

REPOSITIONING THE NEW NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper is about repositioning of the New National Policy on Education which came into effect in 1979. It examined critically the document and brought out all its strengths and weaknesses. The paper established the fact that the document recommended an expensive method of education which our leaders are not willing to implement because of corruption in the society. The paper also frowned the recommendation of forcing primary school drop outs to take gainful employment which is against international law.

Introduction

Repositioning can be defined in several ways by several authorities such as to re-orient, to review, to revisit, to examine, to analyze, to reconsider, to criticize, to revise, to discuss or to edit for maximum effects.

All governmental policies are supposed to be reviewed from time to time for maximum effects. In the United States of America, educational policies are constantly repositioned for better results. Because education and societies are independent it is the society that sets the goals which education follows. Thus, education in the United States is generally not planned but is in a constant process of repositioning to individual and social demands. There are various systems of education at work in each of the fifty States of that great country. From time to time, however, national needs make the nation as a whole sit-up, think about the direction of education.

More recently, there was the impetus provided when the first "Sputnik" was launched on the 4 October 1957 by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Russia). Suddenly the United States of America realized that the country was lagging behind Russia in the field of mathematics and the physical sciences. This realization forced the United States to critically examine its education policy and new methods of teaching were devised. After the United States repositioned her educational system, it launched APOLLO 11 ON July 20, 1969 which was the first single greatest technological achievement of all time when a human first set foot on another celestial body (NASA: APOLLO 30th Anniversary 1969-1999). The theme of this conference of the National Association for Research Development (NARD), *Reposition Education in Nigeria*, is appropriate because it is in use for over 24 years. In a more serious organization, educational system is repositioned when it was used for a minimum of 5 years. The national Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) revised or repositioned its minimum standards every five years for maximum effects. The theme of my paper is *Repositioning the National Policy on Education*.

• **Brief History of the New National Policy on Education**

On the 12th day of January 1970, the Nigerian Civil war came to an end. The rebellious Eastern Region which called itself Biafra surrendered to the forces of the Federal Government of Nigeria. This brought to an end the 30 month old (1967-1970) war. The victorious Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, and Head of State declared that "There is no victor or vanquished in this civil strife. He added:

"We are all brothers and sister". This reconciliatory attitude was vividly reflected in the Federal Military Government's Second National Development Plan of 1970-1974 whose objectives were to make Nigeria:

- > A united strong and self-reliant nation
- > A great and dynamic economy
- > A just and egalitarian society
- > A land of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens
- > A free and democratic society.

The experience of the civil war which came as a result of accumulated problems must have influenced the minds of the Military Administrators to choose education as a tool to achieve the noble objectives of

the nation spelt in an unambiguous language above.

The National Curriculum Conference

The Federal Military Government organized the first ever broad-based national Curriculum Conference in Lagos in September 1969, in which every sector of the Nigerian socio-economic and political institutions-religious bodies, teachers' associations, other professionals (medical, legal, engineering, etc.) , university teachers and administrators, ministry officials, youth clubs, businessmen, and the representatives of the then governments of the 12 States of Nigeria. The significance of the conference was noted by Adaralegbe (1972) as follows:

"It was not a conference for educationists alone, it was necessary to hear the views of the masses of the people who are not directly engaged in teaching or other educational activities, for they surely have a say in any decisions to be taken about the structure and content of Nigerian Education. This explains the wide coverage of participation. Furthermore, the conference should be a purely Nigerian affair. We have participants from as far away as Europe and other countries in Africa are observed."

The Conference observed and reviewed all the shortcomings of the old system of education and identified new goals of Nigerian education to be in harmony with the objectives of the Nigerian nation mentioned earlier in this paper.

The recommendations of the September Curriculum conference were given to the Ministry of Education which subsequently organized a seminar of professionals from Federal Ministry of Education, State Ministries of Education, Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Secondary School Principals, Primary School Administrators, Conference of Teachers' Colleges, Christian Council of Nigeria, National Universities Commission, Islamic Religious Groups, Nigeria Education Research Council, Army Education Corps, Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare and Agriculture, Nigerian Employers Consultative Association, National Union of Nigerian Students, UNESCO Team, and distinguished Nigerians representing various interests.

The seminar adopted the five national objectives recommended under the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), (Adaralegbe: 1972).

The Seminar also adopted recommendation number 59 which suggested that a 6-3-3-4 system of Education be introduced in the country (Adaralegbe:1972). The Seminar also proposed the philosophy and objectives of Nigeria Education as reported by Adaralegbe (1972) as follows:

"Nigeria's National Philosophy on education must be based on equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system."

The seminar suggested for this philosophy to be in harmony with the objectives of the Nigerian nation, it must be directed towards the need for self-actualization, effective citizens and national unity.

The Seminar then dealt with each level of education comprehensively and made recommendations on how to implement each level:- pre- primary Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, University Education, professional Education, Technical Education Adult and Non-Formal Education. The recommendations of the seminar were submitted to the Federal Government for deliberation, approval and implementation.

It was only in 1977, according to Fufunwa, (1995) that Federal Government under the Leadership of General Obasanjo issued a white paper on National Policy on Education, eight years after the 1969 Curriculum Conference and four years after the 1973 seminar.

In 1979, the Federal Government again issued another white paper according to Fufunwa, (1995), called Government views on the Implementation Committee, Blueprint on "The Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education". The Government accepted most of the recommendations put forth by the Implementation Committee. A new National Policy on

Education was then, born.

National Policy on Education

If one examines the document which contains the new Nation Policy on Education (Revised). One will find out that the whole idea came as a result of the failure of the old system of education, which was in place before the introduction of the new one. The disaffection of the old system of education was loudly echoed by Chief Federal Adviser on Education, Dr. S.J Cookey in his keynote address at the Nigerian National Curriculum Conference between 18-21 September, 1996 and quoted by Adaralegbe (1981 :ppxxv-xxvi).as follows

..... Our education was not planned. The system which was prevalent in the past, and which is still persisting in most areas, is that which tends to produce children who can read and write and pass examinations and which qualify them for employment only as clerks.

The new National Policy on Education aims at correcting that serious defect. It is a comprehensive document and could achieve its objectives if it was religiously implemented with adequate attention to details and material support. The philosophy of New Nigerian Education Policy is based on the integrity of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equality of opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both within and without the formal school system.

It was also geared towards inculcating the values of respect for worth and dignity of the individual, faith in man's ability to make rational decisions moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, shared responsibility for the common good of the society, respect for dignity of labour and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

For this philosophy of education to be in harmony with Nigerian National objectives, it has to be moved towards self-actualization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic scientific and technological progress. The government will according to the National Policy on Education takes various steps to implement the policy including education for overall national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological progress.

The government will according to the National Policy on Education takes various steps to implement the policy including education for overall community needs, life long education, self learning, possibility of an individual to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with study or embarking on full-time employment with the prospect of resuming studies later on and others.

The next section of the paper-will examine each stage _of education from the pre-primary level to University level and examine how each stage could be repositioned for maximum effects.

Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education is described in the National Policy on Education document as education given in institutions to children between the ages of three (3) and five (5) years before they entered primary level of Education. Amongst the objectives' of pre-primary schooling are: effecting a smooth transition from the home environment to school environment preparing the child for primary level of education, inculcating social norms and other values.

In this section of education the government and their agencies in Nigeria refused to fund pre-primary education. The only responsibilities of government are: To promote the training of qualified teachers, contribute to the development of suitable curriculum, curriculum supervision and control of the quality of such institutions. This is not enough. The government should fund the operation of pre-primary education. It could simply be attached to primary schools. That is to say, within the premises of primary schools, pre-primary classes could be built. The net result of non-governmental

funding of pre-primary education are the emergence of very many pre-primary schools which are housed in motor garages, uncompleted buildings, road sides and other places not suitable for any form of positive education to take place. The teachers also are not qualified. The school fees charged per term are also very high. National Policy on Education is due for repositioning to make government and agencies in Nigeria to adequately fund it.

Primary Education

The objectives of primary Education which is given institutions for children between the ages of 6 and 11 plus are amongst others: inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively, the laying for sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking character: and moral training, providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

The primary section of the national policy of education should also be repositioned because it provided for those who could not continue their education after primary education to drop out at the age of 7 to 11 + for full employment. This is not proper. Every child should be encouraged to continue schooling until he is 18 years of age. It is against the international labour law to employ the under age and Nigeria endorsed that law.

Secondary School

Fafunwa (1995), maintained that the central theme of the new national policy on education is the three years of Junior Secondary Schooling whose broad aims include: preparation of pupils for useful living within the society, preparation for higher education, equipping the students with technical and scientific skills, inspire pupils with desire for achievement and self improvement, The section of the policy is also to be repositioned to include real practical experience in industries for every pupil. This will minimize the high level of unemployment amongst secondary school drop outs.

Higher and professional Education

Refers to post secondary of the national Education policy which is obtained in Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Technologies Correspondent of higher education among other, are: acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper values, for the survival of the individual and society. So unlike the former system of education which produced only the products who are qualified for white collar jobs, the present system is very comprehensive. But should be re-positioned to include industrial training for maximum effects.

Problems

The document of the new National Policy on Education is very comprehensive. It is an excellent document. It is however, very difficult to implement. It is very expensive -providing technical, scientific and business workshops and laboratories is not easy especially now when the country is facing economic stagnation. No level of the new National Policy on Education was properly implemented. It is difficult for any government in Africa to implement this document because of not lack of resources. It is the high level of indiscipline and corruption of the leadership. The money is there, but over 80 percent of it is stolen. The leadership is dishonest. The system should be repositioned.

The policy was conceived during the much-talked about oil boom. The Federal Government thought it could implement it. But the idea is now a thing of the past. It has collapsed, we witnessed lack of qualified teachers, lack of equipment, lack of accommodation, overcrowded class rooms at all levels including the universities in government schools in most States of the federation. The Plateau State Commissioner of Education, Mr.S.G Mafuyai was reported on the back page of the *New Nigerian* issue of Friday 4 ' , November, 1977 saying—" no government in the country can fully finance UPE scheme because Federal Government had stated in clear terms: it cannot finance UPE as early as 1977." It should be repositioned for the government to implement.

Recommendations.

> The Government should use its huge financial resources to fund education properly.

- > The Government should expunge the section in the New National Policy on Education which recommends child labour which is against international labour law.
- > The business of Education should not be left alone in the hand of governments, wealthy individuals and organizations should also assist.

Conclusion

The paper examined the New National Policy on Education and how it can be repositioned for maximum effects. It began with the main reason for the introduction of the system -dissatisfaction of the old system which only encouraged production of white collar job seekers. Every stage of the system- from pre-primary to higher education was discussed and should be repositioned. The new Policy recommended that craft workshops, including local crafts be established in each level of the system to prepare graduates for livelihood if they decided to drop out from schooling even at the primary school level. This is against the international labour law, which prevents the employment of child labour. The system is also very expensive because the leadership is not prepared to spend so much on education. The economy of the nation can take it, but most of the resources are stolen through corrupt practices. It should be repositioned for maximum effects.

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