

## MANDELA'S LEGACY FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the idea of adopting Nelson Mandela's educational transformation initiatives as a blue print for educational transformation in Nigeria. The work considers these initiatives in three key areas, namely, his human centered education, the critical inclusive basic education strategy which he recommended for his ANC (Transvaal) Congress in 1953 and institutionalized in South Africa, and his large-scale educational transformation initiatives using the Teachers Rationalization Initiative (TRI) respectively. The work argues that of the many challenges facing educational development in Nigeria, the human factor, especially the continuous politicization of education where tribal and political affiliations influence activities within the educational system has created a major setback in providing quality education in Nigeria. Apart from frustrating the principle of quality control and quality assurance which are fundamental to the educative process, politicization of education has induced educational imbalance that has undermined policy implementation and ushered in academic fraud, corruption and indiscipline. The conclusion is that adopting Nelson Mandela's educational transformation initiatives could set a new agenda for educational transformation in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Mandela, Education, Transformation, Nigeria.



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### INTRODUCTION

Education has been identified and acknowledged as the springboard where societal and individual goals are accomplished and sustained. By extension, it is the platform for

national development. This is why nobody can talk about national development without recourse to educational. Education imputes the right values in people that actually drive the process of change. In other words, for any society to develop it must prioritize and sustain all the factors that ensure the level, quality and standards of her education.

Unfortunately, politics, rather than these indices today determine what happen within the education system. Citing of schools, admissions, recruitment of staff, provision of teaching and learning facilities, etc., have political undertone. Because of this, educational interventions tend to focus on urban schools (or few areas with political connections), while majority of the schools which are located in the rural areas suffer shortage of manpower and infrastructural decay. This has created educational imbalance that has heightened academic fraud, corruption and indiscipline within the school system since those in the rural areas are subjected to the same labour and examination conditions such as WAEC, NECO or GCE regardless of their shortcomings. In order to meet up, certain sharp practices are adopted to make up for their deficiencies. Corruption researchers, says Trines, like Hallak and Poisson have posited that:

Poor people tend to be more dependent on corrupt practices, as they rely more on public services and are less capable of paying extra costs ... as they are less educated and less informed, they are easier to manipulate. At the same time, corrupt practices are major obstacles to poverty alleviation (or intervention), as they sabotage policies and programmes aiming at reducing poverty and capture resources targeted at the poor. ([wenr.wes.org/2017/academic-fraud...](http://wenr.wes.org/2017/academic-fraud...))

Today, there is mounting aggression in people involvement in academic fraud such as examination malpractice, certificate forgery, admission and employment racketeering, sale of degrees, hiring staff to achieve accreditation, name it, suggestive of increasing frustration and self-help occasioned by internal contradictions of vast disparities existing between the rich few and the majority poor populations of the world in the bid to suppress

policies and arrogate all privileges to themselves. These sharp practices have created a dangerous impression that threatens to devalue certificates, higher qualification, undermine academic integrity, distort educational practice and ridicule education as a vital institution. In Nigeria, the situation has degenerated to the extent that even urban students have lost faith in themselves and now troop to interior villages to register for WAEC and NECO examinations where they believe there are no syndicates to sanction the fraud. Asouzu narrates how:

Many children hardly believe in hard work any longer to pass their exams. Some even believe that it is something dignified and indeed that it is the mark of a smart person to cheat in examinations. Parents send their children to special centres to write their WAEC higher school exams, where with the help of proprietors of such centres, children are coached on how to cheat at will. (12)

This cannot be allowed to persist. As Trines notes, "Reputational damage is another risk for insufficient controls..." ([wenr.wes.org/2017/academic-fraud...](http://wenr.wes.org/2017/academic-fraud...)). It is on this note that this paper is hinged and examined.

## **THE CHALLENGE FACING EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA**

To transform is to change the nature and character of something so that it is better. Educational transformation therefore describes the process of making the educational institution to function better in terms of turning out globally competitive products (or school leavers). It encompasses the academic performance, intellectual initiatives and character of those who pass through the system and the quality of controls that enable the development of those abilities and the impact of these on the overall development of the society. Transforming the educational sector requires first the formulation of policies and programmes that will ensure the provision of human and material resources needed to drive the educative process of teaching and learning and ensuring that those policies and

programmes are judiciously implemented in accordance with set standards and in accord with existing realities such as basic amenities like portable water, electricity, food, shelter, equipped modern classrooms, functional laboratories and libraries, trained and qualified teachers, adequate remuneration and promotion of staff and a standard curriculum. All these have to be factored-in in the policy framework in order to ensure effective transformation and development of the sector.

However, Olujuwon, who examined a detailed historical attempts at transforming the educational system in Nigeria asserts that researchers agree that education transformation in Nigeria has been marred by policy inconsistency due to political interference and abuse of laid down rules and regulations meant to standardize educational practice (208-210). Not only are there abrupt changes in government's educational policies and programmes, he agrees with Nwangwa and Omotere that school managers today do not meet the managerial expectations captured in their policy framework (169). He furthered that "Despite huge budgetary allocations to education, researchers reveal that inadequate facilities are the bane of Nigeria's education system" (211).

Of utmost importance is the fact that he acknowledged that Nigeria had established a well-regarded higher education system in the 1980s, where research outputs of tertiary institutions in Nigeria was about the best in Sub Saharan Africa", but that "That sparkling reputation on universities" was lost when "government interference in university affairs became more rampant" (212). His recommendations are apt: "Government must, as a matter of priority stop paying lip service to the full restoration of autonomy in educational institutions, summon the political will in the provision of adequate facilities for effective teaching and learning and encourage "All stakeholders within the educational system (to) uphold the sanctity of examinations" to restore quality in the system.

Uwameiye, aligning with Ifedili and Ochuba maintain that “The imposition of intolerable and short-sighted policies by those exercising political authority without knowing their implications, inadequate finance for the implementation of the formulated policies, corruption in the management of the available funds, and the appointment and promotion of unqualified teachers based on ethnicity and parochialism while neglecting the qualified ones” are some of the major factors militating against the maintenance of the standards of education in Nigeria ([foeaau.com/?p=744](http://foeaau.com/?p=744)). He blames government for being the source of the problem due to their abrupt policy change that leaves stakeholders confused, crave for paper qualification, failing to provide the needed teaching and learning facilities as well as leaving corrupt officers unpunished as hampering the process (Edet, 139; Uduigwomen and Edet, 85). Other factors, he said includes neglect of the education sector by government, carefree handling of teachers welfare and shortage of qualified teachers.

Youdeowei, against contemporary expectations, decries the decay in the basic education sector in Nigeria. He quotes the National Publicity Secretary of Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Audu Amba as saying that even when many teachers retire year in year out, “28 states had not employed teachers in the last four years” (2). Although this might not reflect the exact number, it paints a picture of the deplorable situation at the basic education level. Further analysis of his report showed an acute shortage of teachers especially at the basic education level. For instance, in Sokoto State, Rimawa Primary School, Goronyo LGA, a school with 1,170 pupils have only 10 teachers. That is a ratio of 1:117 as against the required 1: 25 (i.e. a teacher to 25 pupils by global standards). Akanto Primary School, Amasiri, Afikpo North LGA of Ebonyi State, has only 3 teachers including the Headmaster. Carter Primary School, Ogui, Enugu State, has only five teachers including the Headmaster. The report further revealed abysmal tale of salaries being owed teachers at the basic education level as at May 28, 2019 viz:

State	Primary School	Secondary School
a. Abia	5 months	10 months
b. Benue	10 months	---
c. Kogi	10 months	25 months (in % ages).
d. Ekiti	6 months	----
e. Ondo	2 months	----
f. Kwara	4 months	---- (2).

This situation, the report continues, increases the level of truancy of teachers especially those who were recommended by their political godfathers. Such employees, administrators complain, cannot be sanctioned since they are ‘covered’ by their sacred cows (Youdeowei et al. 2). What can be gleaned from this is that there is considerable levity in handling educational matters; one showing some lack of sincerity of purpose with a weak management system due to absence of internal mechanisms of control. This work views this missing link as a serious conceptual problem that could be tackled using Mandela’s educational transformation initiatives

### THE AIM OF MANDELA’S EDUCATION

Mandela articulated his concept of education from the background of African Ontology where discipline is the foundation for moral justification to tackle the inequality entrenched by the Apartheid Regime. He believed that self-discipline is the greatest weapon with which to maintain a stable and dignified personality, develop responsible citizenship and avoid strive (46, 622). Mandela discovered that the lures of material gains and fear of death were the major tools of oppression and slavery; which could be defeated by your ability to endure self-denial rather than gains – and this is the key to real freedom (391). He had realized that “the many dark moments when (his) faith was sorely tested”, if he gave in, he would have risked, not only the lives of his followers but his own also.

His task as a leader is encapsulated in this realization thereby prompting in him the zeal to build moral courage in men in order to develop in them a “thick skin” against vulnerability – to reform men to hold their value and dignity as men. Only in this way can men come together jointly, from a collective understanding grapple to change their existential situation (or dark moments), to make life meaningful and not animalistic.

Group intelligence and future referential attitude helps to sustain human confidence and drive in solving teething existential issues. This is why oppressors adopt the “Divide and Rule tactics”. In other words, it is only in a future referential attitude that moral acts and self denials can be justified. Thus, Mandela saw all incentives given to him by the Apartheid Regime as impediments to the genuine reality before him which is freedom of the South African People. Against Karl Marx and Engel’s believe that it is economic forces that shapes man’s thought and actions, Mandela propounded that self-denial and discipline are what preserves group intelligence (120). And because the intelligence of men is key to social transformation and development, the value of man is incontrovertible. Whatever violates this rational awareness is a misnomer and should not be done. Corruption is a direct violation of this justification as it tends to demean others for one’s ego (Eyo 33; Eyo and Etta 64; Eyo and Udofia 62). Corruption contrives one’s mind against the other thereby creating artificial divides that disorganize group intelligence that frustrates synergistic support of group relations. Thus, he remarked

The authorities’ greatest mistake was keeping us together, for together our determination was reinforced. We supported each other and gained strength from each other. Whatever we knew, whatever we learnt, we shared, and by sharing we multiplied whatever courage we had individually.” (390).

This drew to him a striking lesson that racism or any other markers of social difference; religion, ethnicity, gender, class, caste, language, social and cultural practices were not only artificial and unnecessary ignorance and misgivings that results to permanent global

inequality and disability, but the main reason behind all forms of social injustice and conflicts globally! These differences, he maintains, “are elements which enrich human civilization.” We “demean our common humanity” if we allow them to divide us (*United Nations* 26). The function of education is to arm man against this deceit. What this means is that education provides knowledge and insight for generating innovative ideas and strategies for survival of oneself and others in a relational future referential attitude. In this way, *education ought to lead to the transformation of the individual and society and enhance human dignity*. Being educated is to be ‘born again’ with hunger of responsibility to attend to the ever ailing conditions of the people and state; the patriotism and willingness to show concern for himself and others – not in the sense of his kinsmen and countrymen alone, but a global family of people irrespective of colour, creed or any other social markers. Education without this true sense of responsibility cannot be education in the true sense of the term.

This intellectual ethical insight informs Mandela’s entire theory of education (Edet and Segun 65). He knew the extent it could go. Thus he rejected all forms of negative indoctrination. He paradoxically furthered this when he said that: “Racism has taught people how to hate, and if they can learn how to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally than its opposite” (622). What people know, they learnt through experience. Consequently, education is the tool for refining and redefining the attitude and behaviours of the citizenry. Education is the foundation as well as guide for unfolding one’s place and role in the society. Education is a right to “dignity and decent life” (*United Nations* 28, 32). In other words, to be educated means two very significant things in one. First, it means true depth of knowledge and resourcefulness and second, generosity or ethical use of one’s endowments in assuming full responsible citizenship of fostering societal well-being. It is the knowledge and moral standing within African culture where one earns the name ‘True Son of the soil’ (Eyo Ojong, 33). Exhibiting this ethical insight

and making it an attitude is what being educated is. The role of education for Mandela therefore is to raise men of extraordinary courage, wisdom and understanding. This is what builds capable leadership, fresh ideas and positive renewal of attitude that brings true change (622). Without this understanding of rights and feeling of the otherness, whatever grades of certificates or number of degrees does not make one educated as that will not guarantee change and development.

## **MANDELA'S EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES**

In line with his idea of transformative learning, Mandela believes that educational policy thrust must be designed to eliminate, as much as possible, divisive tendencies that tends to distort and disrupt mental freedom and group intelligence (Edet 148). "It was humbling, he said, to see how the suggestions of ordinary people were often far ahead of the leaders" (172). This, understanding along with the gains of the impact of the team spirit among his prison colleagues yielded gave impetus and re-echoing of the truism in the popular cliché "Unity is strength". For education to be productive, it must be just and inclusive.

### **1. Human Centred Education**

Mandela views educational reforms as beginning with the guarantee of human rights. Gebremedhin and Joshi write that Mandela insists that: "Transformation of education and training system involves moving from the provision of education for elite to education for all, ensuring that all people ... have access to education and training on a lifelong basis" (183). This, they say, reflects "a human-right based approach to education with focus on equal rights where education is "depicted as a crucial means for the creation of a common citizenship and nation hood" (183). The aim was to eliminate "division" and foster unity. Mandela's first government policy document, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP 1995), they explained dedicated a significant section to "Developing our

Human Resources to Schooling” (182). The document, according to them, was “Driven by strong mechanism that repeatedly invoked images of progress, the rights of South African learners with considerable emphasis on self-development alongside ensuring that basic needs are met, the society is democratized and the economy grows (Agbii et al, 49).

Of particular emphasis again, is the point that the document treated education as “a public good, beneficial to both the individual and the community (and should be) available to all” (182). To successfully do this, the document institutionalized procedures to pursue strong investment in public education and improve social opportunities through equal access to quality education that will bridge the gap of inequality between the majority of the people that were marginalized and the few racial Whites. For Mandela, educational reform is a collective task requiring concerted efforts of all stakeholders. And for there to be unity of purpose, the society must ensure harmonious co-existence and sharing of common values and norms that regulate the conduct of its members which necessitates adherence to law and equality of members. He may have seen, like Umo, that long-term development goals of any society can be realized only if it recognizes the creative potentials and viability of its people as development agents (71). For Mandela, one is educated to the extent that he/she realizes his/her relevance; whom he/she is and what he/she functions as in the society and what ought to enable him/her achieve his/her goal in life. Once human rights are rationally guaranteed (which education gives), the tensions of class struggles and arrogation of resources exclusively to oneself becomes minimal.

*Since it is human beings that are to develop the society, they must themselves be transformed before they can impact on the society. And to transform an individual is to make him/her develop ‘mental freedom’ or what Soudien calls “Thought-ful Ontology:*

An awareness of oneself in the relational ecology of social difference. It is the capacity to live relationally, in a fully aware sense, of ones own capacity to

do good or evil in the larger social world in which one lives. It brings together, and this is its relevance for modernity, the full spectrum of one's knowledges, and put them to work ethically (5).

Only such transformative learning and internalizing harmonious relationship as an attitude gives the insight and foresight that generates ideas for changing the society for the better. It is patriotic leadership that transforms the society.

## **2. Inclusive Education**

Fundamentally, Mandela sees denial of education as direct choice for poverty and instability (*United Nations* 10). Those who are educated are the ones to develop the society. For this reason, education must be just and inclusive (30). Consequent upon this, the mandate he gave to the fully centralized South African Department of Education (DoE) during his government was a replica of his mass literacy campaign strategy for his ANC (Transvaal) Congress in 1953 viz:

Establish your own community schools where the right kind of education will be given to our children. If it becomes dangerous or impossible to have these alternative schools, then again you must make every home, every shack or rickety structure a centre of learning for our children. Never surrender to the inhuman and barbaric theories of Berwoerd's education. (Gebremedhin and Joshi 175)

For him, no rational human being should be discriminated against or denied education. Education is what empowers an individual to do what he/she would ordinarily not have done in life. In his popular words:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president

of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given that separates one person from another (166).

Education is directed towards “unleashing of the creative potentialities of the people”. For educational reforms to have impact, Mandela insists that it must treat education as a basic inalienable right in which everybody is entitled to accessible quality education at all levels of education, particularly the basic level. This is significant to the extent that most reformers in developing countries in Sub Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria, adopts ‘window-dressing’ approach or instantiation-generalization reform approach where educational reform is selective or urban-based while regarding those particular gains as general achievement or progress, leaving a sizeable population in total ignorance. Today, schools in rural areas across Africa are not only in dilapidated structures and deplorable conditions, but grossly short-staffed, with little or no facilities at all. The abysmal revelations of the deplorable state of Okotie Eboh Primary School, Sapele, Delta State, involving little Miiss Success Adegor who was sent home for N12,000 school fees that went viral in the social media is a case in instance ([www.legit.ng](http://www.legit.ng))

### **3. Large-scale Education Reform using Teachers Rationalization Initiative (TRI) and Policy Control Mechanisms.**

Teachers are fundamental factors in education reforms. While other facilities for teaching and learning could be improvised, teachers cannot! Mandela did not stop at saying that schools be sited in all nuke and crannies; he backed that up with legislative policies that will ensure quality teaching and learning at all levels of education using his Teachers Rationalization Initiative (TRI). Jansen and Taylor examine this policy framework in six respects, however, this essay limits it to four (9-11).

The first was developing a sustainability plan that will guarantee the ideals of his envisaged inclusive education system in the form of laws prescribing in clear terms, the

institutional framework and Standards Operational Procedures (SOP) that must be followed to realize and ensure strict compliance to set standards for quality service delivery. This includes provision for a fully centralized Department of Education (DoE), thereby making for a unified philosophy of education with defined objectives and organized goals. The other was the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which, according to Jansen and Taylor, “Became an emblem and an instrument of the single national high-quality education and training system” that was standardized and “woven into the fabric of the South African learning system” (9). Following the prescriptions and ordinances outlined in the DoE and NQF, Mandela established graded institutions corresponding to the various levels of education in accordance with occupational needs of South African economy.

Of greater security and significance, was the introduction and appropriate legislation of strategic fiscal measures for achieving equity in education. Some of those legislations included the South African Schools Act, which provided for exemptions (or discount), to poor parents in fees; the National Norms and Standards for Schools Funding where certain funds were earmarked to fund some poorest schools (mostly those in local areas on the basis of need) and apportioning special intervention funding such as school feeding programmes, transport subsidies, free school uniforms etc. to balance inter-provincial inequalities (Jansen and Taylor 16).

Yet very strategic was the reform setting mechanisms for balancing pupils to teacher ratio and developing a consolidated salary structure for all teachers. The reform pegged a pupil to a teacher ratio of 40:1 for primary schools and 35:1 for secondary schools. And in 1996/97 “the various salary structure for teachers were merged into a single salary scale” (29). Although the authors indicated that there were some difficulties in implementing the rationalization plan, they admitted with pious faith that “A very significant feature of this period was the large increase in the numbers of SGB-paid teachers in every province with

a total of 174 percent for the country as a whole (33). In other words, the TRI ensured availability and equalization of teachers in both urban and rural schools – Giving room for even distribution of teachers and quality teaching with clear visible performance across board.

Regardless of the reservations by the authors, it is held here as it is on record that the TRI, especially on the basis that it was backed by legislation from the South African Schools Act and the National Norms and Standards, must have been the magic wand that rebranded and strengthened South African educational system. Up till today, South Africa has one of the best education systems that are next to none in Sub Saharan Africa (Uwameiye, [www.foeaau.com/?p=744](http://www.foeaau.com/?p=744)).

## CONCLUSION

The continuous existence and frequency of socially divisive utterances and murmurings against discriminatory tendencies using concepts such as ‘Cabals’, hijack of process in governance, ‘Sacred cows’, ‘Powers that be’, the phenomenon of ‘Slots’ in high-profile paid jobs, award of contracts, empowerment schemes, scholarships, awards, provision of basic amenities etc., are indicative of the prevalence of a “Dominant order” of repressive policies in social transformation processes akin to the Racial Oligarchy in South Africa that Mandela’s educational theory and policies were primarily designed to overcome. Reddy witnesses that:

Much has been achieved by (Mandela’s) government on the legislative policy front to transform higher education institutions and to make them more socially responsive and critically engaged in deepening and broadening South Africa’s democracy ... In the main, it can be argued that (the policies) reflects the values and goals repeatedly conveyed during the freedom struggle: to overcome the legacies of racism and exploitation. (39)

In other words, Mandela's educational transformation initiatives were human centred and human right-based, thereby providing for institutionalized equality of stakeholders and planning of interventions according to needs rather than certain groups or individuals. This ensures even development.

Equally significant is the existence of an inbuilt legislative policy framework and control mechanisms that guards against perceived abuses which hamper judicious implementation procedures. There are explicit rules that define processes for reforms such as the National Norms and Standards for School Funding, making it easy for people to adopt corresponding legislative mechanisms and provisions to address marginalization tendencies to ensure strict adherence to laid down standards. Being a product against long years of inhuman practice, the policies designed are more comprehensive to deal with perceived forms of abuses inherent in racial South Africa. This holds enormous implications in the civil society-spirited government policy approach adopted by Nelson Mandela that makes for the "broad-band participation" that has been acknowledged globally and worth emulating.

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