
RE-ENGINEERING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examines the formal education and its roles in making Nigerians self sustaining and self-reliant in relation to the non-formal education and its applicability to national development. The paper posits that with the attention being given to formal education by the government and other stakeholders, the result of formal education for self sustainability should have been more than what is obtainable now. So re-engineering non-formal education for immediate employment and self productivity through adequate funding, policy formulation, supervision and implementation is highly imperative.

At independence, Nigeria was not a developed country; the need then was for the post colonial government to evolve, develop, execute and implement as well as continually evolve a culture of evaluation and maintenance of its infrastructure/programmes. One of the areas that needed attention then was education. Education as inherited from the colonial masters was not aimed at production. The traditional informal education which favoured the dignity of labour, self-employment and productivity at independence had gradually given place to education for its own sake. It became a status symbol making the mere ownership of certificate a status symbol. This resulted in men and women abandoning the idea of traditional occupation (self-employment) acquired through non-formal education for the white-collar jobs created through formal schooling. This class of people acquired false notions of superiority to many who possess it while fostering an inferiority complex in those who did not have it. The genesis of this foundation has to date produced graduates who cannot use their hands and produce any meaningful thing. Unfortunately the multifaceted criminal acts of examination malpractice in our formal institutions produce semi-literates whose main aim is to get to the top at whatever means being half baked school learners but fully baked criminals. The vicious circle continues.

The Development Policies in the Nigerian Educational Sector

This is not, however, to postulate that nothing was done to improve or correct the grammar school system inherited from the colonial masters. The first positive attempt at evolving a viable educational policy for Nigeria started with the Ashby Commission set up in 1959 (Ujo 1994). The white paper issued by the Nigerian Government in 1961 formed the foundation of the educational policy in the first

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National Development Plan which was introduced in 1962. Five universities came into existence as a result of the Ashby Commission. These popularly known as the first generation Universities were the:

- University of Ibadan, upgraded from University College established in 1548
- University of Nigeria Nsukka
- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
- University of Lagos
- University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo

Educational policy in the first National Development Plan 1962-1968 targeted increases in enrolment in the universities, secondary, teacher training and technical education. In the second National Development Plan of 1970-75 the government embarked on a policy of massive expansion of educational facilities.

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) introduced during Gowon's administration which made primary education free from September 1976 was introduced. The unity schools or Federal Government Colleges were established during this period as well as the establishment of the National Universities Commission in 1974 to regulate the activities of the Federal Government owned universities whose numbers were on the increase.

The educational policy during the third National Development Plan 1975-1980 contained in it what appeared to be the most ambitious of all in the National Policy on Education. The initial groundwork towards the new policy was a culmination of expressions of general dissatisfaction with the existing educational system which did not seem to satisfy fully the envisaged national needs, aspirations and goals of an emerging nation. As result of the National Curriculum conference held in 1969, a section of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was convened in 1973.

The seminar which included voluntary agencies and external bodies deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be. The outcome of the seminar was a draft document which after due comments were received from the states and other interest groups, led to the final document- The national policy on Education, published in 1977 but which came into operation in 1983- the 6-3-3-4 system.

Government's intention was that the far reaching provisions set out in all sections of the policy should transform all aspects of the national life overtime. To this end, the government set up a National Educational Policy implementation committee to translate the policy into a workable blueprint that would guide the bodies whose duty it would be to implement the policy. The committee was also to develop monitoring system for the educational plan as it evolved. Among other things the 6-3-3-4 system considered adequately, the role of science and technology in development. Specifically,

for the interest of this write-up section 7b reads: Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education encompasses all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. (p.36)

Subsection 75 spells out the following goals of the mass literacy adult and non-formal education.

- a. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education.
- b. Provide functional and remedial education for these young people who did not complete secondary education.
- c. Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- d. Provide in-service on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills and;
- e. Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic educational for public enlightenment.

Subsection 76 goes on to spell out the establishment of a national commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal education enjoining each state to do the same to complement the Federal Government's effort. Machinery was also set in place for monitoring and evaluation of mass literacy programmes and facilities.

What Went Wrong?

However, two decades into the evolvement of what appeared to be the panacea for Nigeria's educational woes, the then Honourable Minister of Education Professor Babalola Borishade convened a National Summit of Higher Education on the theme "Repositioning Higher Education in Nigeria". The summit had become necessary because within the past ten or more years, the Nigerian higher educational system had been bedevilled by myriads of problems such as strikes, leading to closure and disruption of academic calendars, cultism, and examination malpractices. The unsavoury events have eroded the quality of education. Many products of the nation's universities, polytechnics, colleges of education were known to fail competency tests given by employers of labour and productivity. There was a growing trend towards lack of recognition of degrees, diplomas and certificates from the Nigerian higher educational system, a condition that is a matter of fact giving the nation a great concern.

Among the observations made by the committee was the fact that already, several reports of studies on higher education in Nigeria had been submitted to government including the Ashby Report, the Longe Report, the Etsu Nupe Report, the Vision 2010 and the Yabani Report without much improvement in the system. Another observation worthy of note was the fact that the social vices in the tertiary institutions were not peculiar to the staff and students of these institutions but also to the larger society.

The Reality of Formal Education in Nigeria

The foregoing exposition on the formal education in Nigeria has been made to appreciate the fact that in practice the hopes and aspirations of the Nigerian government towards the education of its citizenry is not markedly different from what obtains elsewhere. The concept of education whether formal, informal and non-formal meets the world concept. For example, the International Council for Educational Development (ICED 1973) grouped education into three categories; formal, non-formal and informal education.

Formal Education is defined as the hierarchically structured full time chronologically graded system running from the primary school through university and in addition to general and academic studies a variety of full time and professional training and generally controlled by a Ministry or department of education. Informal education is the life-long process for acquiring incidental attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through daily experience and the education influences and resources of one's environment. Through informal education, a child masters the fundamentals of his mother tongue, acquires a substantial vocabulary before he goes to school and learns social functions. Non-formal education on the other hand is defined as any organized educational activity outside the established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning objectives. P.12

These definitions agree totally with the educational practices in Nigeria. However, formal education in Nigeria has not proved or yet yielded itself as a viable avenue for economic reliance, in recent times. The vast majority of formal education products in recent times are waste pipes through which the nation's hard earned resources are flushed out. The value in the pride of being sincerely educated is gradually oozing out of the country. The craze to be certificated without knowledge is becoming alarmingly frightening. People use their certificates for lucrative employment not based on what they know but whom they know. As a matter of fact in some institutions job placements are given without interviews fitting square pegs in round holes to the detriment of the nation.

Non-formal Education- Its Place and Impact on Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

There are some reasons why non-formal education is strategic to the meaningful attempt to enhance the development of any country, human resources. In other words, non-formal education performs some crucial functions particularly employment for self productivity in developing countries such as Nigeria. Due to the apparent unintended deficiencies of formal education, non-formal education fills some kind of gap by providing some minimal learning for the vast majority of adults and youths who have been partially exposed or never been exposed to any form of formal education. Thus the non-formal school system has a place for the larger group of youths

who have never been to school or who have dropped out before finishing or have completed primary school but could not proceed to secondary school.

The seriousness of the unemployment problem in Nigeria is attributable principally to the formal education system. The graduate unemployment problem is caused mainly by the apparent rapid expansion of facilities for formal education without adequate growth in employment opportunities. The second major reason for promoting non-formal education arises from the deficiencies of formal primary and secondary education in catering for the needs of socio-economic development as well as for the fulfilment of individual aspirations. In other words even if it were possible for all children to receive primary and secondary education, there will still be need for remedial non-formal education. This is because the organization, methodology, of formal education are such that they alone cannot be expected to handle realistically, the task of equipping the children and adolescents with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for employment, household management, family responsibilities and participating in the community, all aimed at living a satisfying and productive adult life. With the UPE and now UBE, the number of children seeking entrance into secondary school has outpaced facilities with very small fraction of the learners progressively entering the higher levels leaving the chaff behind. Worse still and especially in Nigeria, a country believes in titles, the orientation of the formal school system has served mainly to build expectations, goals and values related to life and occupations in the urban areas in the modern sectors of the economy even though the majority of the people live in the rural areas. Thus formal education can only drive such youths to the urban centres and thereby increase the growing urbanization problem with its drug abuse crime and HIV problems including urban unemployment.

Recent Trends in the Right Direction

As part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Babangida administration in 1986, certain organs were established to cater for the needs of mainly unemployed youths. Among these were:

- Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). One of the functional and specialized department of MAMSER was Mass Education(Ujo,1994)
- Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DIFRRI). Here again there was a national programme for co-operative and credit for road side mechanics and artisans
- The National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The NDE has as its objectives:
 1. The re-activation of public works.
 2. The promotion of self employment
 3. The organization of artisans into co-operative organizations
 4. The encouragement of the culture of maintenance and repairs.

The NDE was expected to realize these objectives through the following four programmes:

1. National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programmes. The training schemes under the programmes are;
 - a. The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme
 - b. Waste to wealth Scheme
 - c. Schools on Wheel Scheme
 - d. Disabled work Scheme
2. Small scale graduate employment programme. The schemes under these programmes are:
 - a. Job creation loan guarantee scheme
 - b. Mature people's scheme
 - c. Enterprise management support service
 - d. Entrepreneurship development programme
3. Agricultural sector employment programme special public works p.129.

Similarly, the Obasanjo government launched another comprehensive home grown poverty alleviation programme christened National Economic Empowerment & Development Strategies (NEEDS). Already the World Bank had pledged support for the NEEDS programme for the next two years. (Daily Trust 2004 p.8)

In another development the NDE under the women affairs and youth development minister had solicited for funding for its Start Your Business Projects (SYBP). The minister had called for partnership and support of all stakeholders in ensuring schemes and ventures for job completion of six model training youth centers and other initiatives aimed at strengthening youth organizations and network for increased participation of the youth in nation building.

She lamented that the Nigerian youth are faced with a long list of challenges including unemployment, good education, youth restiveness, cultism, drug abuse and capacity building; entrepreneurship and poor health especially the HIV/AIDS scourge. (Daily Trust August,200 p. 24) It is through such formal education that the youth will be given a sense of hope. What is wrong with the Nigerian youth is the environment with its induced problems.

Daily Trust (August 20th, 2004) again reports N120m World Bank loan to Urban Youth Employment and Development Project (UYEDP) to facilitate its project. The same page of Daily Trust carries news on efforts at resuscitating the National Youth Fund (NYF) to provide less cumbersome micro credit to young people.

Advantages of Non-formal Education in Economic Rehabilitation

Non-formal education has some advantages when compared with formal education. Training through on the job training such as the indigenous apprenticeship system is less expensive than formal training. It does not for example require the purchase of additional training equipment. Further more, rarely does the question of under utilization of expensive equipment arise in the case of on the job training. It is

usually a major problem in formal educational training institutions such as Trade Centers and Vocational schools. In fact in some cases the facilities of such formal institutions are used for non-formal training thus reducing the degree of utilization. Non formal education particularly on-the job training is flexible because it can be adapted to several work situations and it is a means whereby employers of labour can easily adjust to shortage of skills manpower and technological changes. On the job training minimizes the possibility of people being trained without eventually securing a job. Non formal education like literacy education, community development and agricultural extension gives quick result in comparison to formal education.

Suggestions/Recommendations

There is an urgent need to plan and develop all forms of adult to education programmes. Though the traditional apprenticeship form of vocational training can be encouraged because of the records it has kept of the years.

The government's present effort in encouraging the dignity of labour through the different programmes already outlined should not lose steam. The apprenticeship system should be modernized. The technical and management skill of small scale entrepreneurs should be upgraded to improve the quality of training they impart on their apprentices.

Finally, the pre-vocational courses being taught in secondary schools should be matched with adequate staffing and equipment so that at any point of their education such students may go on the apprenticeship scheme if they choose to or some scheme for out-of-school vocational training.

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