

# NIGERIA EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 2020: DRAMA FOR MASS LITERACY AS A PANACEA.

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## **Abstract**

Government in her National Policy on Education(2004) clearly that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals be set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual of the society in consonance with the realities of our environment world. The guiding principle therefore, of education in Nigeria is equip, every citizen with such skills, knowledge, attitude and values to enable them derive maximum benefits from being a member of the society living a fulfilled life and contributing to the development and welfare of the immediate community. This paper examined Nigeria education and developments beyond 2020, by way of using literacy medium through drama to create awareness on the importance of education on how it can bring about development in Nigeria. Finally, the paper recommended that for education to bring about development, the delivery process should be in such a way that it will enhance productivity.

**Keywords:** Education and Development, Drama, Literacy and Beyond 2020

Vision 2020 was a conscious National Development plan by late President Musa Yar'adua to take Nigeria into the top 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020. He was not the first to have designed a development plan. Nigeria, since independence, had witnessed many development goals on paper but none was widely publicized like vision 2020. There was first National Development plan 1962-1968, and second 1970 - 1974, third 1975 - 1980; forth 1981 – 1985. According to Damwesh and Thomas (2011), following the development plans were the emergence of the era of visions which are: vision 2000, 2010 and 20:2020. Vision 2000 had as its objectives education for all, health for all, housing for all, in-short it was almost everything for all. It was a Colossal failure, because nothing was achieved including that of vision 2010. Vision 20:2020 emerged from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) objectives and goal which include policies to eradicate poverty; achieving universal basic education; promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; reducing child mortality and improving maternal health; controlling of HIV / AIDS; controlling of malaria and other deadly diseases; it also seeks to develop global partnership with other countries and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Today, the whole idea is now beyond 2020 because the strategic plan for the actualization called the seven point agenda are very fine, fanciful and laudable. Given the realities of the problems of the nation on ground, low level of technological advancement, poor state of infrastructures, unstable power supply, electoral manoeuvring, insecurity and socio-economic instability, will the vision be actualized? (Nshe 2011). In spite of media propaganda, many of the laudable schemes launched in Nigeria failed because the means or tools were grossly irrelevant and in most cases, alien to the clientele.

According to Ebohon (2009), Legislation, as forceful as it is, cannot bring desired social change or adequate economic recovery because its effectiveness dies with the power that brings it into being. Mass mobilization through the media or in any other form becomes a mere rhetoric. It is when man is made Literate that he has a "new pair of eyes" which he can use to see the modern social challenges and use the Literacy acquired as a strong weapon to liberate and develop himself. To support these arguments above, Shaaba (2008) posited that the real cause of underdevelopments is man because as long as he remains underdeveloped as a result of his lack of education so will all resources remain dormant.

Without any doubt, Literacy enhances the total capabilities and the social status of the individual as without the ability to read and write in the present age he would seem to be outside dignified existence.

There must be an intensification of efforts on mass literacy programmes so as to stop perceiving literacy for all as mere rhetoric. This paper is looking at Nigeria education and development beyond the vision 2020 agenda, using drama as a medium of creating awareness and orientation on the importance of mass literacy which will in turn bring about the necessary social change and development in Nigeria.

### **Nigeria Education and Development**

Education is a product that is aimed at producing useful citizens, because useful people will contribute first to themselves and then to the society at large. Education is a process by which a sound mind is developed; thereby producing refined mind, body and soul. Today the case of Nigeria is a far cry from what is presented above. Way back in history before the country's interaction with religion and colonialism, there was a robust form of education that was all inclusive. This type of education was aimed at developing the child's physical and intellectual skills. The main aim of education then was to meet the needs of the individuals and the community, employment then was automatic. That made education functional. Instead of improving on this further, like farming, hunting, fishing, dyeing, weaving, blacksmithing etc. According to Isife and Ogakwu (2012) with the advent of Christianity and Islamism, there was a shift from this type of profitable education to Christian/Islamic education. The aim of the new Christian education was to prepare citizens that would convert others to the Christian folk. Emphasis was placed on training people to become catechists, teachers and clerks. Islamic education on the other hand was to make converts who will honour a number of ethical injunctions which make for civilized life. So what was taught to learners in schools was based on foreign ideas, norms and values.

Again in the colonial era, the aim of educational pursuit was to be closer to the white and not for skills improvement. The curriculum then was purely arts centred at the expense of science and technology. The educational system then was only producing men that could work as clerks for the white men. The native were not taught to improve skills in agriculture or other areas.

Rather, children were sent to school to attain a status. Getting formal education meant not working with our hands because status, power and prestige were attached to administrative and clerical positions. With this, education became dysfunctional (Isife and Ogakwu 2012).

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, by 1969 to be precise, there was a national curriculum conference which was attended by cross-section of Nigerians because the government of the day had seen that the type of education of the British and Missionaries were not geared towards integrating the nation for proper functional education system, that is characterized by school system that will develop and implement a vigorous curriculum that is intentionally tailored to individual, local and state needs.

The need for a national policy on education came about as a result of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. The conference was a culmination of expressions of general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which had become irrelevant to national needs, aspiration and goals. After all said and done, by 1977 the very first document that spelt out in clear terms the philosophy and objective of Nigeria education was published - "National Policy on Education". The National Policy on Education (NPE 2004) came with a National Philosophy and goals which are:

- a. Live in unity and harmony as one individual, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice
- b. Promote inter-African Solidarity and world peace through understanding while the five goals are:
  - i. A free and democratic society
  - ii. A just and egalitarian society
  - iii. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
  - iv. A great and dynamic economy
  - v. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN 2004).

Furthermore, Nigeria's philosophy of education therefore is based on the following:-

- ✓ The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- ✓ The full integration of the individual into the community

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✓ The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

With the above philosophies and goals in the nation's education policy since the constitution of the curriculum conference till date, it goes to show that Nigeria's education is in the deep pit. The nation's educational sector has experienced one reform and innovation in the curriculum in recent times but that has not changed the sector. Rather, these policies, reforms and innovation come into the system like a barber's chair springing round but making no progress.

This paper is concerned about the state and development of Nigeria's educational sector, not just to the sector alone but to the nation at large. There are so many factors responsible for the backward trend of the educational system in Nigeria. The major one is the policy makers who are always quick to introduce policies without first considering how long it took the country where they copied or borrowed from to stabilize their system and the policy before introducing it. All they are after is they should be seen as working. In the first place their children are not in public schools or better still are not schooling in the country. So they make policies that their own offspring will not experience. It is preposterous seeing the ever-flowing wave of Nigerians travelling abroad for education. Today, because of the systemic failure in the educational system, most foreign universities are putting in place qualifying examination for Nigerian graduates. To stop the trend our policy makers should as a matter of fact revisit the National Policy on Education. The document is very rich. What is needed now is the full implementation of the education sector as recommended by this policy.

If the system must develop, it is time to look beyond the formal sector of the educational system as spelt out in section one; article six of the National Policy on Education:-

*For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals, education has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective, citizenship national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (FRN, 2004).*

The aforementioned cannot be achieved through only formal school system. That is why the position of this paper is looking at Nigerian's educational development beyond 2020 using drama as a medium for creating awareness on mass literacy.

### **Concept of Mass Literacy**

In the National Policy on Education there is a provision for mass literacy, adult and non-formal education that is to encompass all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal system such as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. For the purpose of this paper, mass literacy will be defined as the ability of a great number of persons to read, write and compute in any known language used by man. In the views of Indabawa (1995) it is the ability to encode and decode with a view to communicating information, knowledge, skills, meanings and ideas for the facilitation of day-to-day living.

According to Oyedeki, Omolewa and Asiedu (1982) Literacy is the skill of transmitting and receiving messages in an intelligible manner in written form. Literacy is not just the physical ability to read and write, it includes the ability to do both intelligibly. To be literate is to be able to communicate with other persons through reading and writing. They went further to argue that when one attempts to define literacy one finds that no one definition can be acceptable. A person is said to be literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which will enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development (Harman 1970).

The deplorable state of rural communities in Nigeria calls for their transformation, if Nigeria must meet her target of becoming one of the world's twenty biggest economies by the year 2020, but at this juncture this paper is looking at it beyond 2020. A campaign for mass literacy therefore should pin itself down to the training of the masses of Nigerians to acquire the skill of reading and writing as an essential starting point to the social, political and economic heights attained by the developed world. Such training should be functionally indicated, if it must enable Nigerians to solve their own problems by achieving their own synthesis of their experience, illuminated by previous and newly-acquired knowledge in their relationship with their fellows. In effect, what is necessary at Nigeria's level of development is a mass functional literacy campaign, which will enable the masses to work themselves out of poverty and disease. According to Anyanwu (1998) it is this type of Literacy that will effectively place the Nigerian society on the hopeful pedestal for a successful development take-off into the technological age. This also will be able to bring Nigerians in the rural communities to that level at which new literates should be able to read and write their own letters and read notices on posters, instructions on food items, drugs, plants and seeds, application instruction on fertilizers bags, insecticides, herbicides etc.

### **Drama as a Panacea for Mass Literacy**

What role is drama expected to play here with inbuilt prejudice against it. It is the crux of this paper to show that drama is more or less like a catalyst that sets other activities in motion. The agitating role drama is expected to play in our educational system today knows no measure, especially in a country where education has reached rock bottom level. Drama has vital role to play in the lives of the individuals in the rural areas, these include; innovation and preservation, socialization, recruitment and preparation for social and occupational role, it also aids integration and custody, self-discovery and the ability to adjust within the society.

Drama activities for now are wise choices for creating awareness to both the young and adults alike in the rural areas, because through drama experienced individuals will creatively explore life's challenges and relationship. Since a well packaged drama is action packed the people will enjoy sharing the excitement because it will help to create an awareness of the problem posed by mass illiteracy in their domain and other communities as well. Such awareness programme can motivate the masses towards struggling to eradicate this scourge of their community. It can also promote mass registration of both the young and the adults for mass literacy programmes. This can only be achieved when the people must have become aware of the importance of this type of exercise in the whole scheme of achieving individual and national development. The initial drama campaign programme can help to mobilize strong support for the development of the operation and organisation of mass literacy programmes. Drama is one very strong tool that can help to develop interest as well as sustain the people's morale on mass literacy programmes.

Drama as explained in Aristotle's "Poetics" represents men in action or men doing things, therefore drama is a representation of an action. In view of Aristotle's explanation, it is clear that drama is essentially a representation, improvisation or re-enactment. That action which is imitated is the crucial element in drama since something is done by interacting characters, that people or characters are the agents of the action in drama. According to Okpeodua (2010) the essence of drama is to edify or entertain or to do both in a general sense therefore, drama can be described as any working art designed to be represented on stage by actors and actresses who impersonate the characters of others with a view to either instruct the people or entertain them, or to do both.

The World Book Encyclopaedia defines drama as an art form that tells a story through the speech and action of the characters in the story. Drama is therefore an impersonation, a re-enactment of human experiences in action and a representation of human life using the arts of the theatre. It is through this medium that the performers use to share an experience, desire, expectation and create an ideal world, Drama is an art form that is well designed and constructed for specific purpose and in most cases for specific audience and actors.

Drama is a universal language, in the sense that, it is very easy to comprehend the packaging of the message. The logic behind drama is that an ideal world is created out of the real world, both the actors

and the audience journey into this imaginary world to explore it and discover the secrets with which to adjust or readjust life in the real world, for you not to return into the real world from the imaginary one and remain the same, because life would have been so affected that adjustment in the real world will now be based on the messages or lessons learnt from the imaginary world. This is what makes drama a slice of life. Drama however has always been part of the tool for educating, behaviour modification and changing man since the beginning of time and therefore it has become a key to human development.

Through a well packaged drama piece, millions of illiterates in various walks of life in the rural and even the urban areas will begin to see the need for them to become literate so as to make them more efficient and effective in their jobs. To use drama to create mass mobilization and awareness will go a long way to give self help to communities where farmers, carpenters, plumbers, masons etc. will acquire little writing and reading skills that will make them less dependent on people to read and take measurements for them.

Development requires an educated and enlightened populace. Aderinoye (2007) is of the view that the difference between the developed and the underdeveloped countries of the world is related to the level of literacy among the populace. It should be noted here that literacy or functional literacy is a foundation on which education that leads to development is built. Development is a concept which implies a conscious and progressive transformation of a society. It suggests a determined effort to bring about significant transformation of the society, in a desired direction making use of available resources. If Nigeria and her educational system must develop beyond 2020, Mass literacy programmes must be vigorously pursued using drama as a motor for creating the awareness.

### **Conclusion**

Right from the inception of this paper, it is clear that mass literacy programme has suffered a set back because the federal government of Nigeria in the past and even in the present have been good at policies formulation and very poor at implementation. The National Policy on Education that emerged out of the 1969 Curriculum Conference had put in place a mass literacy programme that was to encompass all forms of functional education in Nigeria. Section seven (7) of the policy stated clearly the objectives and goals of mass literacy programme. The government at all levels should revisit this section in the National Policy on Education and make frantic effort to put into practice those policies. This will go a long way to improve the lives of Nigerians in one way or the other.

### **Recommendations**

- Mass Literacy programmes should be designed at all levels of government in such a way that they will result into increased productivity.
- There should be sensitization programme through the use of drama so as to attract more rural and urban dwellers who are not aware of the programme of mass literacy.
- As stated in the N.P.E., government must ensure that all the literacy Network committees at the local government, districts, villages, wards and centres are operating efficiently and effectively.
- Most of these government agencies that are specifically designed to provide manpower development and training should be well funded without government interferences, but rather they should be monitored so as for them to achieve the objectives for which they were established.
- The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should create a unit under it that will be in charge of Drama/theatre activities. This unit will be responsible for using the medium to assist individuals, private, public and government organisations to make their programmes get across to the local and urban populace.

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