

# TRANSFORMING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE

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## **Abstract**

The achievement of the national goals is anchored on education system. However, the extent to which the objectives have been achieved leaves much to be desired. This accounts for the various acts, memoranda, reforms and policies on education even before the nation's independence. The on going transformation is an indication that all is not well with the system. The burden of this paper is to explain the concept of transformation, x-ray some major reforms in the sector. The extent to which the various reforms had achieved their objectives is also highlighted. Counseling approach is proffered as an alternative strategy for effective educational transformation.

Education, all over the world is regarded as an important instrument for national development. Any nation that is able to efficiently transform its educational system into a strong footing is sure to be reckoned with in the comity of nations. The ability of a nation to grow and develop depends on the quality of its educational system, not on the quantum of natural resources like land, forestry, and sea products available in the country. After all, Nigeria has all these resources in abundance and yet she is among the poorest countries in the world (Ocho, 2005). The true of this is captured in the national policy on education that adopted education as an instrument par excellence effective national development (FRN, 2004). Education is therefore, a necessity that prepares and equips learners for all aspects of life. It provides learners with basic foundation to

function and develop in the society. Any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society proceeds educational revolution.

Nigeria in its transition from an essentially traditional society to the modern technological one, has over the years, undergone series of education revolutions and transformations. The present seven points agenda of president Goodluck administration immediately comes to mind, out of which is education system. Transformation is a mark of dissatisfaction of a system or condition which demands for a change. Edem (2011), puts transformation as a systematic and paradigm shift or change of the previous epoch necessitated by dysfunction or dissatisfaction. At different times, efforts have been made to improve on the ability quality of education. Alumode (2012), opines that educational transformation involves coming up sound policies on education, implementing policies and also involving stakeholders at every stage of the implementation. The transformational role of education in national development justifies the series of revolutions education sector in order to achieve the nation's objectives, which is intended to be actualized through education. The burden of this paper therefore, is to examine the role of education in national development, previous educational revolutions and the position of counselling in the educational revolutions and the position of counseling in the educational transformation agenda, as it relates to national development.

### **Education**

Education is said to be the foundation for national development and advancement. It is the pivot or springboard through which other resources for development thrive. FRN (2004), explains in the national policy on education that education is the basis for advancement of civilization or transformation of the country. It defined education as the process of transmitting or inculcating knowledge and cultural value and norms of the society into the young ones in order to be a responsible adult and contribute to the development of the society. In the words of Falayi (2004), education is the transmission of what is worthwhile into individuals to make them knowledgeable and contribute to of the society. Education is often seen as the force that can be used to bring about changes and of course, the greatest investment that a nation makes in achieving quick national development. This is the basis for the assertion that no nation can rise beyond the quality of its education system (teachers). Education therefore, acts as catalyst for modern civilization or transformation. It is a long term investment by the government to make the society a living place. It is a powerful instrument for man's improvement and survival. It is a key that unlocks the doors to economic growth and development.

### **Roles of Education to Development**

The position of education in the development of the nation is vividly captured in the national policy on education in which national objectives are encapsulated, which the nation intends to achieve through education (FRN, 2004). The policy states among others as follows: Acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual

to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

However, the extent to which these objectives have been achieved is better imagined than described. One of the nation's appealing targets is to transform Nigeria into a land of full and bright opportunities for all. The availability or non availability of desired opportunities is left to your assessment. The recurrent educational reforms or revolutions over the years are obviously an attestation or indication of failure of the previous policies to achieve the set goals. The education had in the past, been accused of producing half baked graduates and schools as breeding grounds for cultism and other forms of maladaptive behaviours. Examination malpractice, certificate forgery, incessant strikes, academic disruptions, late payment of teacher's salaries and malingering had dotted the education sector. Falayi (2004), explains the rate of the fallen of education as very high and therefore lost the confidence of the public. Edem (2001), asserts that Nigerian certificates graduates are looked down upon by their contemporaries in other countries in event of comparison or call for duty. This is an impression situation that never goes down well with any Nigerian. In the face of this, government never found it easy, as it has never rested but at different times, made changes in her educational programmes.

### **Educational Reforms**

Prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, there have been series of reforms, ordinances and memoranda on education resulting from reports of inefficiencies of previous policies. The Sir Eric Ashby led commission in 1959 was the latest. The commission had Prof. K.O. Dike, Senator Shettima Kashim and Dr. S.D. Onabamiro as Nigerians among other members. Just a month (September) before independence, the commission submitted that for any reasonable economic, social and political development to take

place in Nigeria, the educational sector must be developed. This was to serve Nigeria till 1980 without a replan. This was short lived as the euphoria of self government crashed the programme in early 70s.

Again, the then young Nigeria, being in a hurry to develop, after the Nigeria/Biafra civil unrest, embarked on another revolution in education sector; believing education to be a crucial instrument for rapid development. Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was later re-baptized Universal Basic

Education (UBE) was introduced. This provided for free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children. This resulted to unimaginable outburst in the influx or enrolment of children into schools. The implication being that government got more than bargains. There was not adequate number of teachers. Auxiliary teachers or 'anyhow' teachers were scouted to augment the inadequacies. Classrooms were not enough, children studied under the trees, no fund to pay salaries of the recruited teachers. The necessary facilities were not available. Many of the teachers abandoned their duty post in search of greener pasture. The programme therefore collapsed. Several other attempts had been made by government to revamp or reposition education in the past at different levels of education. The popular 6-3-3-4 system, a shift from the old 6-5-4 model, immediately comes to mind. This is a system in which a child instead of the former six years in primary, five years in the secondary and four years in the university, now spends six years in the primary, three years in junior secondary where emphases are laid on technical, commercial and agricultural studies such as metal work, home economics, masonry, accountancy, shorthand, poultry and typing. The supervising body at this level is Universal Basic Education Board (UBEB). After this the child proceeds to another three years in secondary to be supervised by Secondary Education Board (SEB). Children finally chooses

or decides on the vocation or discipline to pursue. It is then concluded with four years extensive studies in the university. A striking feature of this system is the evaluation method which introduced continuous assessment instead of over depending on the single final examination for evaluating learning outcomes.

A number of coordinating and supervising bodies have been set in place by successive governments to ensure optimum productivity, such as Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education, Teachers Registration Council (TRC) and similar commissions. Also of note is the introduction and disbursement of the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which aims at ensuring all round efficiency of education.

Examination malpractice decree by past military governments and other enabling laws to check excesses of students which to a great extent have marred our education are measures taken to transform education into a more virile system. The President Goodluck led administration introduced a new salary structure for and lectures to motivate teachers shows a match toward massive reformation of education. The controversial post UMTE text in an indication that all is not well with the educational system which is gradually eroding the confidence of the public in the economy.

#### **Weaknesses**

In spite the commendable efforts and pragmatic policies and reforms in education sector by government at different times, much of the desired educational objectives do not seem to have been achieved. Okonkwo (2004), reports that the attitudes of teachers at all levels ranges from lateness to duty, leaving duty before closing time, absenteeism, lethargy, extortion, exploitation, lack of commitment among other forms of truancy. It could -be true

to state the above scenario does not depict a match towards the actualization of the nation's educational objectives, hence the present standard of our education.

Our institutions of learning now wear a complexion of pity than admiration as seat of wisdom. Most schools in the rural areas lack classroom blocks while good number still study under trees with 2-3 teachers to a population of 150-500 students. One wonders what the government or the hopes to harvest from such arrangement. Deviancies of our school children seem to defied all disciplinary measures. Schools have become a breeding ground for all forms cult societies. The school authorities appear helpless. Uzoma (2001), notes that chances of students losing their lives to road mishaps is fewer than those that die in inter cult clashes and rivalries. Bullying, intimidation and gangsterism is the order. Teachers/lectures are neither respected nor spared of the harassments. They harass, beat and even maim teachers at the slightest provocation just to announce or establish their dominance or arrival on 'stage'.

The incidence of examination malpractice has been on the increase, taking different dimensions and proportions. The act now is a collaboration teachers, school managers, examining bodies and students. The habits of hard work and honesty have been slaughtered at the altar of cheating; yet many don't worry. Some parents even sponsor the illegality (Awam, 2006).

The introduction of the new teachers salary structure does not seem to be the desired cushion as it is not paid in time while in some places it is not implemented. This will obviously not augur well with the system. A hungry teacher may be an angry teacher and we can guess what an angry teacher can do. Industrial disputes, strikes, protests, riots and resentment have continuously hampered the desired growth and development of the educational economy.

Students over stay their approved periods for a course without compensations. Employment opportunity is almost zero for Nigerian graduates after completion of their studies in the face of the ever increasing school fees.

Another major deficit in the educational system is over emphasis on certificate than knowledge or competence. This is a serious misplacement. Even though some may argue that after all, it is the only visible evidence to show attendance and completion of a programme, but has criminally institutionalized examination malpractice whose output is certified quacks. This particular weakness seems to be the greatest undoing to the actualization of national development. Employments and selections are based on the type of certificate an individual brandishes, it does not matter, even when the bearer would have stolen it. When employments and appointments are made on this basis, knowing that certificate itself does not work, but the empty bearer, then productivity will be certainly poor. The popular paradigm that one does not give what he does have, for it is out of the abundance that he gives out.

Most importantly dangerous is the abuse of teaching profession. Let it be stated again that no educational transformation can work without first transforming the teachers, just like no nation will rise above her educational quality. Teachers are the pivot around which educational system revolves. Unfortunately, teaching profession has been bastardized, porously opened to all comers as a gateway to better vocation. No ambitious child will ordinarily choose teaching or opt for education programme in tertiary institution in midst of other opportunities. Ocho (2004), laments that most students and parents only pick education course or choose to study education related courses in the face of no other discipline or professions but as a last resort. Falayi (2004) notes that colleges and faculties of education are usually seen as dumping

ground for dull candidates and average once who have to gained admission into other fields. This may have accounted for usual cut off mark preference for admission into education programme in order to attract students until it was recently harmonized. The introduction of Post Graduate Diploma in Education which formally crashes untrained fellows into the profession within few months of crash programme makes ridicule of the profession. Education managers don't seem to be helping issues. No crash programme can make a teacher to practice medicine, law, journalism or engineering without undertaking full training in the discipline as is the case with education. This is a trend has helped to reduce the quality of education in Nigeria. Teaching is a special profession that involves the art transmitting knowledge into another. As a matter of fact, one may be intelligent but may not know how to transmit knowledge because he is not trained in the art. The influx of untrained personnel into teaching has continued to undermine the nation's march to greatness through education.

### **Counseling Perspectives**

Counseling is a psychological process of assisting an individual or group of persons to understand him/themselves and their worlds so as to be satisfactory in life. Counseling has educational, vocational and socio-personal services which mainly aim at assisting to prevent or solving problems of adjustment, vocational choices and academics. An individual needs counseling as well as government in all spheres of human endeavour, especially as it relates to decision taking including the ongoing transformation policy for it to achieve its desired goals. The following therapeutic approaches have been identified.

### **1. Cognitive Structuring**

Behaviour is said to be a function of learning. School managers should early enough to structure or guide children toward suitable world of work, creating habits of hard work and solid moral base in the children's mind so that they don't from it when they grow. Cognitive structuring is a psychological construct that involves persuasion technique of appealing to conscience or the mind to suit the future. Emphasis here should be to catch them young. Statements as listed below could be presented: Truth is life. No pain no gain. Hard work is the key to success. As you make your bed so you will lie on it. The school children will be reached or arrested with these techniques during morning assemblies. In this way, children will develop morally, socially and academically. This is unlike where attention is centred only on the educational needs of the child to the total neglect of other aspects of human development.

### **2. Cognitive Restructuring**

Under this technique, a change is advocated when a deficit in behaviour is noticed. Rational Emotive Therapy as propounded by Albert Ellis (1969), will be applied. Here, the teacher or school child should be confronted or defaulted with his irrational utterances, misdemeanour, approach or behaviour as products of their irrational thoughts. He should be shown how happy, satisfied and productive he could be when he thinks or acts logically or rationally and how sad and unfulfilled when he is irrational. This could applied during students protests, agitations, labour disputes, strikes and other forms of conflicts of interest between education stakeholders. Dialogue and balanced bargaining is advocated. This will help in

resolving school related crises and thereby ensure cordially, partnership and optimum output.

**3. Public Awareness or Sensitization**

This is programme of activities through which members of the public are educated or orientated on the meaning and benefits of new policies or transition stages in order to gain public support collective and collective dedication to its implementation. The recent debates on the downstream oil deregulation before its final proclamation immediately comes to mind. Similar awareness exercises should be organized when introducing a new educational policy in which every stakeholder should be considered or involved. Covert sensitization as a psychological tool will be very effective in this respect. This tool is explained by Kolo (2005), as pairing together of unpleasant experience with unpleasant behaviour, in which the consequences of the two opposing actions are exposed. The major key players in the education sector should be made understand the two sides of their decisions and reconcile same if they disagree to prevent avoidable disruptions of the system.

**4. Environmental Psychotherapy**

This method emphasizes on relocation to a new location of erring staff or students to escape a psychological trauma, guilty feeling or shame arising from or often associated with maladaptive behaviour educational managers should as a matter of necessity, apply this technique without any vindictive tendency. This will help the teacher or learner to be at his best. The usual transfer of staff is a good example. Teenage pregnancies should not result to

drop out from school. Such child relocates to another area to continue her studies after delivery of her baby.

**Conclusion**

Nigeria has unimaginable quantum of natural resources, yet it is classified as one of the poorest countries in the world. This is not unconnected with the fact that she has not given educational sector the desired attention it deserves. All over the world, education is seen as instrument par excellence for the development of any nation but the extent to which Nigeria genuinely holds unto this, leaves much to be desired. Teachers who are the pivot around which education rotates are not paid above board. School infrastructures are yet to attain the deserved footing. Teacher education and teaching as a profession, is yet to outgrow inferior comparison in midst of its contemporaries. No wonder the series of reforms or revolutions on education, yet another transformation is desired.

**Recommendations**

Schools at all levels should wear images of hope as seats wisdom, upon which our hopes for brighter future depend. Government should employ and deploy guidance and counselors to our schools, which seem to be absent, in most public schools to take up non academic aspects of the child's development while school heads concentrate on administration and academics. This helps to make the child an all round responsible adult when he grows and contribute his quota to the development of the nation.

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