

Book Reviews

Tamuno (T.N.) and Atanda (J.A.) (eds) *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years, Vol III, Education*. Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria). 1989. 338 p. (£25/\$40)
ISBN 978 129 475 2 (paper); 978 129 960 6 (hardback)

This is one of nine volumes covering Nigeria's administration, culture, economy, education, international relations, politics, religion, society, and science and technology over its first 25 years. The main concern is to provide a multifaceted discussion of the country's history, to examine its problems, successes and failures as the authors see them. For this volume, the authors are mainly professors of education. The first nine chapters focus on the development of the educational system (including Arabic education for Muslims) from pre-colonial times, through the colonial period to the development of national policies in the 1960s and 1970s; this includes the political economy of education, educational management, the use of language and the development of a local publishing industry to supply needed books. In the second section, policies relating to primary, secondary, university and adult education are discussed in five chapters. One of the editors sets the scene in the Introduction, while the other summarizes the themes in the Conclusion. Most of the authors provide tables demonstrating the rapid growth of Nigeria's educational system.

The book thus provides a full discussion of issues which have exercised Nigerian educators over a long period. While this will certainly be welcomed by those unfamiliar with education in Africa's most populous country, most of what is said, and the figures provided, will not be news to those who have followed Nigerian development over the years. Each author seems to have written independently, so there is considerable repetition. For example, in spite of the book's title, considerable space is given in many of the papers to education before independence. Readers are told over and over about early regulations, the Ashby Commission and the contribution of the missions, though there are varying opinions on the benefits of their work. The major events after independence, both educational and political, are also each discussed several times.

Omolewa's 'Myth and reality of the colonial legacy in Nigerian education, 1951-84' is outside the usual pattern in being much more ideological than the other papers. He seems to assume that all European influence was detrimental, but contradicts himself enough that it is not always possible to distinguish what he considers myth and what reality. Fafunwa, the present Minister of Education and a major source on Nigerian educational history, is ideally placed to discuss large-scale conferences and official developments from 'A planner's viewpoint'. Political goals necessarily shifted as financial resources rose and fell. Afolayan passionately recommends that every Nigerian child should study at least three languages, starting with a firm basis in the mother tongue. It is not clear how this can be afforded, but it is now required in secondary schools if teachers are available. The claims that primary education in the mother tongue and secondary education in English will 'maximise effectiveness and minimize costs' has not been upheld by the Tanzanian experience. Segun's chapter on book development is very welcome, since not much is available on this important topic. Basic literacy needs to be supported by publications that the new literates can read. This is also a problem for adult literacy programmes which, with the exception of Kano State, have not got very far in Nigeria.

The two chapters on university education are by two former Vice-Chancellors and a former university Director of Planning, so the emphasis is on government policies and expansion. Although the goal has long been a 60:40 share of science to arts students, the inadequacies of the secondary system and realities of the job market have made arts subjects far more popular than the sciences. The rapid increase in universities (to 30) as each state sought places for its own students has posed an impossible burden on both federal and state resources. A highly dissatisfied student population complains legitimately about inadequate scholarships, books, teaching,

accommodation etc. In Nigeria, as elsewhere, there is often a large gap between government proclamation and realization. More attention to research on university staff and students rather than government statistics and position papers could have provided more information on the nature of the student body (gender, class, aspirations, success) as it has changed over the years, which would be useful to other countries. How has wastage increased as universities have become four-year institutions, including A-level work? How have the qualifications required for entry changed and how has this affected the chances of various categories of applicant? The ethnic quota system is discussed briefly, but more information is needed on how it actually works.

Overall, this is a useful summary of Nigerian educational development but provides little that is new; the limitation to 1985 also means that it is mainly of interest to educational historians.

Margaret Peil

Centre of West African Studies, Birmingham University, UK