

# IMPEDIMENTS TO THE VISION AND MISSION OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The vision and mission of education in Nigeria at first, was a derivative of the colonialists. It had as its primary objectives reading, writing and interpreting which served the colonialist interest to get to the grass-root. It was later discovered that the vision and mission could not cultivate in Nigerians what it takes to develop technologically and creation jobs. Consequently, this paper looks at vision and mission of colonial education and its inadequacies, the desired vision and mission of Nigerian education and recommendations on the way forward to make her educational programmes to address the basic needs.

## Introduction

Nigeria is an entity that was brought together as a result of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, including the Colony of Lagos, in 1914. Prior to this date, the elements of nationhood like: honour, truth, loyalty, integrity, honesty, dedication, hard work, good character, reliability and other similar virtues characterized the basic aspirations of the people of Nigeria, and her place in the world community of nations, both in terms of respect and responsibility (Anyaoku, 2005).

Such were the structures put in place for effective national development before the coming of the colonial masters with their central administration and formal education which were fully embraced by the indigenes. The aims of colonial masters' early education were selfish, being centred on reading, writing and interpreting which bridged communication gap between them and the governed.

It is unfortunate to note that after about 45 years of independence with the establishment of many tertiary institutions, offering both vocational and non-vocational courses, disloyalty, dishonesty, disorderliness, narrow-mindedness, selfishness, assassination of defenceless citizens, et cetera, replaced our societal values which we used to cherish. Consequently, the mission and vision of Nigeria's *National Policy on Education* has become a nightmare and the need to put these missions of her education in proper perspective calls for attention.

Certainly, the Nigeria of today is of the dream of our founding fathers.

## The Mission and Vision of the Missionary Education

As earlier noted, the objective of early formal education was to serve the interest of colonial masters. These objectives were later found not adequate in scope. Hence, the report of the Educational Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office in 1847, as cited by Nwozu (1971:13), recommended:

- (a) To make the school the means of improving the condition of the peasantry by teaching them how health may be preserved by proper diet, cleanliness, ventilation, clothing and by the structure of their dwelling.
- (b) To give practical training in household economy and in the cultivation of the cottage garden as well as those common handicrafts by which a labourer may improve his domestic comfort.
- (c) Improved agriculture is required to replace the system of exhausting the virgin soil and then leaving to natural influences alone the work of reparation.

The education of the colonial races would, therefore, not be complete for small farmers unless it included this subject.

At this time, the need to embrace vocational education continued to gain more grounds. Hence, the Federal Ministry of Education constituted the Ashby Commission (1960:63) to investigate Nigeria's needs in the post-secondary certificate and higher education. The commission recommended technical and vocational education to Nigerians to sustain its economy in the 1980s.

Consequently, technical and vocational education is noted to run programmes that help in acquisition of practical and applied skills in specific trades, occupation, profession, etc. This led the

National Policy on Education (2004) to clearly state the present mission of technical and vocational education as follows:

... to provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and commerce, particularly, at sub-professional grades; to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development; to provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man; to give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies; to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of

craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant; and to enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology (p.30).

From the foregoing, it is observed that the objectives of the early education has been viewed to help cope with the present technological challenges around the world.

#### The Vision of Education Desired in Nigeria

The vision of Nigeria as a country has been identified in her *National Policy on Education* (2004) to include

- (a) a free and democratic society;
- (b) a just and egalitarian society;
- (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) a great and dynamic economy; and
- (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

To achieve these objectives, we rely on a sound education policy, adequate funding and proper monitoring of the implementation to achieve the desired objectives, which is development. And development, according to Adedoyin (2001), must be people-centred. In supporting this, Dudley (1989:483) as quoted by Oyovwi (2004:96) observes the following questions inherent in understanding of a country's development:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore; what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to inequality?

Thus, if these three variables: poverty, unemployment and inequality are observed to be declining, one could say the country is experiencing development.

These questions are further reinforced when Anyiwe (2002:3) sees development as progress in place of decay, food in place of hunger, health in place of disease, education in place of ignorance, decent environment in place of slum, employment in place of joblessness, equity in place of inequality, freedom and esteem in place of servitude.

Anyaku (2005:8) observes in his article, *Towards a Sustainable Future for Nigeria*, that:

We all want for ourselves and our children a stable, prosperous and united country whose standing in Africa and the wider world will command respect; a country whose citizens would enjoy universally acknowledged fundamental rights and liberties, are free to associate with one another as compatriots whatever their background, are actuated by a genuine sense of patriotism, enriched and inspired by their diversity, free and able to contribute their utmost for the good of their country, expect and be guaranteed justice and fairness anywhere within its borders without discrimination against them on grounds of ethnic origin or religious adherence, and wholly free to enjoy their country in peace and security.

This optimizes the vision of education in Nigeria in a nutshell.

#### The Concept of Mission and Vision

Mission is the objectives that organizations aspire towards. And vision is broader than mission. It is within the framework of vision, that mission statements are drawn. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines vision as: "the ability to think about or plan the future with great imagination and intelligence." From the vision of universities, Okebukola (1998:49) identifies four common missions the universities the world over subscribes to. These are:

- (a) To provide opportunities for individual development of able people;
- (b) To transmit the cultural heritage;
- (c) To add to existing knowledge through research creative activity;
- (d) To serve the public interest.

Thus, a child that has had full time education, from primary through to the university is expected to be fully empowered, not only as a job seeker, but also job creator to be able to contribute his quota to national development. Most often, many graduates are handicapped in meeting with these expectations as many trained teachers, engineers, doctors and lawyers now roam the streets without jobs (Okebukola, 1998:52).

Secondly, if education that provided the advanced countries with the desired national development cannot provide same for Nigeria, something must be seriously wrong in the country's educational system either in terms of mission and vision or implementation or both.

#### Problems of Mission and Vision of Education in Nigeria

The mission and vision of education in Nigeria is supposed to be the focus of all stakeholders in the educational system at all times. Unfortunately, a lot of events dominate Nigeria's actions that most often, we give mission and vision of education little thought when we are taking decisions that bother on all Nigerians. Some of these militating factors are:

##### (a) Political System

It is unfortunate that a country that had lived for over forty years is still not having confidence in the type of political system to adopt. This has given rise to the issues, which National Conference set up by President Obasanjo is to address. As Prince Tony Momoh in his booklet titled *In Search of a Viable Nigeria* notices,

Our expenditure profile shows that as at May 2002, we spent 92 per cent of our resources on recurrent expenditure. By the end of that year, we were borrowing to do so, and any vote for capital expenditure was at the expense of meeting recurrent demands like payment of salaries and allowances, and meeting our commitments to pensioners. We have therefore, had very little left for funding development, which means that if we refuse to revisit the structures, it will be a question of time before we would be borrowing to sustain the system of government we have opted for" (Anyako, 2005:8).

The vision and mission of the political system we have adopted over the years have been noticed to be faulty, because our mission and vision of education is faulty. The mode of delivery of education has been slightly modified by vocational and technical philosophy. This is still the pattern along the mode of mission of the missionaries who introduced western education. Lassa (1998:115) observes that the mission of the missionary education was to derive an acceptable political system that will help to deliver "Good Governance" to meet the aspiration of the people of Nigeria.

##### (b) Wrong Perception of Our Educational System

Many of our youths still take to education because of the fortune they believe the white collar jobs offer. The flamboyant living of the political class and managers of some government departments buttress this fact. The vision and mission of Nigerian education should be geared towards producing individuals who are patriotic and imbued with a determination to be great through their contributions to National Development, and not how much material benefit they are able to get from the system.

##### (c) The Problem of Inadequate Funding

Most researchers have identified inadequate funding to be the bane of Nigeria's educational system. But how inadequate is the funding against the background of the corrupt nature of Nigerians? It is common knowledge that those charged with the responsibilities of monitoring spending are often "bought over" during the exercise.

However, the need for adequate funding is an essential ingredient for education as the giver of "light", for it is popularly believed that education helps to eradicate poverty.

##### (d) Inadequate Incentives

Here, funding of education plays a major role again. A situation where teachers and their pensioners fail to get their monthly entitlements regularly is not motivating.

Teachers should be given enough facilities and equipment to foster teaching and learning situations. Teachers occupy important positions among the stakeholders in our educational system. A teacher should not just be referred to as a "teacher", but one who is proud of his job among other employees of other organizations.

##### (e) The Gap Between the Design and Implementation of Curriculum

Often, it is observed that there is a missing link between curriculum design and implementation. Sometimes, it is poor curriculum design, and where this is not the case, those charged with the implementation are often ignorant of the aims and objectives which form the focus of the curriculum. The curriculum is just handed over to teachers whose residue knowledge is relied upon to help them through implementation. Adequate pre-briefing and reorientation through regular in-service training and promotion prospect can help to overcome this hurdle.

(f) The Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)

Experience has shown that students sent out for SIWES are often turned back either on grounds of lack of space or pay by some organizations, or even with a demand from the students to pay them before they could allow them to use their organization to complement whatever theories they have learnt. Yet, such organizations that have such employees who show little or no knowledge of missions and vision of Nigeria's educational system are still in business unchallenged.

Eliminating the Problems Created by Impediments to the Mission and Vision of Nigeria's Educational System

The task of eliminating the impediments to the mission and vision of Nigeria's educational system rests squarely on the school leavers who have cultivated the culture of self-learning, self-confidence, self-reliance, patriotism, and encourage the dignity of labour by helping the country to secure a place in the global economy.

These solutions are:

1. The mission and vision of Nigeria education should reflect the needs of the society;
2. Adequate motivation should be given to the teachers because they hold the key to the mission and vision of education in Nigeria, just like in any other countries of the world;
3. Adequate funding sets the ball rolling. Without enough funds, curriculum cannot be designed and implemented, teachers cannot be trained, re-trained and motivated, facilities and equipment cannot be put in place before pupils' enrolment and in fact, a good teaching and learning environment cannot be secured or guaranteed to foster realization of the mission of education;
4. Entrepreneurship education should be emphasized in all our education programmes;
5. Teaching and learning situation should be taken away from the normal formal classroom environment to the field and should be practical-oriented. Students should be encouraged to create jobs, while the school should form the monitoring centre before graduation; and
6. Greatness should be determined by past activities and contributions to the national development.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, attempt has been made to redefine the mission and vision of Nigerian education, capable of helping Nigerians to tap their numerous mineral resources, on fertile land with varied plants and animals and good talents from our numerous tertiary institutions. Some other advanced countries did not have the opportunities we are wasting. Nigeria can be great, if only we love each other as ourselves. Patriotism is it.

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