

RECREATING EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND MARKETABILITY OF NIGERIA EDUCATION PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Formal education in Nigeria has been criticized for being non functional as majority of its products roam the streets in search of employment as if they have no marketable skills that would make them fit into the world of employment. The new education system takes cognizance of this defect as the proposed curriculum emphasizes functional and education-for self-reliance. It is envisaged (that many of the products would be self-employed if the new education system is well implemented. Suggestions are made on how the education products can be self-reliant if they fail to find openings in the conventional employment market.

Introduction

The educational system of any country is designed to satisfy its basic philosophy of life and objectives. The objectives of Nigeria education were formulated during the 1969 Curriculum Conference which led to the publication of the 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE). One of the goals of the national policy on education is to achieve self-reliant education, but this policy has for years remained an illusion because the implementation has not geared toward the actualization of this lofty goal.

Education for self-reliant is learning directed towards developing in young people those skills, competencies, and attributes which equip them to be innovative and successfully manage personal and community work and business opportunities. The new system of education in Nigeria (9-3-4) is developed by the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to make primary junior secondary school pupils self-reliant. This an

exercise that has already re-designed our educational system. The NERDC has already rolled out strategies that are meant to facilitate an effective implementation of the basic education curricula.

In view of the above, recreating or re-designing Nigeria's education system toward self-reliance may not be a befitting theme; but rather we should dwell on suggested strategies for the implementation of the nation's new education system as the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system has been a huge failure. The purpose of the study is therefore to look at the efforts of government on the achievement of self-reliance using the school curriculum as a sure means.

The Notion of Education

Education is an essential process of self-realization and citizenship in human sustainable human development. It is a necessity for the survival of man. According to Adesina, Fagbongbe and Talabi (1985:), education is not an easy concept to define because its definition is related to many variables such as the purpose of learning, the aim of the teachers, and the problem or level of the technology society. Some scholars may define education as the ability to read and write, others may choose to define it as the ability to read, write, and perform some skills. Yet others may see it as the quality of being able to read, write, and perform skills and become morally acceptable to one's society. For the individual, education may mean the provision of opportunity for him to realize his potential goals and abilities in life, which in-turn make the individual a useful and happy citizen in the society.

Denga (1993), defined education as an on-going process that facilitates the learning and acquisition of skills that equip mankind to utilize the environment effectively for personal success in life as well as for the development of the society. As a process, education focuses at the development of a total person in the following three ways:

(a) Development of intellectual abilities such intelligence or general ability which can be utilized to reason abstractly, tackle complex problems, reason logically and invent things to improve man's standard of living. This can be termed cognitive competence which aims at developing an individuals aptitudes or special abilities/talent to create and tackle problems that require specific talent or ability. The new system of education in Nigeria (9-3-4) is specifically designed to prospect and develop these special talents as a form of "insurance education" to ensure that those children who may drop out of formal schooling for one reason or another, will at least, possess a skill to live a self-reliant life.

b) Development of the non-cognitive aspects of an individual which primarily deal with personality. The primary concern here is to ensure a healthy development of all the personal traits of an individual which include: emotions, temperaments, feelings, attitudes, self-concept, motives and motivation. These non-cognitive aspects of a person are important because they influence learning, interaction with others, and the total balance of personality which falls under what is referred to as affective domain.

c) Development of manipulative skills of an individual, such as finger/wrist dexterity for typing, drawing, painting, carpentry and moulding. This aspect of a person involves performance skills such as choreography, drama, track-and-field events, gymnasium and similar activities that involve gross body-movement. Many individuals can use these skills to earn a living today. Thus, apart from developing healthy bodies, individuals can also turn these

activities into occupations. Since these practical motor activities require some psychological co-ordinations this aspect is referred to as the psychomotor domain.

From the ongoing, it is evident that education as a process, takes cognizance of the total development of a person. It is an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it, certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. The basic aim of education is to inculcate in the individual the habit of work and prepare individual with the necessary skills that will enable them to contribute their quote to the growth of society rather than become drones.

A Philosophy for Nigerian Education

"A philosophy for Nigerian Education" is the title of the report of the proceeding and recommendations of the National conference on Curriculum Development which was held in Lagos from 8-12 September 1969. The Conference was planned as the first of three on Curriculum Development which were to deal respectively with the objectives of education, the content of the curriculum and the methods, materials, equipment and aids required for implementing the curriculum so as to achieve the objectives. Taiwo (1986:161), remarked that, the conference on the objectives of education covered, the three stages of formal education (primary, secondary and University), teacher education, education for women, education for living, science and technology in national development. It is significant that the conference was initiated and planned entirely by Nigerians.

The search for goals of education was not new and definitions of aims of education were not lacking. What the conference did was to review the old goals and identify the new ones with a view to a new set of goals according to the present needs of society. The integration of indigenous education with the formal education

system was suggested as a panacea to the non-functional, school system inherited from the colonial government. The participants reasoned that education should prepare the children for adult life and formulated goals at different levels of education to suit the age, ability and aptitude of the children. The objectives of Nigerian education which were formulated into national philosophy as contain in the National Policy on Education (2004:8) are:

- The training of the mind in building valuable concepts, generalizations, and understanding of the world around us.
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in his society.
- The acquisition of a relevant and balanced knowledge of facts about local and world phenomena

These noble objectives should lead to self realization, better human relationships, self and national economic efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, scientific and technological progress and national unity. The National Policy on Education signaled the first serious efforts by Nigerians to identify, integrate and translate national concerns into curriculum proposals (Ehinder, 1986).

Nigeria's philosophy of Education is based on the integration of the individual into a social and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at every level of education. There is emphasis on functioning education but many problems are known to beset the- education system like: inadequate basic facilities, funding, dilapidated buildings, insufficient desks and chairs, lack of qualified teachers, lack of laboratories, libraries, and workshops. All these work against the attainment of laudable educational objectives and may rebuff the cherished objectives of our education system.

Education for Self-Reliance

The chambers dictionary (1993), defined self-reliant as reliance on one's own abilities and resources. It is the ability to do or decide things by yourself rather than depending on other people for help. Education for self-reliance implies the development of independent, free and responsible citizens and morally upright citizens. Self-reliance meant the right, the necessity, the freedom, the capacity, the willingness and the resolve of a people to define, articulate and struggle to achieve their own goals through their own indigenous effort and programs designed and operated by the people (Egiogu and Ajeyalemi 19987). To Ukeje (1984), self-reliance implies the development of effectively contributing members of the society rather than parasites.

Self-reliance has become a world view to guide the new educational system. It is a policy that proclaimed war against poverty and oppression, and stressed that the resources to be used in the fight should be gotten "within" and all things external should be avoided. It lays emphasis on rural development and recognized that success depended on the intelligent application of individual effort (Adesina, Akinyemi and Ajayi 1983). Self-reliance can be regarded as a "helper doer" with the following five principles as its codes:

- The doer should be able to continue the development process when the help from others stop;
- The outsider must make a positive difference in the living conditions of all doer;
- The outsider must see the world through the eyes of the doer and respect the autonomy of the doer;
- The doer must own and implement the programme; and
- The help must be for limited period of times as long term charity corrupts self-

help and under-cuts the capacity for development.

Too much help can make the helped lazy.

Behind this philosophy, writes Richmond (1979) lies the goal of equality achieved by self help and cooperation within the community. Our present educational system has been tailored towards the achievement of self-reliance. It has been structured to be able to develop men to the level that they become fully autonomous and capable of directing their affairs.

The National Policy on Education (2004) emphasizes the teaching of science, technical and vocational education in order to achieve self-reliance for this nation's educational products. But there are no science equipment and laboratory apparatus in most technical and vocational institutions in the country.

Measures taken to Achieve Self-Reliance

Attempts have been made by government to ensure the attainment of self-reliance. Some of the measures include the introduction of introductory technology in our secondary schools. This did not see the light of the day because Nigerians in their usual way of rushing over issues to satisfy few interest groups, did not train the required man power for such enterprise before importing the machines which eventually rusted in their final destinations.

Government has undertaken to make sure that our educational system is functional enough for self-reliance by mobilizing schools for Agriculture and industry. The 'school-to-land' programme that was extinguished at the 'baby stage' is a good example. The mobilization of schools for Agriculture and industry, especially in Anambra state provides for vocational training and technology in the school curriculum with bias on production in the areas of Agriculture and industrial technology.

Again, Federal Government set up National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to train youths on the acquisition of basic trades that will lead to self-reliance

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) and the various skills acquisition centers by state governments are designed to provide vocational training in skills acquisition to school leavers who have no skill between the ages of 15 and 25 years to enable them to be self-reliant. Government had also set up the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). These schemes were designed to expose students to practical and realistic experiences as they occur in work place. This is based on the assumption that given the quality of workshops, laboratory and other instructional practices that occur in a formal school setting, a gap still exists between the school and the world of work.

Conclusion

Nigeria has a dream but how this dream can be realized is a big problem. Nigerian's philosophy of Education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at every level of education. There is emphasis on functional education but many problems are known to beset the basic education system. Education is necessary and desirable for the development of self-reliant, free and responsible citizens. Education calls for the development of wholesome attitudes and right ideals. The process of education for self-reliance should not be characterized by indoctrination or the uncritical acceptance of the views of others but by critical analysis, experimentation and discovery.

Suggestions on the Way Forward

Any education that is not able to train her citizens to fit into her society, cannot be said to be self-reliant. The following suggestions can be utilized in the achievement of self-reliant education:

1. The stoppage of one hundred percent transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools without commensurate expansion in the existing facilities which has been a bane of the nation's education system.
2. Since teachers are the key players in policy implementation, they need intensive in-service and on-the-job training programme in the concept, methodology, scope and content of each subject in textbook use and in the production of instructional materials.
3. Both public and private schools should whole heartedly imbibe the culture of "education for the use of hands and brain". They should revert to the entrepreneurial orientation of some early schools like "May flower" and West African People Institute (WAPI).
4. Education courses in agriculture, cattle rearing, fishing, handicrafts and horticulture should be taught with all seriousness in schools as they have potentiality of making students self-reliant
5. Graduates of tertiary institutions should be interested in establishing their own business ventures instead of looking for white collar jobs that are not readily available.
6. The government should provide resources to adequately promote science, engineering, technology, agriculture and research through the establishment of the necessary infrastructure and ensure the accreditation of all the programmes in tertiary institutions.
7. The general education provided by the Nation according to Ntino & Usoro (2006) is 65% highly cognitive oriented and 35% low cognitive oriented. For affective development, Nigeria education is 40% high in content and 60% low in content orientation; while the

psychomotor aspect of the education provided is 85% high and 15% low in content. This type of education with low psychomotor content cannot be said to be self-reliant oriented. Therefore, our educational policy should be tailored towards high psychomotor development of the citizenry by highly stressing the practical aspects of the curriculum content.

8. For the nation to achieve the expected self-reliance and employment for higher productivity, informal education which aims at making the individual functional in the society, should be re-introduced in our school system.
9. Entrepreneur education should as a priority, be introduced in the nation school system especially at the secondary school level were a greater number of drop out are found. This will provide the rudiment for entrepreneurship to the students.
10. It is highly recommended that counselors should be trained, deployed and posted to all schools and work settings, because it is a service for all people for educational, personal, social, information and occupational services.

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