EDUCATION SECTOR REFORM IN NIGERIA: A CHANGE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

A UNESCO ABUJA PUBLICATION
EDUCATION SECTOR REFORM IN NIGERIA: A CHANGE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

By

Pai OBANYA

October 2007
CONTENT

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 3

FOREWORD 4

1. Introduction 6
   i. Terms of reference/purpose of the study
   ii. Methodology
   iii. Limitations
   iv. Organisation of the report

2. The Broader Context 9
   i. The International Inpetus
   ii. The Reform Agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria

3. Education Sector Reforms 17
   i. The Presidential Mandate
   ii. ‘Madam: Her Antecedents, Her Vision, Her Style
   iii. Major Achievements
   iv. Impact on Society, the Ministry and the System

4. Achievements and Impact of the Reform initiatives 36
   i. Major Achievements
   ii. Impact of the Initiatives

5. The Change Management Angle 48

6. CONCLUSIONS – Reforming the Reforms 53

REFERENCES 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRIC</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBN</td>
<td>Central Bank of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEEDS</td>
<td>Community Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FME</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSS 2020</td>
<td>Financial Sector Strategy 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEP</td>
<td>Girls Education Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCCE</td>
<td>Joint Consultative Committee on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEEDS</td>
<td>Local (Government) Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE</td>
<td>National Council on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEEDS</td>
<td>National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYSC</td>
<td>National Youth Service Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-Private (Sector) Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDS</td>
<td>State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIL</td>
<td>Transformational Team leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBE</td>
<td>Universal Basic Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The valuable contributions of the following in providing guidance, information, ideas and comments in the course of the study leading to this publication are hereby gratefully acknowledged, while the author takes full responsibility for all the imperfections

- UNESCO, Abuja
- The World Bank Nigeria Mission, Abuja
- DFID, Abuja
- The Civil Society Coalition on Education for All
- The Department of Research, Planning and Management of the Federal Ministry of Education
- The Staff Association of the Federal Ministry of Education
- Alero Otobo – Leader, Transformational Team, Federal Ministry of Education
- Dr. Abba Sayid Ruma – Hon. Minister of State for Education
The antecedents that precipitated the reform initiative in the education sector in Nigeria stem from the widely held belief among stakeholders that the sector has become so eroded that inputs made in the past two decades do not seem ever to yield desired results. For instance, the upgrading of the Education Data Bank, which had been established with UNESCO support in the early 80s, has not had adequate political support to ensure availability of timely data. Other efforts including the review of landmark documents including the National Policy on Education and the curriculum as well as the championing of the development of education sector plans at national and state levels do not appear to have pooled up to the cumulative positive effect expected. When in late 2006, the idea of the need for a reform was mooted and the education sector was selected as one of the five to drive a national reform process, everyone expected that the final solution was indeed underway. It however, took another period of transition, another leadership and a major public declaration that the education sector in Nigeria is in a state of crises to eventually usher in a reform process that still appeared to have taken many by surprise.

With the declaration of the crises, came the full blown reforms that were so fundamental as to touch on very core aspects of the Ministry’s functions. The reforms were welcomed by all coming from a Minister whose antecedents in another sector were already public knowledge. Expectations were high. The spate and style of the reform, and the pronouncements that accompanied the process, however, left initial concerns in the minds of stakeholders on its ultimate conclusion and outcome. As the activities unfolded, it became necessary for UNESCO to document this landmark process for the benefit of Nigeria and other countries who might wish to learn from the process. UNESCO was particularly interested in describing and analyzing the objectives, context, process and outcomes of the reform; identify and evaluate the key elements for training, research and dissemination; as well as identify and analyse the good practices that would constitute outcomes of the reform. The IIEP supported the process through providing guidelines and advice.

It is over one year into a succeeding administration. Owing to widespread concerns on the style and content of the reform process and its perceived implication for the national polity, modifications have been made on some of the core reform initiatives. For instance, ownership and
management of the Federal Unity Colleges have been revisited while the tertiary education consolidation reform has been reversed. We have incorporated these and other changes in this publication because we believe that they all constitute learning processes which ought to be documented for posterity. We have maintained an objective view and have not attempted in anyway to reflect an opinion on them as presented.

Joseph Ngu
Director/Representative
UNESCO Abuja
1 INTRODUCTION

1. This opening section recalls the terms of reference of the study, explains the procedure for data collection, the limitations of the process, and the structure of the report.

2. The terms of reference required that the following specific tasks be undertaken.
   i. Analyze the overall political and socio-economic context (especially the overarching reform agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria, as encapsulated in NEEDS and Vision 2020, which has formed the launching pad for reforms in the education sector,
   ii. Analyze the overall general principles and development goals and objectives that form the underlying policy direction of reforms in Education
   iii. Analyze the major reform initiatives - objectives, execution, achievements and challenges,
   iv. Analyze the methodology for stakeholders involvement in the reform process, from conceptualization to execution
   v. Examine the relationship between iv above and stakeholders’ perception/acceptance of the reforms
   vi. Assess the extent to which reform initiatives have resulted in positive changes at different levels
   vii. Highlight the lessons to be learned from the reform initiatives: the ideas, the planning, the consultative/negotiation/execution process, and
   viii. Suggest the way forward, with special emphasis on mechanisms for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the reforms

3. Data collection was a fairly prolonged process that went on from March to August 2007. The process involved
   a. Desk and web study, in search of analysis of and comments on Nigeria’s overall ‘reform agenda’ as well as on reforms in the education sector
   b. Interviews and focus group discussions at the Federal Ministry of Education, involving all categories of staff and the industrial unions, the Minister and the Permanent Secretary (see annex)
   c. Interview with the head of the TTRs (Transformational Team Leaders), the main overseers of the reform process
d. Open and relatively unstructured discussions with representatives of State Ministries of Education

e. Interviews outside of the Ministry, particularly with the NGO coalition on Education and Nigeria’s external partners

f. A telephone interview with the representative of DfID (British Department for International Development), an institution that gave considerable technical support to the reforms

g. Spontaneous engagements, incidental events and informal contacts with all classes of Nigerians for whom the reforms have become a subject of profound interest.

4. The limitations of the process (which has had its impact on the findings of the study) are linked with the peculiar challenges of the researcher’s working environment. Fixing appointments within the Federal Ministry of Education was an uphill task. It was harder still getting respondents to keep appointments punctually. Reaching out to parastatals of the Ministry was impossible, as the Ministry (for reasons that have remained unfathomable) failed to make the needed logistic arrangements. Access to official documents was not easy and one had to resort to personal (as opposed to official) contacts and on copies available in the files of development partners. There were in fact deliberate attempts by some persons directly concerned with the reforms to avoid being interviewed. ‘Am coming Sir’, ‘we are so busy’, ‘I’ll get back to you’ were the common expressions used to push off interviews, even when they had been formally scheduled.

5. It was not possible to speak to Oby Ezekwesili, the Minister who had vigorously pursued the reforms. She had left the country to take up an appointment with The World Bank at the time the interviews were taking place. Her new engagements and tight work schedules have also prevented her from responding to the discussion points sent to her by mail, as she had requested.

6. This report is in three parts. The first part (section two of this report) discusses the broader political and socio-economic context of the reforms, particularly the national ‘reform agenda’ on which reforms in Education were premised, and of which they form a significant component. The second part (section three of the report) zooms in on the education sector reforms, attempting to unearth the underlying philosophy, goals and objectives, and the reform process. Part four tries to draw some lessons from the entire exercise, focussing mainly on the change management challenge that it has
created and how this could become a methodology lesson for the future.
THE BROADER CONTEXT

The International Impetus

1. Nigeria was a pariah state during the last phase of its long military rule experience from 1993 to mid 1999. Those were the days when Nigeria was ruled by the ‘maximum dictator’, General Sani Abacha. Nigeria was during this period under sanction by various international bodies and was even expelled from the Commonwealth. On returning to democratic governance in mid-1999, one of the first major steps taken by the government of Olusegun Obasanjo was to return Nigeria to the international fold. This involved undoing the political ills of the immediate past (restoration of democratic institutions, reconciliation with the country’s external partners, etc). In addition, the country had to chart a development path that was in consonance with global trends and which respected prevailing ‘international covenants’ like the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative, both of which had the year 2015 as goal post.

2. In the process of re-integration with the rest of the world, Nigeria has also borrowed the international methodology of doing the development businesses, one of which is visioning. This is a methodology that has yielded VISION 2020 documents for a number of countries (developing and industrialised), of a number of international organisations (e.g. the Right to Sight Vision of the World Health Organisation –WHO – intended to ‘eliminate avoidable blindness worldwide by the year 2020, in order to give everyone in the world the Right to Sight’), government agencies (as is the case with the US Defence Department), educational institutions (e.g. Texas A and M University), political parties (as in the ‘Towards a Progressive Century’ vision of the British Labour Party), and civil society organisations.

3. Visioning, as a methodology for preparing for the future, and for enhancing, maintaining or achieving competitiveness, is now taken seriously in many places. Among developing countries, there are illustrative examples from India (a “Vision for a Strong India by the year 2020”), Malaysia (‘a fully developed country by the year 2020’) and Trinidad and Tobago’s whose vision is aimed at investing in life,
creating innovative people, engineering a competitive global reach and promoting effective government’.

4. Nearer home, in Africa, there is the vision by Rwanda to build a ‘new Rwandan nation’ with the following national aspirations: ‘peace, political stability, physical and social openness, a diversified, integrated, competitive and dynamic economy, which could raise the country to the level of medium income countries.’ Ten ‘basic building blocks’ (relating to key socio-economic and political targets) has been articulated for the achievement of this goal by 2020.

**BOX 1: VISION 2020 STATEMENT – TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

By the year 2020, Trinidad and Tobago will be a united, resilient, productive, innovative and prosperous nation with a disciplined, caring, fun-loving society, comprising healthy, happy and well-educated people and built on the enduring attributes of self-reliance, respect, equity and integrity.

In which...

*every citizen equal opportunities to achieve his/her fullest potential* All citizens enjoy a high quality of life, where quality healthcare is available to all and where safe, peaceful, environmentally friendly communities are maintained.

All citizens are assured of a sound, relevant education system tailored to meet the human resource needs of a modern, progressive, technologically advancing nation. Optimum use is made of all the resources of nation.

The family as the foundation of the society contributes to its growth, development and stability.

There is respect for the rule of law and human rights and the promotion of the principles of democracy.

The diversity and creativity of its entire people are valued and nurtured.
The Reform Agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria

5. The ‘reform agenda’ for which the Obasanjo administration is famous, and which the Yar’ Adua administration has re-christened ‘national transformation’ with a seven-point agenda, is aimed at ensuring for the people the full ‘dividends of democracy’. It is multisectoral, even though it has been most noticeable in the financial and public services sectors, while education sector reforms per se became a matter for intense national debates only in the last two years of Obasanjo’s eight-year rule. The reforms have been more or less articulated in two major policy documents: Vision 2020 and NEEDS.

6. According to Chukwuma Soludo (Governor of Nigeria’s Central Bank and a member of Obasanjo’s ‘economic team’) the reforms have been undertaken in two phases

- 1999-2003: Socio-political reconstruction (de-militarization of the state and reconstructing the military; Due Process for accountability and transparency; strengthening institutions for democratic governance, re-integrating Nigeria into global community of nations, foundation for private sector take-off
- 2003—2007: NEEDS: Economic reforms, fighting corruption, and strengthening institutions, several landmark legislations, energy reform; pension reform; PPP (Public-Private-Partnership) in infrastructure; etc

7. Nigeria’s ‘Vision 2020’ is designed to enable the country to rank among the world’s twenty largest economies by the year 2020. Official documents on the ‘Vision’ proclaim boldly that

By 2020 Nigeria will be one of the top 20 economies in the world

And then go on to say forcefully what this means for development actors in the country

“This is a bold and daring desire demanding radical and monumental policy reforms. It means Nigeria will be listed in the League of Nations after the current G7 (United States of America, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, France, Italy and Canada), the current E7 (China, India, Brazil,
Russia, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey) and Spain, Australia and South Korea.

It can no longer be business as usual. To attain this goal will require the total commitment of every sphere of Government, civil society and the private sector. Education is the foundation for transformation; the trigger for catapulting the nation towards its Vision 2020.”

8. The international impetus for Nigeria’s Vision 2020 is probably the work of Goldman Sachs, a highly rated international investment banking institution who had reported that,

‘In December 2005, four years after its report on the emerging "BRIC" economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), Goldman Sachs named its "Next Eleven" list of countries, using macroeconomic stability, political maturity, openness of trade and investment policies and quality of education as criteria: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, South Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam’

9. Vision 2020 has given rise to sector-specific visioning, the best known example of which is the FSS (Financial Sector Strategy: 2020) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) - (“The strategy for what Nigeria’s financial services industry should look like by 2020

“FSS 2020 aims to transform Nigeria’s financial system into a catalyst for growth, develop Nigeria into an international financial centre, and transform Nigeria into one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020. The project intends on achieving this aim under the following objectives:

• Developing a shared vision and an integrated strategy for the nation’s financial system.
• Developing market and infrastructure strategies that will align fully with the strategic intent of the overall system.
• Creating a performance management framework and building a partnership of all key stakeholders to implement the strategy.
• Establishing a harmonious and collaborative environment for the development and delivery of the strategy”.

10. NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy) was published by the national Planning Commission in 2003, as ‘Nigeria’s plan for prosperity’. Its preparation is said to have taken three years of data collection and stakeholder consultations. It is built on a tripod of empowering the people, promoting private enterprises, and changing the way government does its business. The document goes into fine details of the concreter actions to be taken as government initiatives in each of its three poles of concentration. (Table One summarizes the major highlights).

11. The NEEDS process was expected to be replicated at state and local government levels. As explained in the official document:

‘Each state government is developing a State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS). Local governments are also being encouraged to develop medium term development programmes, specifying benchmarks, targets, deliverables, timelines and implementation guides. These plans will complement SEEDS and NEEDS’

Table I- A Summary of NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEEDS PILLARS</th>
<th>INTENDED ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowering People</td>
<td>Creating Jobs&lt;br&gt;Providing affordable housing&lt;br&gt;Improving Health care services&lt;br&gt;Strengthening the skill base&lt;br&gt;Protecting the vulnerable&lt;br&gt;Promoting peace and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Private Enterprise</td>
<td>Diversifying the economy&lt;br&gt;Privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation of public owned industries&lt;br&gt;Development of infrastructure, particularly power generation, transport and telecommunications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the way the Government Does its Public sector reforms</td>
<td>Strengthening of anti-corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. By the middle of 2007, Nigeria embarked on a revision of NEEDS, with a series of consultation workshops to examine the drafts of NEEDS II. Soludo’s assessment of the national reform agenda seems to suggest that a good start had been made but that challenges still needed to be seriously addressed in the following areas.

- Unemployment, especially of urban youth
- High rate of urbanization (5.4%) associated with crime and pressure on urban infrastructure and housing
- Getting the States to be ‘developmental’ and stem the rural-urban drift and poverty reduction
  - Appropriate local government administration that links with town onions and communities
- Insecurity of lives and property
- Infrastructure deficiency
- Urban renewal challenges
- Addressing spatial inequality (North and South) and absolute poverty
- Institutional challenges ---- Constitutional Reforms ---other legislations by national assembly. He then suggests that these be taken up in a ‘new generation of reforms; (box two), to be addressed more specifically by NEEDS 2.

13. NEEDS 2, intended to run from 2007 to 2011, is expected to ‘deepen the gains of NEEDS 1 and address the emerging challenges and outstanding issues’. It also ‘seeks to reduce poverty through growth with employment’. Its overarching goal is to ‘reduce poverty by 30% by the year 2011. This is to be pursued by focusing on five ‘strategic targets’ – production, security, human infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and service delivery. Its operations will be characterized by ‘community led interventions’. For this reason,

‘The CEEDS (Community Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy) forms a basis for LEEDS, (Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy), while both (CEEDS/LEEDS) form a basis for revised SEEDS (State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy), SEEDS and NEEDS 2
done within a uniform framework and participatory intervention strategies’

BOX II: NIGERIA’S PROJECTED NEXT GENERATION OF REFORMS

- **Vision** of a prosperous country based on hard work and productivity of the citizens and sound value system. A **vision** that breaks away from a natural resource and rent-dependent society to one based on intangible wealth, entrepreneurship, and competition
- Objectives remain: poverty reduction; employment generation, wealth creation and value re-orientation.

• Consolidating Macroeconomic stability--- stable (low) inflation; exchange and interest rates
• Security of lives and property and continuing to address infrastructure deficiency
• Financial System Strategy (FSS 2020) --- to drive the economic transformation
• Trade, Technology and Exploiting Networks and Partnerships: Nigeria may lose the future contribution of the Diaspora
• Agriculture: Conquering Nature and Exploiting Technology
• Deepening Reform in Education as bridge to the future--- especially Science and Technology
• Addressing Spatial Inequality: New Thinking required on how to move the Northern Zones Forward: Old models have failed.
• Continuing to Strengthen Public institutions for transparency, accountability and Good Governance
• Urban Renewal Across the States--- especially Lagos (Lagos is the economic capital of Nigeria, if it does not work, the economy stagnates...)
• Amendments to the Constitution: Imperative for Effective Governance and Economic Management
• How to compel the States and LGAs to deliver on Development?--- so far Nigeria has been clapping with only one hand--- States and LGAs control about 50% of the resources (Paraphrasing Soludo)
14. A point of particular interest to this study is that the early conceptualization of NEEDS 2 did devote some thought to Education, a subject on which NEEDS 1 was quite thin. Education, together with Health, constitutes what NEEDS 2 describes as ‘human infrastructure’, the current thinking on which is reproduced in box three.

**BOX THREE: NEEDS 2 ON EDUCATION**

**Strategic Target:**
- To increase the educational status by 20% by 2011

**Specific Targets:**
- To increase adult literacy level by 5% every 2 years
- To increase primary enrolment rate by 5% annually
- To reduce attrition rate by 5% annually (by gender)
- To increase the quality of teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions by 10% annually
- To increase the quality of school graduates by 10% annually
- To induce attitudinal and value change (to improve sustainable entrepreneurial spirit)
- To increase international competitiveness of graduates
EDUCATION SECTOR REFORMS

The Presidential Mandate

1. President Obasanjo’s reform mandate to all sectors and all line ministries came along with his re-election for a second term in 2003. The mandate found its articulation in the NEEDS document published in the same year. The President had earlier, in the course of addresses and speeches, used every occasion to echo his reform agenda, as can be seen from the following quotations from the NEEDS document
   i. ‘Our goal is to fight corruption to a stand still’
   ii. ‘The goal of NEEDS is to mobilise the resources of Nigeria to make a fundamental break with the past and bequeath a united and prosperous nation to the generations to come’
   iii. ‘The economic and development agenda under NEEDS must of necessity be complemented by other reforms – especially in the electoral and political governance architecture that is consistent with developing and sustaining democracy’
   iv. ‘In my dreams I see a new Nigeria in the hands of God. As I traverse all parts of Nigeria, I feel a new Nigeria emerging. Let us therefore join hands and make Nigeria even better’

2. The clarion call to ‘make Nigeria even better’ was considered of special import to the Education sector. In the words of President Obasanjo, ‘without a proper Education sector, there is no possibility of attaining our MDG and EFA goals or fast tracking NEEDS’. Reform could not however take off in the education sector because there had been too rapid a turn over of ministers, with three successive ministers in the pace of three years (2003-2006). When therefore Oby Ezekwesili was appointed Minister of Education in June 2006 (some 11 months to the end of the Obasanjo administration), she was mandated to act swiftly and decisively, with the President’s familiar working slogans ringing in her ears
   i. ‘It’s no longer business as usual’ and
   ii. ‘The status quo is not an option’.

17
3. The foundation for the reforms in the Education sector, as has been shown, was an integral part of President Obasanjo’s over-arching reform agenda. The reforms also have a direct link with VISION 2020 and NEEDS. Their modus operandi was however dictated largely by the personal style, the commitment and the passion of Oby Ezekwesili, who was addressed as ‘Madam Minister’ during her tenure as Minister of Education. The way she swung into action and the bulldozer posture she adopted were to a large extent dictated by the urgency of the situation and the depth of the crisis facing the Education sector. She had herself an all-round education and a good deal of international exposure. She had, in addition, an enviable track record of transforming institutions in her two previous national assignments - institutionalising due process in government procurement procedures and development the extractive industries transparency initiative as Minister of Solid Minerals. (See box three) She was widely referred to as ‘Madam Due Process,’ and was also a member of the President’s ‘economic team’, or inner cabinet.

4. Oby was seen by stakeholders as an a-typical minister, a minister who strove to understand all the technicalities, who read every piece of paper that came to her table, who asked questions, who sought clarifications, and made sure there were no contradictions in reasoning. She is also known to be highly articulate, with a capacity to write and speak persuasively. Oby is known to have an unequalled capacity for hard work and would always pursue a task to its logical end. On the flip side, she is perceived as a bad listener, as someone who likes to do most of the talking.

5. Her strong will to get things done, and swiftly too, was expressed by the motto WE CAN, which became the hallmark of all documents emanating from the Ministry. She saw the challenges facing Education in the country as having deeper roots beyond the confines of the sector. In her own words, ‘we do not just have an education sector crisis; we have a national crisis’.
BOX FOUR: OBY EZEKWESILI

Ms. Obiageli (Oby) Ezekwesili is the Minister of Education since June 2006. From July 2005 to June 2006 she was Minister of Solid Minerals Development. Before that she served as the Senior Assistant to the President and Head of the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit in the Office of the President of Nigeria. She piloted the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which opened up the oil, gas and mining sectors to wider public scrutiny through transparency and accountability mechanisms.

A leader in development and governance initiatives, Oby serves on the boards of several national and international organizations committed to economic development and democratic issues both in Nigeria and elsewhere. She was one of the founders of Transparency International (TI) in 1994, and served on the TI board for five years until October 1999, when she stepped down.

In January 2004, Oby was given Tufts University's prestigious Dr. Jean Mayer Award for Global Citizenship, joining that rare breed of Nobel Laureates who were past winners of this award. She was the recipient of Harvard University's prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Award for Excellence in public service in 2000. The Nigeria Institute of Quantity Surveyors conferred on her an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of her leadership of the reform of the public procurement system. She was also cited in the publication “Heroes of Democracy”, in recognition of her pro-democracy advocacy roles.

Oby is a graduate of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. She holds a Master of Public Policy and Administration, a Master of International Law and Diplomacy, a BSc in business education, and has qualified as a Chartered Accountant after a career in Akintola Williams Deloitte and Touche.

The Process, Focus Areas, Goals and Targets

6. It is possible, from an analysis of available documents and the results of interviews and focus group discussions, to discern elements of a systematic process in prosecuting reforms in the Education sector. The process seems to have followed the line of situation analysis, visioning, rolling out of specific initiatives and legitimizing. It is not easy to place a timeline on these phases. There appears in fact to have been some backward and forward movements in the process as events unfolded, especially as public interest in the reforms became more pronounced.

Phase One: Situation Analysis

7. The situation analysis was described as ‘broad based’ and ‘rapid’. It relied on various sources: internal consultations within the Ministry of Education and its parastatals, an assessment of the skill and knowledge level of staff, existing studies by the Ministry and by international development partners, and consultation with states and local governments. The conclusions were that

8. ‘The education sector is essentially dysfunctional at the federal, state and local government levels, and across public and private schools’ ... ‘the Ministry is ill-equipped to provide leadership for the sector’. ² ... ‘this situation has not occurred overnight and is the result of many years of decline, neglect and mismanagement over several decades...nothing less than major renewal of all systems and institutions is required’.³

9. These conclusions were based on different forms of qualitative and quantitative analyses. Key issues of education sector performance were rated on a scale ranging from zero (non-existent) to 5 (satisfactory). As table two shows, a good number of the issues received low ratings all levels and forms of Education. In addition, access was still a problem, in spite of progress made with UBE - Universal Basic Education. As graphically captured in figure one, only 22.3 million of the 42.1 eligible children are enrolled in primary schools. At the secondary level only 6.4 million of the 24 million

² Ezekwesili, Oby: CRISIS- The State of he Education System and the Agenda for Reform )powerpoint presentation at a stakeholder consultation – October 2, 2006
21

estimated eligible children were in school during the 2005/2006 academic year.

Table Two: Rating of Selected Education Sector Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUES</th>
<th>ECCE</th>
<th>BASIC EDUC.</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
<th>TERTIARY</th>
<th>ADULT AND NON FORMAL</th>
<th>SPECIAL NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLICY</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE/GOVERNANCE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPLOYMENT OF ICT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGULATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALITY OF CURRICULUM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHER QUALITY and SUPPLY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNDING</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUITY ISSUES</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What is perhaps more important is that the situation analysis identified a number of bottlenecks, ‘which are stopping these issues from being addressed and the causes and consequences behind them’ (table three). Attention was drawn to the inter-relationship among the bottlenecks, ‘which implies that no single one of them can be unblocked individually, without addressing all at once.’

4 ibid., page 37
Fig. I: NIGERIA - In school versus out of school populations (in millions): 2005/2006 academic year

Source: Federal Ministry of Education - EMIS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottleneck</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-implementation of vision and</td>
<td>• lack of managerial experience and ability</td>
<td>• no clear definition of objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plans</td>
<td>• inadequate prioritization</td>
<td>• no common ownership of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of adequate systems for monitoring and accountability</td>
<td>• resources not directed to strategic objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of staff capacity</td>
<td>• inadequate action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• inadequate data systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Capacity</td>
<td>• inadequate working environment - poor buildings, facilities etc</td>
<td>• low motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of training</td>
<td>• insufficient quality and quantity of tealet services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• insufficient resources</td>
<td>• staff ill prepared for roles and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• insufficient learning materials</td>
<td>• poor quality of education provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• inadequate curricula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Governance and Management</td>
<td>• lack of community participation</td>
<td>• weak systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of leadership skills</td>
<td>• poor planning and reactive management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• failure to delegate responsibilities to lower levels</td>
<td>• failure to use existing skill base efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective and inefficient allocation of resources</td>
<td>• corruption</td>
<td>• inefficient and ineffective management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• politicization</td>
<td>• frustration and demotivation of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• over-centralization</td>
<td>• failure to make resources available when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• unnecessary bureaucratic controls</td>
<td>• lack of flexibility in the use of funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of management information systems</td>
<td>• inability of institutions to plan effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack of incentives</td>
<td>• low quality of educational provision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Reproduced from the report of the situational analysis study (op.cit.)
| Weak information base | • lack of a planning culture  
  • lack of information systems  
  • lack of staff capacity  
  • lack of technological support | • lack of data on which to base strategy  
  • failure to convert strategy into operations  
  • lack of data on which to base operations  
  • inability to monitor and evaluate performance |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Inequitable opportunities for all | • inequitable treatment of males and females  
  • poverty  
  • social attitudes  
  • cultural differences  
  • religious differences  
  • lack of investment in rural areas  
  • lack of investment in special education needs | • low attendance rate especially for girls  
  • low priority to basic education  
  • under-utilisation of abilities of women  
  • low level of pupil enrolments  
  • high drop-out rate  
  • low level of educational attainment  
  • restricted employment opportunities  
  • examination malpractice  
  • cultism |

**Phase Two: Visioning**

10. That the minister’s chosen pillar for envisioning reforms in the Education sector was the national VISION 2020 document, can be seen in the emergence of an Education-specific 2020 document, which proclaimed that

‘Our Vision is to become an emerging economy model, delivering sound education policy and management for public good. With this vision comes the expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development; as a tool of empowerment for the poor and the socially marginalized groups; as an effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials
of the human resources; and as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies.'

EDUCATION VISION 2020 then goes on to articulate both a sector-wide and sub-sector specific vision focus areas, as summarised in table four. The Education 2020 Vision seems to have informed the development of the reform agenda (table five), which in the words of Madam Minister was intended to ‘restore equilibrium to the Education sector’.

---

6 Crisis (op.cit.)

7 Crisis (op.cit.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTOR WIDE VISION</th>
<th>SUB SECTOR VISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An education system that:</td>
<td>Provide quality early childhood care and education through public / private partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides access to quality education for all regardless of gender, ethnic,</td>
<td>All children aged 5-14 receiving quality basic education from well-qualified and motivated teachers in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social background and geographical location;</td>
<td>schools with good facilities and infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develops the individual into a sound and effective citizen</td>
<td>Increasing access to senior secondary schools providing relevant education that develops the skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifies, develops and responds to individual needs, talents and aspirations;</td>
<td>and aptitudes of individual students and meets the needs of the nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is relevant to the 21st century and the needs of the Nigerian economy;</td>
<td>A tertiary education sector that provides access at degree and sub-degree levels to all students who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefits from, and inculcates the values of technology;</td>
<td>are qualified and wish to benefit, is responsive to the needs of individuals, states and the nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is efficient and effective in its delivery.</td>
<td>and is entrepreneurial in its activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An expanding adult and non-formal education sector providing quality basic and vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in response to a demonstrable need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of quality education for all special needs and physically challenged students without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discrimination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Five: The Education Reform Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY and SECONDARY EDUCATION</th>
<th>TERTIARY EDUCATION</th>
<th>CROSS CUTTING ISSUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment Drive - UBE Campaign</td>
<td>Innovative Enterprise Institutions</td>
<td>Reform and Restructure of the Federal ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Quality Assurance/Minimum Standards</td>
<td>Consolation of tertiary institutions</td>
<td>Harmonisation of ministry and its parastatals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Realignment</td>
<td>Computer ownership initiative</td>
<td>Staff audit in line with service wide public sector reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEP for Girls</td>
<td>Linking public and private sector brains to university faculties</td>
<td>Educational Financing Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking Teacher Availability</td>
<td>Research grant vehicles</td>
<td>Deployment of EMIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination Malpractices</td>
<td>Physical assets condition survey</td>
<td>Realignement of staff cost/capital cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer facilities for secondary schools</td>
<td>Review of course accreditation vehicles</td>
<td>Legislation to embody new amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University Autonomy Act</td>
<td>New national strategy on special needs education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reconstitution of governing councils</td>
<td>New national strategy on adult literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standardisation of procedures for selection of vice chancellors</td>
<td>Presidential forum on Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NYSC*, law school and medical school issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NYSC: National Youth Service Corps – a one-year national service programme for university graduates
Phase Three: Roll Out of Reform Initiatives

11. Rolling out the reform initiatives involved the participation of a team of eleven ‘Transformation Team Leaders’ (TTLs), who were really external consultants charged with leading ‘the Federal Ministry’s response to the current crisis in education’. The TTLs led task teams in eleven broad areas, as follows.

- Education, economy and competitiveness
- Curriculum, instruction and teacher quality
- Reform of the Ministry of Education and parastatals
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Physical Infrastructure
- Standards, accountability and academic assessment
- Examination ethics and campus safety
- Communications strategy
- Equity
- Governance and politics
- Education finance

12. The Federal plan that later emerged is said to have been ‘informed by the deliberations of these task teams’. These deliberations also led to the roll out of the following twenty odd Initiatives

I. Adopt-A-Public School Programme
II. RC -- READ Campaign
III. CATI -- Community Accountability and Transparency Initiative
IV. Public Private Partnership for Unity Schools

---

8 Federal Ministry of Education: 10 Year Strategic Plan (draft 08): 05 March 2007
V. TEC – Tertiary Education Consolidation  
VI. CANI (FME) – Computers for All Nigerians (Education Sector Response)  
VII. Exam ethics and campus safety  
VIII. Exam administration and management  
IX. ORAPS – Operation ‘Reach All Primary Schools’  
X. ORASS – ‘Operation Reach All Secondary Schools’  
XI. Special education strategy  
XII. Vocational Enterprise Innovations (VEl)s and Innovative Enterprise Institutions (IEIs)  
XIII. Ed. Tap -- Education Tracking Assets for Progress  
XIV. National School Mapping  
XV. Federal Ministry of Education and parastatals reform  
XVI. Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP)  
XVII. Housing for All Teachers  
XVIII. Youth Voices in Education  
XIX. Children’s Parliament in Education  
XX. CISCO Academy for re-tooling and re-skilling graduates of higher institutions

13. The list of initiatives reads like a tall order indeed. They can easily be categorised as follows:
   - Sensitisation/popularisation, building society ownership (1, 3, 4, 18, 19)
   - Structural/functional/administrative reforms (12, 15)
   - Teacher development and motivation (16 and 17)
   - Quality (2, 6, 9, 10, 20)
   - Efficiency (11, 18)
   - Higher Education (5)

There does not seem to be any direct correspondence between what was rolled out and what was projected in the reform agenda presented in table five, which in itself is a direct emanation of the situation analysis phase.

14. The roll out phase represented the actual implementation and heightened public scrutiny moment of the reform process. There is every indication that increasing public interest prompted an acceleration of the legitimization phase, which then elicited more intense public interest.

Phase Four: Legitimization

15. By the first quarter of 2007, public interest in the education sector reforms had attained fever heat and had become a subject of incisive
discussions among all classes of Nigerians. That period also witnessed intensive activities by the Minister of Education, and these entailed (a) more intensive consultations with the States, (b) the Minister’s use of every possible opportunity to clarify issues relating to the reforms, (c) the organisation of a presidential retreat on the subject, (d) the drafting of a 10-year plan, and (e) the drafting of an education reform bill.

16. Consultations with the States involved formal presentation of the initiatives at special sessions of the Joint Consultative Committee on Education – JCC - (the professional group clearing house on government education initiatives) and the National Council on Education – NCE – the ultimate collective policy coordination body on Education. Most of these meetings (the latest of which was held two weeks before the Minister left Nigeria for an international assignment, devoted several hours on an agenda item titled ‘progress on the FME (Federal Ministry Of Education) reform agenda’

17. While representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education saw such meetings as ‘carrying the States along’ and blaming the states for slowing down the pace of reforms, most state representatives had their distinct positions. From their point of view what happened was not involvement, but something between consultations and information. These terms were described in the following words:
- Involvement - being part of the process right from the initiation/conceptualization phase, and at every phase thereafter
- Consultations - being shown a near-finished product for one’s input, an input that might or might not count
- Information - being informed that aspects of the reforms had been well packaged and that these would have to be implemented both at the federal and state levels.

18. The States also maintained that some of the initiatives fell within their own constitutional mandates, areas that were not the concerns of the Federal government. An often cited example is the ‘adopt a school project, launched in Lagos early in 2007. It was felt that, as desirable as public-private partnership may be to solving the problems faced by schools, the schools belonged to the States and therefore any intended partnerships arrangements should have been with state governments.

19. The Minister’s attempts at clarifying specific reform issues (and vigorously defending them) with stakeholders focused mainly on the problems of Unity Schools and consolidation of universities. The problems of Unity Schools, as articulated in the education sector analysis study of the Ministry are highlighted in box three. The Ministry sees Unity schools as an
anachronism’ and therefore calls for ‘new management and governance’ modalities for them, in the form of p-p-p (public-private partnerships)

Box Five: Unity Schools

The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for the funding and management of 102 unity schools. This is a historical legacy from a time when it was considered important to create such schools as exemplars of national unity. While these schools have a proud history, they are no longer fulfilling the purposes for which they were founded. In fact, given that the Constitution gives clear responsibility for the delivery of education to the States, Unity Schools are an anachronism which deflects the Federal Ministry from its primary responsibilities, which are curriculum, standards, tertiary education and policy and planning. As it is, they consume a disproportionate percentage of the Ministry’s funding. Pupils in unity schools represent 1.88% of total pupils in secondary schools, but over 80% of the Federal Ministry’s budget and 85% of the Ministry’s staff resources are being spent on the management of the unity schools. Of some 23,000 staff in these schools only 6,000 are teachers. There is a clear need to consider alternative modalities for managing and running these schools which do not directly involve the FME. This could in fact be a valuable opportunity to trial new management and governance modalities, which if successful might be applied more widely (SOURCE: FME Situation Analysis, page 34)

20. P-P-P does not however seem to have gone down well with Nigerian stakeholders. The Minister herself admitted this in a widely published presentation on 19 October 2006, the essentials of which are summarised in table six below. She finally defined P-P-P as ‘a model for restoring efficient management of schools for improved academic achievement and for the FME to focus on its role as the nationwide policy maker and regulatory organ’...the features of which would be ‘Government funded, non commercial basis, co governance for benefit of stakeholders partnerships, and accountability through monitoring and evaluation’.
Table Six: Three Broad Categories of Complaints on the PPP Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category One - genuine Concerns of the Public</th>
<th>Category Two - Mischevious Propaganda</th>
<th>Category Three - Communication Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job security as a general and Union issue</td>
<td>That the Ministry is going ahead with the reform without consultations</td>
<td>The following are the communication issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to quality education for the poor</td>
<td>That the schools have been penned down to be sold to specific special interest groups</td>
<td>What is public/private partnership in educational reform?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform interpreted to mean that the role of the schools as national integrators will be destroyed</td>
<td>That there is lack of integrity &amp; transparency in the reform process</td>
<td>Why is Government privatizing social service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear that the raising of standards in these schools cannot be achieved without charging high fees thereby turning the schools into elite institutions for the rich &amp; powerful</td>
<td>That the reform is an imposition on the country by global institutions like the IMF and World Bank &amp; therefore the issue is an ideological warfare between the socialists and Neo-liberals. (This is The conspiracy theory.)</td>
<td>What are the specificities of the Ministry's plans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That the Ministry is deliberately distorting data to achieve predetermined objectives</td>
<td>Doesn't the term business model for running schools bring to fore the issue of market forces, appropriate pricing, downsizing and their blood relations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Isn't there going to be mass sacking in the schools and won't the new owners just hire &amp; fire?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Why does the Government want to sell Unity Schools?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. The above table does very little to disprove the doubts in the minds of stakeholders, except to redefine PPP as ‘co-governance’. It is not clear if this also implies co-financing. Communication is seen as an issue, but it was not clear that the Minister’s defence of the initiative ever resolved this.

22. The higher education sector in Nigeria is made up of universities (federal/state governments and private), polytechnics (technological and business non-university institutions, colleges of education (for non-graduate level teacher education, and ‘monotechnics’ – specialist professional institutions teaching courses in one single specialty – Nursing and Midwifery, Forestry, Fisheries, etc). Higher education consolidation – as a reform initiative - involved the progressive conversion of polytechnics and colleges of education into universities. The former would become faculties of technology of proximate universities, except for Yaba – in Lagos - and Kaduna (the nation’s leading polytechnics) that were to become universities almost immediately. The latter were to become ‘campuses of proximate and contiguous universities’.

23. Again, the announcement landed on the Nigerian public like a bomb. There was hardly a voice in its favour. Arguments ranged from the need to put a stop to the proliferation of universities to the need to avoid acting in a hurry. Stakeholders in the polytechnics and colleges of education, particularly the academic and technical staff, complained of not being consulted. They also felt that the States could have been carried along, and that reforms should not be a matter of ‘you the states follow the examples of the federal government’. The situation here is that there was hardly any debate on the issue and so there was not the usual ‘for-and-against’ divide that is usually seen in public discussions on a matter of great national interest.

24. the most forceful effort at legitimizing the reform initiatives was the Presidential Retreat held early in October 2006. According to a newspaper report,

‘The meeting, convened by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) held for two days at the Banquet Hall of the Presidential Villa, Abuja, and had in attendance members of the National Assembly, ministers and commissioners of education at both the federal and state levels, permanent secretaries, heads of multilateral agencies and other development partners, Non-Governmental Organisations
(NGOs), heads and officials of the parastatals in the Federal Ministry of Education and teachers.

The national workshop approved the draft Education Sector Bill and the 2006 to 2015 Federal Education Strategic Plan, which outlines the policies, strategies and targets designed to respond to the urgent needs of the sector in the next ten years.

The new draft bill encompasses all the reforms under implementation in the education sector.”

Most of our respondents saw the Presidential Retreat as a ‘summit without a base’. The general feeling was that grassroots consultations that would have preceded the retreat were not as broad-based as they ought to have been. For this reason, the entire reform was seen as more of an imposition.

25. The ultimate steps in the legitimization process were the drafting of a 10-year federal education plan (see box 6) and the submission of a draft reform bill to the National Assembly in the first quarter of 2007.

---

**Box Six: The 10 Year Federal Education Plan: (2006 – 2015)**

- The draft Federal 10 Year Plan was derived through consensus building processes, involving the Management of the Ministry, the regulatory parastatals and contributions of various stakeholders

- As a working tool, it includes policy options, the hierarchy of objectives, key actions and institutional arrangements for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- The projected costing provides an expenditure framework to guide budgeting and plan implementation thereby serving as a reference point for action within the education system,

- It is designed to be flexible to allow for simulation of policy options, adjustments to address emergent needs/issues or new developments during the course of implementation;

---

9 The Guardian 12 October 2007
The Plan is still in the process of development and all states are requested to develop their 10 year strategic plan for effective service delivery. We should also endeavour to have a framework that is compatible with and in synergy with the Federal Plan ease in development of a national plan.

(Courtesy: Federal Ministry of Education)

26. Public opinion wondered if the plan could not have been the starting point of the reform. Questions are also being raised as to why State’s plans could not have been developed alongside the federal plan, instead of the states being called upon to run after the federal plan. A third set of questions deal with the nature of the consensus building processes employed in developing the plan. Public comments seem to point to ‘controversy-rousing’, rather than consensus building.
ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT OF THE INITIATIVES

Major Achievements

1. Table seven presents an education sector reform scorecard based on a summary of evidence from oral and documentary sources as at the end of May 2007, the moment of change of administration (from Obasanjo to Yar’Adua) in the country. In the score card, the initiatives are rated from 1 (project still on paper), through 2 (project formally launched, but yet to take of formally, 3 (project formally launched and taken off, but with doubtful prospect of continuing), to 4 (launched, taken off, being built into the system).

2. Of the twenty reform initiatives, four are still at the level of ‘grand ideas’ with a rating of 1, eleven have been formally launched (with a rating of 2) and are raising critical dust among stakeholders, two have formally taken off (i.e., gone beyond mere lunching), with a rating of 3. Only three of the reform initiatives appear to have landed on some form of solid ground, though their sustainability would still depend on the extent to which the states accept them and build them into their normal operations. This is particularly applicable to ORAPS and ORASS, which should constitutionally become the role of the proprietors of the schools – the state governments. The teacher upgrading programme is the single initiative that has taken genuine root, and this could be because it pre-dated the intensive reform era of 2006-2007 and so had a relatively long conception-gestation period.

3. Two other achievements should be recognized as features of the reform score card – the 10-year education plan and the draft education reform bill. Both of them can at best be described as ‘works in progress’ as well as ‘something one can work with’. On the Bill, we are told that

   A Cabinet Committee headed by the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice was set-up by Mr. President to work on an Education Sector Reform Bill that will underpin the reform.

4. It will however still have to follow normal parliamentary channels and processes – formal presentation, first/second/third readings, public hearing, detailed examination by legislative committees of the national Assembly, final resolution, with amendments, by each chamber, harmonization of positions between the Senate and the
House of Representatives, signing into law by the President. Since Education is a politically charged subject, the fate of the draft bill cannot be readily predicted.

5. The 10-year education plan has gone into several drafts, but the general feeling in the country is that it has not been subjected to intensive national debates. A serious question is also being raised as to the justification for requiring the states to ‘key into’ the federal plan, with strong voices suggesting the reverse approach of the national plan being simply an aggregate of all state plans. Above every other consideration, the draft reform bill and the draft plan are both expected to incorporate the ‘recent reforms’. These reforms are themselves being subjected to serious questioning by the citizenry. It therefore becomes problematic to justify an education plan and reform package that embodies and legitimizes them.

Table Seven: State of the Reform Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIATIVE</th>
<th>STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adopt-A-Public School Programme</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘It is an initiative, where all stakeholders in education come together as partners to rescue our public schools and restore them back to their old glory and thus catalyze Nigeria into a model emerging economy by 31st December 2020’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formally launched in Lagos early 2007, with some enthusiasm from a number of private companies, but also with queries from state governments, who feel they (as owners of the schools) should have been at the forefront of the initiative. The launch has also not been followed up in any meaningful sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RC -- READ Campaign</td>
<td>Formally launched, but continuity/sustainability have been the major issues, even though public opinion says poor reading habit is a national problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CATI -- Community Accountability and Transparency Initiative</td>
<td>Formally launched, but doubts subsist on its continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public Private Partnership for Unity Schools</td>
<td>Formally launched, bidding already taken place, with some enthusiasm from private school proprietors and old students of these institutions, but initiative plagued by public outcry against the ‘sale’ of these ‘national assets’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>TEC – Tertiary Education Consolidation</td>
<td>Publicly announced, with resistance from the direct stakeholders, who feel that the matter could have been approached in a different manner. Implementation un-officially halted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CANI (FME) – Computers for All Nigerians (Education Sector Response)</td>
<td>A national initiative that has not gone too far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exam ethics and campus safety</td>
<td>Launched officially and seems well received, as it deals with an issue of great national concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Examination administration and management</td>
<td>Still on paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ORAPS -- Operation ‘Reach All Primary Schools’*</td>
<td>‘21,000 ORAPS Inspectors will inspect over 75,000 Primary schools Nationwide. Primary schools were actually ‘reached’ and the inspection provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Initiative Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><strong>ORASS</strong> – ‘Operation Reach All Secondary Schools’*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td><strong>Special education strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td><strong>Vocational Enterprise Innovations (VEIs) and Innovative Enterprise Institutions (IEIs)</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><strong>Ed. Tap -- Education Tracking Assets for Progress</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td><strong>National School Mapping</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td><strong>Federal Ministry of Education and parastatals reform</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td><strong>Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP)</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td><strong>Housing for All Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 10. | 11,000 ORASS Inspectors visited approximately 14,543 schools Nationwide  
**‘We have for the first time vital data and reports on all secondary schools/states, that enable comparative analysis of education at the State level’**. |
| 11. | Policy directions prepared for an area previously neglected, incorporated into the draft education bill. |
| 12. | Students that just completed junior secondary school (JSS) and are interested in pursuing a vocational course that will give them the requisite skills to operate in the labour market.  
People with a strong desire to use their hands. |
| 13. | Initiative launched with a ‘desk’ in the Ministry, but states are wondering if this should be a federal function. |
| 15. | Elaborate re-structuring that has created personnel-related problems and which does not seem to have entailed reform of processes and operational modalities. |
| 16. | Initiative inherited from a former minister and embraced by state governments, and has also gone into its second year of operation. |
| 17. | Still a statement of intent |
5. An initiative that deserves special attention and comment (one that would have been the anchor of the entire reform process) is restructuring of the Federal Ministry of Education and its parastatals, item 15 on table seven). The restructuring was justified in public statements by the Minister on the need to correct the ‘burning platform’ highlighted in box seven, to enhance

- Efficient bureaucracy for education planning policy articulation,
- Sound Education Policy and management delivery
- Proper alignment of competencies and skills

**Box Seven: THE BURNING PLATFORM**

- The Ministry of Education is responsible for defining policies, regulating procedures and setting and maintaining standards of education in the country
- The FME parastatals are charged with implementation of defined policy statements and derive its mandates from the Ministry’s intent.
- However, the situation was different. What existed was a situation where the parastatals dictated and determined lines of action for the Ministry.
- Apart from the issues of role reversal,
  - Span was control was overwhelming with supervisory responsibility over 21 Parastatals.
  - Overwhelming issues of duplication of functions
– Operational inefficiencies with how they were managed.
– Several of them constituted “Brand Hazard” for the Ministry.

6. The restructuring involved collapsing the following eight departments and seven units into the structure reproduced as figure two.

**Service Departments**
1. Administration Department
2. Finance and Account Department
3. Planning Research and Statistics Department

**Professional Departments:**
4. Department of Primary and Secondary Education
5. Department of Higher Education
6. Technology and Science Education Department
7. Education Support Services Department
8. Federal Inspectorate Services Department

**Units**
1. Federal Audit Unit
2. Internal Audit Unit (IAU)
3. Legal Unit
4. Stock Verification Unit
5. Press Unit
6. SERVICOM (service contract with Nigerians) Unit
7. Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Programme (HGSFHP)
7. The new structure is in place, but has created a number of problems. First, there has been a ‘down-sizing’ of staff, and this has become the most perceptible ill-effect of the reform from the point of view of a majority of stakeholders. Second, it has created ill feelings among staff members who feel that they were not carried along in the restructuring exercise and who readily point to analytical flaws in the study of staff profile that came before the assignment of staff to specific positions. Third, one readily observes while working in the Ministry of Education that reforms in structures did not go along with reforms in processes and systems. People seem to be thinking and acting the same old way, thus reinforcing the low productivity syndrome that informed the restructuring.

8. The proliferation of parastatals, a phenomenon that developed in the Nigerian system during the years of military rule, has been a source of concern to education sector actors in Nigeria. That this situation creates enormous conflicts of authority and increases transaction costs has been documented by a number of studies, particularly by the World Bank\(^1\). The reform under discussion and in fact any other reform initiative, can therefore not avoid addressing the issue - a process

---

which resulted in a ‘consolidation’ of the 21 existing education sector parastatals to the pattern reproduced in figure three.

**Fig. III: NEWLY CONSOLIDATED PARASTATALS**

9. Stakeholders have taken issues with the ‘consolidation’ of parastatals. First, it is felt that the minister’s technical team had very little understanding of the origins, evolution and functions of the parastatals and for this reason their advice produced not a viable solution but a new patch work that is likely to complicate an already complex education delivery mechanism. This misunderstanding, it is felt, has led to a mismatch of institutions, like the merger of the federal inspectorate services with Universal Basic Education Commission. Second, there seems to be a continuation of the old ‘proliferation syndrome’ with the creation of new commissions for special education and a national examinations regulatory council. In short, the ‘consolidation’ envisaged by the reforms can simply not be realized, and this is blamed on an over-reliance on external advisers.

**Impact of the Reform Initiatives**

10. The impact of the reform initiatives can be felt in three distinct areas: the Nigerian society as a whole, the Federal Ministry of Education, and the education system. For the society at large, the
reform initiatives had the effect of getting everyone talking about Education. For long, Nigerians had spoken of the ‘rot in the education sector’, the ‘fallen standards of education’, and the ‘non-performing education system’. A call for reform has been made for over a decade, and there was some form of reform in place by the time Madam Minister alerted the nation to a CRISIS in 2006. The alert did however heighten public interest in the challenge. Discussions on the ‘rot’ have intensified ever since.

12. The intensified public debate generated by the reforms can best be described as one-sided. What has emerged as consensus is that reforms are desirable and are urgently needed. At the same time, people have questioned the methodology of reforms, especially the absence of broad based policy dialogues. It is generally felt that broadening the base of consultations could have also broadened choices for veritable reforms. Concerns for sustainability have also featured in the public debates. People see too much of a rush to launch new initiatives before in depth studies had been carried out, and most especially doing this ‘in the dying days of the Obasanjo administration’.

13. A number of former ministers of education advised on the need to thread cautiously and wanted the Minister to concentrate on issues over which she had direct constitutional control, like internal re-organization of the Ministry. This should have excluded the parastatals for the time being, since there were legislative laws governing their establishment and functions. The point echoes public concern on the sheer number of initiatives and the perceived high costs of ‘rolling them out’. There was also a concern about the reforms merely unsettling the system, as captured in the exclamation of a former federal minister of education, who described Madam Minister as a ‘bull in a china shop’.

14. The ‘cost of rolling out the reforms’ has remained a recurrent issue of public concern. It is felt that the cost-benefit effect of maintaining eleven TILs (transformation team leaders), supported by external assistance cannot be easily seen. That each ‘roll out’ (operation-adopt-a school is the often cited example) took the form of an ‘expensive jamboree’ has raised doubts as to whether funds could not have been directed elsewhere.

14. The impact on the Ministry of Education can best be described as traumatic. For the staff, some were ‘monetized’ (meaning that their positions were abolished, and the staff entitled to their services had to
receive monetary payments in lieu). This affected mostly drivers and domestic staff of senior officials. Some positions were ‘outsourced’, meaning that external service providers had to take over their activities. This affected the services of cleaners, security guards and non-teaching staff of educational institutions. A third group was retired for a variety of reasons. This was made up mainly junior cadre workers, referred to as ‘officers on grade levels 01 to 06’. A fourth category of officers of different cadres were ‘sent back’ to the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation for re-assignment.

15. All the four categories of ‘affected officers’ feel that the Ministry of Education was too drastic in handling their disengagement from the civil service - by not adopting a phased approach - as they claimed was done in other federal ministries, that there were no consultations or negotiations with the staff associations, that retirement benefits were not paid months after disengagement from service. Principals of federal government secondary institutions claimed that the ‘right-sizing’ process failed to take cognizance of the special needs of their institutions. Laboratory assistants, for example, were disengaged at a time when external examinations were in progress, a time during which their services were most needed for practical examinations in science. Respondents saw incidences of ‘skills waste’ in the ‘send-back’ exercise. Most of the affected staff has remained floating and idle, while receiving their regular pay. Most of them also complained of the trauma of waking up to see (or to be told by colleagues who had visited notice boards) their names displayed for immediate ‘send-back’ to the office of the head of service.

16. Most of the professional staff were in support of the restructuring of the Federal Ministry of Education but also expressed serious reservations on the manner in which it was carried out. In their view,

1. Consultations were limited to ‘management staff’ and the emerging ideas hardly filtered down to other categories of staff.
2. The assessment of staff skills profiles was undertaken by ‘outsiders’ who cared little for the peculiarities of the public services and of the professional specialties of the education sector.
3. The interview methodology for assessing skills profile was of the type that merely instilled fear on the respondents.

---

10 Nigerian civil service positions are classified GL (grade levels) 1-6 (junior), 8-14 (senior), 15-17 (directorate), and yet an exclusive grade for permanent secretaries (i.e. heads of ministries and extra-ministerial departments) and chief executives of parastatals.
4. There were no rational justifications for re-assigning staff to the new departments and divisions in the revised structure of the Ministry.

5. Competence did not seem to have been taken into consideration, as there were questionable cases of elevation of some staff, as well as questionable cases of sidelining or outright removal of others.

16. Within the ‘consolidated’ parastatals the effects can be summarized as follows:

1. ‘It’s not going to work’ expressing a feeling that the entire process was ill conceived, representing a standpoint that more in depth thinking would have been necessary.

2. ‘My institution is better left untouched’, expressing internal resistance to new regroupings, a point of view loudly proclaimed by NIEPA (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration).

3. ‘Strange bedfellows’, expressing the view that the reformers did not really know the functions of each parastatal, a point repeatedly made with reference to the proposed merger of the federal inspectorate services with the Universal Basic Education Commission.

4. ‘Why the hurry?’ representing the view that the consolidation of parastatals should not be an issue in the face of more compelling challenges.

5. ‘Messing up the system’, a point of view that queries the need for brand new institutions (e.g. an examinations regulatory agency), while the emphasis is supposed to be on consolidation.

In short, there is a general feeling that consolidation would for now remain mere proposals until the issue is fully revisited.

17. The impact of the reform initiatives on the system has been a combination of fear, confusion and anxiety. Activities were said to have become stalled in ‘unity schools’ as parents and teachers ponder on the likely and unlikely fates of these institutions. This was also reported to be the case in the Federal Ministry of Education, where staff members seemed to be playing a ‘wait and see’ game, outwardly being obedient civil servants while inwardly resisting current changes. The overall situation seemed to be one in which there have been intensified efforts to legitimize the reforms through official ‘roll out’ and pronouncements (which have ceased practically since May 2007). It is also one in which the public has been reawakened to the crisis in the education sector and the need for reforms. The consensus of stakeholder opinion (also shared by some actors on the government side) can be summarized thus:

Yes, we support reforms.
But, we must reform this particular reform.
The implication of this is that, desirable as the reforms in the education sector might have been, the process appeared to have been flawed. Therefore, for the reform to continue and to be sustainable, it would have to be managed differently.
THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT ANGLE

1. Change management is simply a systematic process of
   - analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the prevailing operational conditions of an organization, with special emphasis on its continued capacity to execute its mandate efficiently and effectively (situational analysis)
   - charting a broad road map for the direction of transformational improvement, involving strategic decisions on goals, targets, strategic options, strategic actors, and time line (planning)
   - putting appropriate structures, systems and mechanisms in place and mobilizing personnel, technical and financial resources to ensure smooth implementation (institutional/technical support framework)
   - getting things done, following agreed strategies, processes and plans (execution/implementation)
   - continuously following the process of implementation in relation to the goals of the intended transformational improvement, and more particularly turning the entire process into a learning activity in which field experiences help to inform future directions of execution of the desired changes (monitoring/evaluation)

2. Change, defined as transformational improvement, is expected to be profound and not simply cosmetic. It is also expected to be strategic (in that it should really propel result-oriented positive action). It must also have systemic implications, in that it should strongly impact on related structures and processes. To illustrate, the replacement of a Minister of Education would qualify as ‘change’ if it also results in ‘moving the ministry forward’ as a result of improved service delivery and more particularly if the replacement leads to qualitative improvement on the performance of both the Ministry and the entire education system. When, however, a change of actors does not have a system-wide positive impact, it becomes a mere transactional (routine) change of guards.

3. To what extent does the Nigerian experience in education sector reform qualify as ‘Change’ in the transformational sense? The answers would lie in the way the process has approximated the set of transformation criteria just highlighted. Available evidence indicates that in terms of conceptualization (the ground work that led to the development of the reforms) there was some indication of an intention to initiate profound change that could impact positively, not simply on a tiny element in the education sector, but on the sector as a whole. This is
evident in the situational analysis that was done, an activity that led to the declaration of a CRISIS. The problem seems to lie with what followed – the planning and the execution, and the institutional framework support for the reforms. The extent to which the methodology at that level was virtually faulted can be seen from a close study of the basic principles of change management summarised in box eight below.

**Box Eight: CHANGE MANAGEMENT QUOTES**

1. Change management entails thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation, and above all, consultation with, and involvement of, the people affected by the changes.
2. Do not sell change to people as a way of accelerating ‘agreement’ and implementation. ‘Selling’ change to people is not a sustainable strategy for success.
3. Instead, change needs to be understood and managed in a way that people can cope effectively with it. Change can be unsettling, so the manager logically needs to be a settling influence.
4. Check that people affected by the change agree with, or at least understand, the need for change, and have a chance to decide how the change will be managed, and to be involved in the planning and implementation of the change.
5. Quick change prevents proper consultation and involvement, which leads to difficulties that take time to resolve.
6. Be wary of expressions like ‘mindset change’, and ‘changing people’s mindsets’ or ‘changing attitudes’, because this language often indicates a tendency towards imposed or enforced change and it implies strongly that the organization believes that its people currently have the ‘wrong’ mindset, which is never, ever, the case. If people are not approaching their tasks or the organization effectively, then the organization has the wrong mindset, not the people.
7. You cannot impose change - people and teams need to be empowered to find their own solutions and responses, with facilitation and support from managers, and tolerance and compassion from the leaders and executives.
8. **Address the “human side” systematically.** Any significant transformation creates “people issues.” New leaders will be asked to step up, jobs will be changed, new skills and capabilities must be developed, and employees will be uncertain and resistant. Dealing with these issues on a reactive, case-by-case basis puts speed, morale, and results at risk.
9. **Start at the top.** Because change is inherently unsettling for people at all levels of an organization, when it is on the horizon, all eyes will turn to the CEO and the leadership team for strength, support, and direction. The leaders themselves must embrace the new approaches first, both to challenge and to motivate the rest of the institution.

10. **Involve every layer.** As transformation programs progress from defining strategy and setting targets to design and implementation, they affect different levels of the organization. Change efforts must include plans for identifying leaders throughout the company and pushing responsibility for design and implementation down, so that change “cascades” through the organization.

11. **Communicate the message.** Too often, change leaders make the mistake of believing that others understand the issues, feel the need to change, and see the new direction as clearly as they do. The best change programs reinforce core messages through regular, timely advice that is both inspirational and practicable. Communications flow in from the bottom and out from the top, and are targeted to provide employees the right information at the right time and to solicit their input and feedback.

12. **Assess the cultural landscape.** Successful change programs pick up speed and intensity as they cascade down, making it critically important that leaders understand and account for culture and behaviours at each level of the organization. Companies often make the mistake of assessing culture either too late or not at all. Thorough cultural diagnostics can assess organizational readiness to change, bring major problems to the surface, identify conflicts, and define factors that can recognize and influence sources of leadership and resistance.

13. These diagnostics identify the core values, beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions that must be taken into account for successful change to occur. They serve as the common baseline for designing essential change elements, such as the new corporate vision, and building the infrastructure and programs needed to drive change.

14. **Address culture explicitly.** Once the culture is understood, it should be addressed as thoroughly as any other area in a change program. Leaders should be explicit about the culture and underlying behaviors that will best support the new way of doing business, and find opportunities to model and reward those behaviors. This requires developing a baseline, defining an explicit end-state or desired culture, and devising detailed plans to make the transition.
15. Organizational culture is an amalgam of shared history, explicit values and beliefs, and common attitudes and behaviors. Change programs can involve creating a new culture.

16. **Prepare for the unexpected.** No change program goes completely according to plan. People react in unexpected ways; areas of anticipated resistance fall away; and the external environment shifts. Effectively managing change requires continual reassessment of its impact and the organization’s willingness and ability to adopt the next wave of transformation. Fed by real data from the field and supported by information and solid decision-making processes, change leaders can then make the adjustments necessary to maintain momentum and drive results.

17. **Speak to the individual.** Change is both an institutional journey and a very personal one. People spend many hours each week at work; many think of their colleagues as a second family. Individuals (or teams of individuals) need to know how their work will change, what is expected of them during and after the change program, how they will be measured, and what success or failure will mean for them and those around them. Team leaders should be as honest and explicit as possible. People will react to what they see and hear around them, and need to be involved in the change process.

18. Most leaders contemplating change know that people matter. It is all too tempting, however, to dwell on the plans and processes, which don’t talk back and don’t respond emotionally, rather than face up to the more difficult and more critical human issues. But mastering the “soft” side of change management needn’t be a mystery.

19. Management and leadership style and behaviour are more important than clever process and policy.

(Sources: [www.businessballs.com](http://www.businessballs.com) and [www.strategy-business.com](http://www.strategy-business.com))

4. The essential theme of change management theory is captured in the first, the 5th, the 12th, and the last items of box eight:
   - Change management entails thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation, and above all, consultation with, and involvement of, the people to be affected by the changes.
   - Quick change prevents proper consultation and involvement, which leads to difficulties that take time to resolve.
- **Assess the cultural landscape.** Successful change programs pick up speed and intensity as they cascade down, making it critically important that leaders understand and account for culture and behaviours at each level of the organization.
- Management and leadership style and behaviour are more important than clever process and policy.

5. These quotes imply that sustained policy dialogues and participatory planning make change implementation easier, that sustainable change cannot be effected in a hurry, that a deep understanding of the cultural environment does matter, and the question to ask is not ‘how beautiful’ (rationally/scientifically well prepared) is the change project, but ‘how well it is managed’. Evidence from the Nigerian case suggests that a beautiful grand idea was generated, but its articulation was flawed by its fast pace, its limited range of consultations, while its implementation was characterized by inappropriate management and leadership style. Therefore, when our respondents proclaim ‘we are in favour of reforms, but we question ‘the’ reform,’ they are saying, indirectly, that ‘the policy and process was ‘clever’ but this would have been accompanied by another form of ‘leadership and management style’.

6. In plain language, what the Nigerian experience in education sector reform lacked was an appropriate change management strategy. The very idea of reform seems a welcome one among stakeholders; but they would have liked a reform processes that adequately addresses change management appropriate to the Nigerian environment. The respondents did in fact provide guidelines to the emergence of an appropriate change management strategy in their suggestions for ‘reforming the reforms’, as outlined in the following section.
CONCLUSIONS: REFORMING THE REFORMS

1. Suggestions on what could have made the reform process work (ideas that should be taken into consideration in ‘reforming the reforms’) were elicited from stakeholders and these fall into the following six distinct and inter-related categories

A. Taking due account of the work already on ground

2. Reforms were said to have been initiated within the Federal Ministry of Education by the immediate predecessors of Obiageli Ezekwesili, but these were said to have been completely dumped when she became minister in 2006. There are of course two sides to this story. While senior officials of the ministry maintain that the Ezekwesili reforms were an acceleration of what was already on ground, the bulk of ministry-based respondents was of the view that whatever was on ground was simply shoved aside. The balance of evidence seems to have been however that there was a situation analysis that took ‘existing studies’ into account. What was not made explicit was the extent to which the new initiatives represented an improvement on any old ones. There is also evidence of a document that described the ministry structure, achievements and challenges but which stopped short of specifying the directions of actions to address those challenges.

B. Fully aligning education sector reforms with reforms in other sectors

3. The main suggestions here was that reforms in other sectors (government had listed five ‘core ministries’ for reform) had a human face, meaning that they had no adverse effect on personnel. It was also said that the reforms in these other ministries did not destroy their core functions, meaning that the professional departments became strengthened as a result of reforms, while reforms in the Ministry of Education were alleged to ministry were alleged to have been weakened its professional execution capacity.

4. Again, there are two sides to the story. The transformation team leaders maintained that the restructuring of the ministry of education was in conformity with official, overall guidelines for public sector reforms. They however admitted that ‘mistakes may have been made but that the restructuring has resulted in ‘streamlining’ and in ‘putting round pegs in round holes’. The staff associations, on the other hand, did not see any
clear rationale for moving people around, even though they support the 'idea' (as against the practical implementation) of restructuring.

5. A recurrent complaint among professional staff was against downsizing, with such expressions as 'we were nine before and we are now only two'. Questions relating to whether reduction in staff strength necessary led to a drop in efficiency were however not answered. It could be that the need for change was not fully understood, that staff failed to see any positive side of reduced staff strength, especially as this was not accompanied by any change in methods of work.

C. Involving the real people and showing some trust in them

6. The use of 'transformation team leaders' was not favourably perceived by most stakeholders. They were seen as 'arrogant'. They were alleged to have 'by-passed those who mattered' and striving to 'perpetuate their stay in and rule of the ministry'. They were also seen as not being familiar with the field of education and of national bureaucratic practices.

7. The Minister was also alleged to have a deep-seated contempt for civil servants and hardly engaged them in genuine dialogue. Meetings with her were said to be 'a long series of monologues' in the course of which directive (as opposed to persuasive) language was the vogue.

8. Again this story has several sides to it. The NGOs interviewed maintain that they were carried along and that they did make some input into all committee work. The transformation team leaders have evidence of modifications (example, the consolidation of parastatals) to original ideas by the Ministry as a result of critique by stakeholders. There was a working session with local government authorities at some point, according to the Ministry’s records. This is believed to be the first time ever direct contact between the Federal Ministry of Education and local education authorities.

D. Diplomacy and discretion in communicating with stakeholders

9. Evidence abounds of 'interactive sessions' with stakeholders in the course of the reforms, for example, the Minister is known to have outlined her 'reform vision' to the entire staff at the beginning of the process. She is also known to have used the occasion of every formal meeting of groups concerned with education to articulate the reforms. The question however is the extent to which these opportunities with stakeholders (including her working sessions with state and local governments) were perceived as opportunities for dialogues and frank exchanges by her
interlocutors. While the two-sides-of-a-story paradigm also applies here, there seems to be overwhelming evidence that most interlocutors saw the interactive sessions as announcements of already fixed policies, rather than as policies in the making requiring stakeholder input. This is the main reason for the suggestions by our respondents that a change of language (with ‘enhanced diplomatic tones’) would have led to more stakeholders ‘buying-into’ the reforms.

**E. Taking due account of public service culture**

10. Respondents, particularly the staff associations and the management staff of the Federal Ministry of Education, were of the view that ‘the private sector cannot be the civil service’. This is a way of saying that strategies that work in the profit-oriented private sector may not necessarily work in the political-service-oriented civil service. In other words, if some attention had been devoted to studying the culture of the civil service and addressing it directly (in the language of change management), communicating the reforms – and mobilising support for them – could have been easier.

**F. Being strategic and selective**

11. Most commentators on the reforms saw the Minister as doing too many things at one and the same time, pursuing every one of them with equal vigour and speed. They accordingly feel that going in full force after a long wish list of reforms was already a threat to sustainability, that strategic choices ought to have been made, focussing a couple of key challenge areas that would have been more easily manageable, and which would have had direct and indirect positive impact on all other reform areas.

12. The commentators have accordingly suggested a ‘reform of the reform’ that would have concentrated on restructuring the Ministry and consolidating its parastatals. It is felt that restructuring could in itself have been carefully structured to follow the path of intensely participative situation analysis, leading to consensus on the need and direction for reform action, with a full awareness of the possible impact of reform on all actors. In doing this, the emphasis on repositioning the Ministry to deliver its mandate (within the overall context of VISION 2020 and NEEDS) should always be made apparent.

**G. Avoiding Excessive Speed**

13. The Minister had a presidential mandate to act fast. The CRISIS in the education sector had been a source of national concern for sometime.
The Minister therefore had no excuse to waste time. Moreover, the Minister’s antecedents as ‘Madam Due Process’ in the Presidency and as sticker for transparency in the solid minerals sector qualified her to tackle headlong the needed reforms in the education sector. The education reform mandate however required TIME - for understanding the dynamics of the prevailing crisis, for charting a viable and sustainable reform course, for building national consensus around the needed reform, and for fully involving the ‘real people’ in the reforms.

14. Speed was probably necessary in the Nigerian case, but the reform seemed to have crossed the thin boundary between this and over-speeding. In managing change the determinant of over-speeding is not the physical distance to be covered but the social and political dynamics of carrying the stakeholders along.

H. External Assistance not Driving the Process

15. Even though the entire technical assistance/donor community was aware of the reforms, and took an interest in the process, only two agencies (UNICEF and the British Department for International Development – DfID) were known to have gone beyond the exchange of documents and courtesy calls on Madam Minister. It was impossible to obtain information on type, form and level of UNICEF’s involvement. DfID graciously granted an interview on its own involvement, which took the form of the provision of ‘other experiences’, and ‘external short-term consultants’ at the request of the Ministry. The financial cost of the assistance is not public knowledge.

16. Our respondents are of the view that external technical assistance had some negative influence on the interpretation of the facts and figures on which the Minister’s reform decisions were based. They also feel that external assistance personnel had a ‘know-all’ and ‘stand-apart’ posture and failed to capitalise on local knowledge by working with nationals who could interpret national sensitivities more accurately and who knew the Nigerian education sector and its challenges more intimately. There were also questions on the ‘huge costs’ of bringing in external consultants.

17. To these and related queries the donors (DfID) had their responses. They were responding to requests from Government. They were assisting (where and when called upon) while Government was driving the process. Perhaps, the issue here is that Government should learn to really drive the process by showing plainly that it is in-charge of all decisions. This becomes easier if the change management process involves genuinely carrying the people along. If that had happened, all cards would have
been placed on the table. The role of external technical/financial assistance would have been public knowledge, and external assistance would have been more attuned to national sensitivities.

POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS

18. This study set out not simply to chronicle the education sector reforms attempted by the Nigerian federal government in 2006-2007. Its major goal was to highlight the lessons to be learnt from the experience. Available evidence (in spite of the limitations of the study) point to the reforms having to face a major change management challenge.

19. The reform was generally perceived as desirable, but its operationalization and implementation seemed to have
   1. attempted to address too many challenges at one and the same time
   2. been carried on at a very fast pace
   3. underestimated the power of organisational culture within the public service and the education sector
   4. paid insufficient attention to the human factor
   5. accorded insufficient time and attention to the methodology of wide stakeholder involvement
   6. ignored the peculiar demands of Nigeria’s federal system of government

20. However, abandoning the reforms would amount to the proverbial throwing away of the baby with the bath water. Stakeholders are agreed that the reforms are necessary. They seem to be in favour of reform, but have very strong feelings on ‘the reform’. They also have ideas for ‘reforming the reform’. What is therefore needed is a re-conceptualization of the reform in a manner that addresses the change management challenges it has raised.
REFERENCES


- NIGERIA: Federal Ministry of Education: 10 Year Strategic Plan (draft 08): 05 March 2007

