of the Roadmap**

Despite this fairly open attempt at identifying the various challenges that face the education sector, and the premeditative suggestions of the Roadmap, there are still problems with the Roadmap. I will illustrate a few of them.

One, at the level of vision, the Roadmap seems to divorce the problems in the education sector from the general problems of underdevelopment. Some of the problems it correctly identified with the sector such as funding, access and quality are in fact symptoms of an underdeveloped economy, not the underlying causes of the problems with the education sector. It is unlikely that the reform will succeed in isolation of the other sectors of the economy to which the education sector is linked. How for instance can quality be improved if wage levels in the sector are insufficient for the educators to live on such that moonlighting is generally accepted as a necessary supplement? Or how can you create enthusiasm among pupils if they necessarily have to spend most of their time outside school helping out with the family's petty trading? How can you encourage effective learning and studentship in tertiary institutions if there are armies of unemployed and underemployed graduates roaming the streets, forlorn, and uninspiring to any one?

Two, at the level of design, the Roadmap plans to use a 'representative' sample of schools and institutions across the country as demonstration projects. The assumption here is that what works in the representative sample will also work in similar schools

and institutions across the country. Unfortunately this assumption could be erroneous because of the likely biases in the selection of the samples, including the need to 'reflect the federal character'. This is likely to be compounded by problems posed by the differences in social, class, cultural, spatial and historical access to education among the different geographical areas of the country. Will the performance of samples from say Ikoyi, Lagos, and highbrow areas in say Abuja be representative of the likely performance of schools, say in remote rural areas of the country?

Three, while presenting the roadmap, the Minister was also quoted as saying: "I have proposed reinstating an assessment at the end of the sixth year so as not to pass students on who have not mastered the requisite basic skills at the primary level." According to him, the total dependence on continuous assessment to promote pupils "is not helping us. It only helps to produce more illiterates." The Minister's stance on this unfortunately appears to be a retrogressive step that could end up undermining some of the objectives of the roadmap. Obviously if examinations were to be a good way of producing excellence, then the quality of our higher education, where examination is more of a way of life, wouldn't be in such a parlous state. The world is increasingly moving away from the era where children are made to repeat classes because they failed examinations or judged too harshly by examinations. Continuous assessment ensures that children's various abilities are encouraged rather than condemned and that they are allowed to develop according to their various rhythms without being made to feel inferior to their faster-paced age mates.

Four, omitted in the reform is the unnecessarily long number of years spent in pursuing some degree and diploma programmes in Nigeria. Why should it take six years to produce a law graduate and five years to produce an engineering graduate in Nigeria while it takes only three years or less to produce similar graduates in most other countries? What is the sub-text here? That Nigerians are slow learners? Unfortunately in an increasingly competitive international labor market where age is a big issue, Nigerian graduates are being unnecessarily disadvantaged. The Roadmap should in fact have considered the introduction of conversion programs as we have in many countries. In the UK for instance, a non-graduate in law who wants to become a lawyer can opt to do a one year conversion program in law and will be deemed to have satisfied the academic stage of legal training if he successfully completes such a program. In Nigeria such a graduate will be required to spend another four to five years.

Five, the Roadmap still retains the elitist structure of the National Policy on Education which envisages just 16 per cent going to Senior Secondary Schools and subsequently, the Universities. The vast majority of children are expected to be absorbed into Polytechnics and Teacher Education – thus equating these category of institutions less than Senior Secondary/University tracking.

But where is the funding for all these ambitious plans come from? The document relies heavily of the federal budget for 2009, 2010 and 2011 and this is where the problem lies. How much really is needed and what will the budget for each of the years ahead look like? What will be the contributions of the states? It was also not stated whether there are adequate experts in the Federal Ministry of Education to implement the plans step by step, especially those that need professional handling.

Then the big question: what if, by 2011, Egwu is no more Education Minister? Will the FME continue with the plan nevertheless?

#### References

- FME. 2009. The Roadmap for Nigerian Education Sector. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
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