Palmer, W. P. (1990) Nationhood and Education in Nigeria: A Case Study of School Inspection in Nigeria as a means of increasing Central Government Control, In *Nationhood, Internationalism and Education* (Edited Roger Peddie), Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society from 3rd-5th December, O'Rorke Hall, University of Auckland, New Zealand, pp. 171-184.

NATIONHOOD AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA : A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL INSPECTION IN NIGERIA AS A MEANS OF INCREASING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

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ABSTRACT

The author worked in Nigeria for eleven years, for some of the time as a teacher, and for part of the time as a school inspector. In this article the author reflects upon the progress of the Nigerian Federal Inspectorate of Education, its inception, including the reasons for its formation, its early history and that of other educational inspectorates in Nigeria and details of the Inspectorates day to day work. The author sees the start of the Federal Inspectorate in a wider social and political context as an example, in the field of education, of the way in which the Federal Nigerian Government at the end of a bloody and vicious civil war steadily increased its power relative to that of the state governments. The creation of the Federal Inspectorate of Education served the cause of Nigerian National Unity and did much to retain high educational standards at a time of the rapid expansion of the educational system.

INTRODUCTION

The author lived in Nigeria as a teacher from 1962 to 1968 and as an inspector of education from 1973 to 1978. The account, although written in the third person is nonetheless personal, because the author has experienced many of the events described. Firstly, some general overview of Nigeria's geography, history, religions and politics is needed by anyone seeking to place the educational events described into a broader context.

Amongst recommended books/references to study of the geography, history and economy of Nigeria would be Commonwealth (1976), Crowder (1978), Olaloku et al (1979) and Kirk-Green & Rimmer(1981).

Nigeria achieved independence from Britain on 1 October 1960. The first major event in Nigerian history after its independence as a Federation of three large states (Regions) was the successful plebiscite which created a fourth region. The increasing popular discontent with the obvious incompetence and corruption of politicians was one of the causes of the first coup d'etat by General Ironsi on15 January 1966, who ordered the abolition of a federal system and the creation of a unitary state. This caused civil unrest and massacres of large numbers of Ibos in the north of the country. There was then a second coup under General Gowon, and the restoration of the federal system. In 1967 the Federal Government created twelve states instead of the four regions: the Eastern Region seceded as "Biafra" and a civil war started on 6 July. On 12 June 1970 Biafra surrendered and the civil war ended. To its credit the Federal government chose a policy of reconciliation and reconstruction, instead of revenge, but generally tended to follow policies that reduced state power and increased federal power to reduce the possibility of another civil war.

The largest single educational problem was the very low percentage of children attending school in the Muslim Northern Nigeria and in 1976 the government launched its ambitious Universal Primary Education scheme (UPE) (Bray,1981). Also in 1976 the twelve states were increased in number by splitting some of the larger states, so that there were nineteen states. The Government announced major reforms to the educational system in 1977 (F.R.N., 1977) in which the former colonial system (6-5-2-3) was to be replaced by the new system (6-3-3-4) to become effective in 1982.The figures given in brackets refer to the number years of schooling at each stage of education.Unfortunately progress on the implementation of this policy has been slow, largely due to financial constraints (Tewari,1987).

Since 1976 there have been several further coups or attempted coups, a civilian regime which also became increasingly corrupt and another military regime (current). The country's economy increased in strength rapidly during the 1970s, but the government overcommitted itself as a result of apparently limitless oil revenues, and the economy is currently in a desperate situation.

The reader also needs to become familiar with the specific context of this article, which is education. The following books are suggested: Lewis (1965); Williams (1969); Fafunwa (1974); Taiwo (1980); Ozigi & Ocho (1981). Alternatively there are summaries of the educational system, as a whole, such as Ukeje and Aisiku (1982).

SCHOOL INSPECTION (HISTORICAL)

There are few sources giving general histories of the educational inspectorates in Nigeria though the following are helpful: Palmer (1981), Palmer (1983), Palmer (1985) as they tie together information from many of the available sources which concern the various educational inspectorates during the fifties and sixties.

One of these articles (Palmer,1981) traced the history and functions of inspectors of schools in Nigeria, prior to the Civil War during the period when Nigeria was divided into three/four large regions. Each of the regions attempted educational reforms in which the strengthening of school inspection was a part and these will be described briefly. Firstly there was the attempt by the Western Region Government to create a new type of educational inspector in the image of Her Majesty's Inspectors (H.M.I.) which was not in the end successful. Secondly, Palmer (1981) described the rather curious administrative structure of the Inspectorate in the Eastern Region, which showed how difficult it would have been to form a successful educational inspectorate on this basis. Thirdly, the paper gave details of the largely successful attempt of the Northern Region to set up its own educational inspectorate as a result of the Oldman report. Finally, Palmer (1981) mentioned the Mid-Western Regional Inspectorate, and also the role of the Federal Advisers during the period. Each of these regional inspectorates created under a system of four regional governments tended to continue its mode of action on a smaller scale when the four regions were split up into twelve states (1967), since each state created its own inspectorate. Each of the seven new states created in 1976 of course, created its own educational inspectorate, similar to that of the larger state of which it had been a part.

THE FEDERAL INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION (HISTORICAL)

The Federal Inspectorate of Education (Federal Inspectorate Service) has a comparatively brief history. The 1954 Constitution can be seen as giving relatively stronger powers to the regions than to the Central Government (Awokoya). In the educational field the formation of the Joint Consultative Council (JCC) for Education can be seen as a first step (Akpofure, 1973) to combat the trend towards educational fragmentation which was apparent in the diversities of educational provision and inspection throughout the Federation.

By 1963 there was a growing concern about variations in the standards of education in different parts of the Federation which led to a call for a

national system of school inspection. Some inspections organised by the Federal Ministry of Education did take place, mainly in the Federal Territory, (Lagos), where Federal Advisers, sometimes assisted by University staff, were employed as inspectors. However the administrative tasks of the Federal Advisers became more onerous and the frequency of inspections decreased. After the creation of states in 1967 the Federal Ministry of Education was extremely worried that a multitude of different standards and systems of education might be created (Akpofure, 1973).

In 1970 the Morris enquiry pointed out the difficulty in terms of skilled manpower of each state having its own inspectorate and recommended the establishment of a Federal Inspectorate to raise standards. The Joint Consultative Council (J.C.C.) recommended the implementation of this report as a matter of urgency and referred the question to the National Council on Education (N.C.E.) who felt more precision was needed in the definition of the relationship between the existing state inspectorates and the proposed Federal Inspectorate.

As a consequence a Canadian educationalist, Mr C A Mustard, was asked to report on the problems involved (Mustard, 1972). He visited all State Ministries of Education with a view to finding out how conflict of authority might be avoided, and how the independence and objectivity of the Inspectorate would be ensured (Akpofure, 1973). The Mustard Report was submitted in April 1972 and accepted by the government with only minor modifications.

SCHOOL INSPECTION AS 'EYES AND EARS' OF GOVERNMENT

School inspectors can perform a variety of different functions, dependent on the organisation of the educational system. The following are the most common functions (Palmer,1979):

1. Fact finding often referred to as"eyes and ears"
2. Assessment of teachers, including the idea of 'payment by results'
3. The advisory role or the 'dispersal of sound practice'
4. The regulative/administrative role, sometimes called 'the watch-dog role'
5. The energising role or the role of the 'educational missionary'.

The Federal Government certainly wished the Federal Inspectorate to find out information within the sphere of education , though it did not seem to want to be bound to any particular course of action as a result of the Inspectorate's observations. The provision of a capacity of

reporting any politically sensitive issues back after full inspections to the Commissioner/Minister for Education was an example of the Federal Inspectorate being the Government's "eyes and ears". However as stated in the interim guide-lines (F.I.E., 1973).
"*Inspectors are not designed or trained to be policemen on behalf of government, but professional Consultants/Advisers concerned primarily with the improvement of classroom instruction and the full process of education in the schools*".

However, as the above extract shows, neither the 'eyes and ears' role nor the 'watch-dog' role was to be the government's main aim for the Inspectorate. The major problem for the reader unfamiliar with the history and politics of Nigeria is to see the relationship between the description, which follows, of the inception of a single central government organisation, (The Federal Inspectorate of Education) and the whole series of changes in Nigerian society caused by the creation of states and the steadily increasing power of the central government relative to these states. The context of this article is thus much wider than purely a description of the evolution of a single educational structure: there is a permanent dynamic struggle to achieve the correct administrative balance between central and regional or state governments, which was one of the issues about which the Civil War was fought. Federal/State relations can be seen to have developed from the model of a 'loose federation' to one of 'Federal supremacy' (Ojo, 1976) which the states see as characterised by their political and fiscal overdependence on federal authority. This increase in Federal powers such as health, education and highways was recommended by the Dina Committee in 1968 and was able to proceed due to the availability of finance from oil revenues (Offensend,1976).

When comparing different federal systems globally Subramaniam (1981) points to the existence of a federal rather than a state police force in Nigeria as the best and most useful example of federal institutions (the police force has in fact remained a national force rather than returning to being a state responsibility as many states wished):-

"*It (Nigeria) had no common background or interaction between different regional services and the federal service until 1966 and then it went through the trauma of thirteen years of military rule and a bloody civil war, before it established a single central police force".*

Ojo(1976) points to the proliferation of federal institutions in the states, staffed by people employed by the Federal Government, and believes that 'the new Breed of officials' will enhance a National outlook and strengthen Federal hands. Examples outside education are the health

services (Onokerhoraye, 1984, pp.102-147), or housing (Onokerhoraye, 1984, pp.216-249). Both these areas have been areas of major Federal intervention involving considerable numbers of federal employees in the states and huge federal expenditure. Another national scheme was the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C.) (Kirk-Green and Rimmer, 1981, p.54) in which all Nigerian graduates spend a full year working on various projects outside their own area of Nigeria to help forge National Unity. Ojo (1976) considers that this widespread Federal employment is essentially a stabilising factor which should be widely accepted as good for the country.

The means by which Federal powers have increased are diverse, but Adebayo (1979) gives an example of an unusual instance in which Federal Ministry of Education officials enormously increased their power. Adebayo calls it "Government by laughter", but it may appear to today's reader as something straight out of "Yes, Minister"! The Federal Ministry of Education proposed the motion that it should move actively into the fields of primary and secondary education throughout the federation at a meeting of the Supreme Military Council in 1974, having first obtained the support of the Head of State (General Gowon), who sponsored the motion. The motion was unanimously opposed by all the Military Governors and their advisers, but after the motion had been rejected twice the Head of State caused a diversion by making a joke and passed the motion as approved whilst the opposition was convulsed with laughter. This illustrates the comparative ease with which a military government can operate, though a measure of humour was retained in even the most difficult circumstances.

The states have tended to react to the expansion of federal power with a mixture of suspicion and hostility. It is appropriate that any civil servant working in one of the nineteen states to be aware of this and to work very hard to neutralise these negative attitudes, at least on a personal level, so that real co-operation and progress can take place.

THE FEDERAL INSPECTORATE: INCEPTION.

In April 1973, Rex Akpofure was appointed Chief Federal Inspector of Education (later the Director/Inspectorate), to be joined over the next few months by other inspectors. These were all initially appointed at the rank of Principal Federal Inspector of Education.

Prior to the initial training programme, a large number of practical problems, such as the acquisition of houses for officers posted to the states, the provision of furniture, offices, transport, and secretarial facilities

had to be solved and in general they were - for example, the Inspectorate was provided with a fleet of thirteen Mercedes-Benz cars as a goodwill gesture from the Head of State.The author felt that this gave schools a wrong impression of what was intended to be an advisory service, but these vehicles lasted so well in poor conditions that the gift proved to be an extremely important one. On 1 September 1973 a three week training course was held at the University of Ibadan with two experienced inspectors from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (H.M.I.), Mr A B Baddeley and Mr L C Comber, acting as consultants. It was planned to start with thirty-six inspectors but only twenty-nine had been recruited at the start of the training course (Palmer,1979 lists their names in Appendix XIII A).

After the initial training, a further six weeks were spent by all inspectors visiting each of the state capitals, inspecting two post-primary institutions in the state to practice reporting skills. One state capital, Sokoto, had to be deleted from the programme due to a lack of hotel accommodation, but considering the difficulties involved in travelling with a large group in Nigeria, the organisation of the tour was successful, and the exercise extremely worthwhile. There was a brief interlude in Lagos for final briefing and the collection of materials for the new offices after which most inspectors were sent to the states where they would be working.

Thus from mid November 1973 Federal Inspectorate offices were opened in most state capitals. Most inspectors started by visiting a variety of schools in or near the state capital to familiarise themselves with the area, as no inspectors were indigenous to the area to which they were posted. All inspectors were of the same rank but in each office one inspector was appointed 'Co-ordinating Inspector'. This 'primus inter pares' tag is also used in the district offices of the H.M.I. in the United Kingdom. This post was rotated amongst inspectors in each office over a period of two years.

The role and authority of each office was governed by 'Interim Guide-lines' (for a copy of these, see Palmer, 1979, Appendix XIV) which were initially restrictive with regard to initiatives which could be taken, but which were gradually relaxed. The aim of these 'guide-lines' was to ensure that inspectors helped, but remained independent of the state to which they were posted, yet did not get involved in any 'conflict of authority', the repercussions of which could have destroyed the inspectorate at an early stage.

THE FEDERAL INSPECTORATE IN ACTION

The basic mode of operation which evolved was that Full Inspections were organised centrally in advance, inspecting one institution each week from a list of institutions put forward by State Ministries of Education. Inspectors not involved in full inspection could continue routine advisory visits to schools on a schedule prepared locally to avoid clashes with national commitments. Findings and recommendations from these advisory visits would be discussed with the Chief Inspector of the State and his officials.

Full inspections of a school almost invariably started on a Sunday evening with a meeting of all inspectors. Inspectors then attended assembly on Monday morning and were introduced to staff. On Monday afternoon there was a brief discussion to see if there were any special problems. By Wednesday recommendations were prepared and discussed and agreed at a meeting of all inspectors under the chairmanship of the team leader. The whole team met with the Principal of the school on Thursday morning and presented him verbally with a summary of the main recommendations. The team would return to their states whilst the Team Leader and Reporting Inspector would visit the State Chief Inspector of Schools or the Federal Director of Schools, if the visit had involved a federal institution, to brief him of the results of the visit. All inspectors would send in their reports on academic and pastoral matters to the Reporting Inspector who would edit the final report. For the first six months, the Chief Federal Inspector personally led all the formal inspections, gradually allowing other inspectors to lead teams after that.

At this early stage in the development of the Federal Inspectorate practical problems of the provision of housing, offices and equipment tended to dominate events, with some inspectors having to live in hotels for up to two years away from their families. In addition, there was a lack of inspectors in some subjects which meant that certain inspectors had to be on almost continual touring duties for the whole term. There was an initial shortage of inspectors (often only one inspector) in French, History, Art, Religious Knowledge and Technical and Commercial subjects, so inspectors in these areas were under tremendous strain.

One inspector, Mr A B Adigun was killed in a motor accident, one inspector never arrived, one resigned after a few months, and one was posted back to the Primary Division of the Federal Ministry of Education with promotion. The strain began to tell and work at the headquarters in Lagos got badly behind, as perhaps insufficient inspectors had been left to cope with the professional problems there. The headquarters were also understaffed in terms of senior administrators which led to complaints of lack of action from offices in the States. Morale also fell due to the slowness of recruitment of new inspectors who could have

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shared the load where strain was greatest.

The original plan had been to have thirty-six inspectors in the first year, seventy-two inspectors in the second year, and on hundred and forty-four inspectors in the third year (Mustard, 1972). Recruitment was never near these figures, for example in March 1977, there were forty-four inspectors, and in December 1979 there were about sixty inspectors (Federal Inspectorate Report, 1979).

A lack of inspectors at headquarters to administer the publication of reports led to none being published in the first two years, but other factors were also involved. There was over-centralisation and the quality of some reports had been poor: however inspectors had received no detailed guide-lines or criticisms which might have improved their performance, so the quality did not improve. Also the Chief Inspector, already heavily involved in leading inspections, took personal responsibility for ensuring the reports were of a high standard and he had insufficient time to see that the task was done.

Internal re-organisation, decentralisation and guide-lines eventually solved the problem and the publication of reports was speeded up to being completed within three to six months of the inspection.

Initially it had been planned to leave inspectors in an area for five years or more, but in practice inspectors have moved more frequently than this (the author estimates about three years in one place). Nonetheless, the Federal Inspectorate probably achieved a higher degree of stability than most state inspectorates. In deploying inspectors it had been planned to give states the choice of the subject specialisation of the Federal Inspectors in their state (Mustard, 1972, p.3) This was done initially, but in later reorganisations consideration of the subject expertise of inspectors was considered of less of importance, except that headquarters did try to keep those inspectors who toured most frequently along the main air route Lagos-Kaduna-Kano.

After two years of operation there was a major re-organisation of the inspectorate structure. The Chief Inspector was appointed Director (Inspectorate) assisted by Assistant Directors for Primary and Secondary Education. Sixteen Chief Federal Inspectors of Education were created with one Chief Inspector in each state and the other four at headquarters. Other grades of inspector were Assistant Chief Inspector, Principal Inspector, Senior Inspector and Inspector in Training. The creation of seven more states in April 1976 caused further organisational problems, as new inspectorate offices were created. One office, Bauchi, was able to open in May 1977, whilst the office at Owerri did not open

until nearly a year later due to organisational difficulties.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

In order to see the evolving relationship of the Inspectorate to the Federal Ministry of Education as a whole, the organisational structure of the Ministry at various periods should be examined. The structure of the Federal Ministry of Education of about 1964 (Lewis, 1965, p.153) gives the Federal Advisers an important role, though the size of the Federal system at that time was extremely small. Ukeje (1975, p.109) shows a proposed structure of about 1970 in which an inspectorate occupies one of three equal high level positions together with curriculum and evaluation. By 1980, the size of the system had grown enormously and the Federal Inspectorate had become one of four equally ranked divisions under the Permanent Secretary (F.I.E. 1978), (Taiwo, 1980), but it would certainly have been by far the smallest of these divisions. The organisational structure can be seen to make it very difficult for the Inspectorate to retain its independence of judgement, in that the Director is a part of joint decision making procedures within the Ministry and the Inspectorate's independence of thought and action was one of the major reasons for its existence.

For its first six years, the Federal Inspectorate concentrated almost exclusively on secondary education and played no part in the inspection of primary education, though expansion into this sector was always planned. The reason for the delay in starting the inspection of primary schools was said to be the difficulty of recruiting appropriately qualified primary school teachers to the Inspectorate. In this sense the

Federal Inspectorate has evolved through its involvement with secondary education quite unlike Her Majesty's Inspectorate which has developed with the growth of Primary Education in which its inspectors (HMIs) were perhaps best qualified. Writing just as the Federal Inspectorate started its work Lyons and Pritchard wrote:
"*The success of this scheme* (F I.S.) *will rest largely on the degree of collaboration achieved and the acceptability of federal assistance in this sphere (i.e. with State Ministries of Education). It is hoped that it may be possible to further the cause of primary inspection in this way*"

Their hopes, at least in the area of primary education have been largely unfulfilled, as is indicated by the following brief quotation by Robinson, (1988, p 233):-
"It is pertinent to state that inspectors (both Federal and State)*no doubt do their work; the only drawback is that by and large they confine themselves to the secondary school and.....The Inspectorate thus, as it were, abandons the primary school teacher, that all-important agent who is expected to lay the foundation ....."*

However relationships between the Federal Inspectorate and the states have indeed been excellent, certainly far better than had been predicted. The Federal Inspectorate has arranged its own conferences yearly and in addition has organised a joint annual conference for State and Federal Inspectors, the first, being in Jos in 1975. The Federal Inspectorate has also produced a great deal of material including subject guide-lines and bibliographies for various levels of education.

Federal Inspectors have joined state teams on their inspections and likewise State Inspectors have joined federal teams, on occasions.It has been a matter of policy to foster these good relations, which have, by and large, been achieved, though there have been occasions when relationships in some states became difficult. Federal Inspectors feel that by their insistence on visiting schools they have encouraged inspectors in the states to visit their own schools more frequently. The lack of visits to their own schools had long been a criticism of State Inspectors (O'Connell,1972).

Although general morale within the Inspectorate over its first six years has had its ups and downs, most observers would at least feel that it has so far played a useful role at a time of rapid educational expansion in Nigeria. From an outsider's point of view the Federal Inspectorate has been more often ignored than misunderstood. For example it does not rate a mention in some text books on education (Ozigi and Ocho, 1981) or in a social services text (Onokerhoraye, 1984). Edem (1982, p112) gives the Federal Inspectorate just one line. On the other hand Taiwo (1980,

pp.211-217) gives a comparatively full account of the history of the formation of various inspectorates, including the Federal Inspectorate, though he does not mention the important part played by the Mustard Report.

CONCLUSION

The Federal Inspectorate of Education was formed in .April 1973 and started work in November 1973. Considering its small size and the vast area over which it has to work the Federal Inspectorate Service has had a considerable energising effect (Edmonds,1962) in improving standards of education in Nigeria. The effect of sending out thirty well trained inspectors to the states has certainly been out of all proportion to the numbers involved. The Inspectorate has, in its early years, achieved much by the encouragement and quiet persuasion of colleagues in the State Inspectorates, to move them from a traditional to a modern role. A paper by the Nigerian Union (NUT,1973) gives a formidable picture of the traditional inspector whilst Baddeley (1973) gives a more sympathetic image of a modern inspector. Birchenough (1947), himself an inspector, said that the greatest service that anyone can do is *'to increase the vitality of others".* This the Federal Inspectorate can claim to have done.

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