

MAKING LITERARY EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper studies the overall vision of the educational policy in Nigeria and tries to x-ray the reason for the failure of this educational vision, which is pinned down to the prevailing national malaise and lack of follow-up supervision and assessment of the programme. Coming closer to the topic of this discourse, the paper identifies literary art education as an inevitable part of education in its entirety, which must be encouraged, no matter one's Held of interest. This is because literacy art education serves as a boost to learning in general. As a way forward, the paper proffers four suggestions for making literary art education achieve its set goals in the twenty-first century. These include the inclusion of the arms and objectives of literary studies in the curriculum; emphasis on the job or occupational opportunities of literary scholars; training of a new breed of literary scholars who will be equipped with better competence in training others, and finally efforts should be made to check the dwindling interest in the reading of literary works by the youths.

Introduction

Education is seen in general terms as a lifelong process. It may have beginning but it only terminates if one ceases to live. Specifically, education is both formal and informal according to Tayor (1994), involves a systematized and structured teaching and absorption of knowledge sets which the individuals need, to enable him adjust to and operate within a circumscribed where he exists (p. 19). This definition is relevant only when applied strictly against the traditional education concept but in a globalised contemporary system, it falls short because an individual's environment today, is the entire globe. This is because through the use of cellular phones and internet communication, the individuals is at home within the entire globe around him. Education now, therefore, is seen in terms of a global perspective (Ikeobi, 2000). This is why the formulators of the philosophy and goals of Nigeria's education recognized the issue of globalization when they asserted that education aspires to 'the promotion of inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding' (National Policy on Education 2004: 6). On this basis therefore, education is not viewed in terms of the immediate milieu but in a globalised perspective. The only local component is to enable the nation achieve her peculiar national interest in terms of its manpower development needs.

This paper is an attempt to explore the purview and the entire gamut of literary art education vis a vis its scope for the development and establishment of the citizenry for much needed the national intellectual upliftment. The paper explores the problems that tend to hinder the realization of the national aspirations many years after the inauguration of the educational policy guidelines. The essence of this investigation is to identify those problems and advance solution that could enhance the educational prospects in future.

Foundation for National Policy on Education

The vision for Nigeria's national policy is based on laying a solid foundation for a bright future both for individual and for nation as a whole. This vision is anchored on the following articles of faith.

- a. A fair and democratic society;
- b. A just and egalitarian society;
- c. A unified, strong and dynamic self-reliant nation;
- d. A great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE) (national policy on education 2004: 6)

• To achieve these aspirations, the educational plan is tailored to guide the citizen and help the individual to realize its full potentials through the following processes:

- a. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen;
- b. The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- c. The provision of equal access to educational opportunity for the citizen of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system (N.P.E, 2004:6)

All these vision can only be seen as achieving the ultimate purpose of the goals which, include.

- a. Inculcation of national consciousness and national unity in the citizen;
- b. Inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society;
- c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around;
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical, and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in the world around him (N. P.E. 2004: 6)

The above statements speak elaborately of good vision and articulation of the nation's educational goals which, with orderly implementation, would perfectly ensconce the nation on the platform of the developed nations in the world today.

Proper examination of the issues raised in the country's educational philosophy and goals, will reveal that the country does not lack great thinkers which can appropriately provide a lee-way for the nation's social, moral and intellectual progress. However, the problem is in the implementation phase.

Problem of Implementation

Every human project is usually undertaken in three phases. These are the planning the implementation and the Assessment phases. This paper has presented, in port, the planning stage of the county's educational policy and goals. This comprises the philosophy and the expected goals of the entire educational plan for the country. However, no matter how sound the plan may be, it depends on actual implementation for its actualization. It is at this stage, according to Akpan (1996) that 'most bold and forward-looking vision and plans for Nigeria get defaulted'.

An instance of the defaulting in the implementation of a sound plan in the educational vision is seen in the ability to enthrone section (d) of (NPE, 2004: 7) which state that:

The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society

As *sine qua non* for national growth and individual upliftment. These plans and goals have been laid down, but has the implementation been pursued with the vigour that is needed for it to be firmly established?

In the first place, there is a kind of paralyzing laxity hovering over the nation when it comes to implementing a programme or an action plan. This arises partly from the unwillingness to walk in tune by those expected to implement. Ndubuisi (2001), observed that actual implementation of educational programme is distorted by the Nigerian factor' (p. 19). Taking the issue further, one may ask what the Nigerian factor is all about? This is partly explained by Yahaya (1997:39-40), as the natural miasma arising from that overpowering tendency towards insincerity, weakness or inability to follow the part of rectitude or decorum which abounds in the typical Nigerian character'. There has been a short-lived television programme sponsored by the National Orientation Agency (NOA), titled "Not in our character, in which most of the common malaise in our society were ridiculed and repudiated.

However, Achebe, in his novel, the *Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), tried to explain the origin of the nation's malaise. He stated that:

_the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with Nigerian land, or climate, or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of the leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmark of true leadership... (Achebe, 1983: 76-7).

What the above passage suggests is that the same leaders fall back after instituting the vision, without a good follow-up of what is their brainchild, hence, Stepwood (1983:18), opined that *the Nigerian leaders have no problem instituting an edifice but as little as one naira will make it dysfunctional*.

Every subjects taught in the school system has its peculiar philosophy and goals which ought to be inculcated into the learners as part of the curriculum. The basic aim of each subject taught is to help the learner acquire the appropriate skill and develop *the mental, physical and social abilities and competence as equipment, for the individual to function actively in the society* (N.P.E. 2004: 8). Nevertheless, most pupils or learners fail to understand the usefulness or value of the training at the end of the course simply because the teachers have failed to deliver the knowledge or, the school system has not been able to help the learner to acquire the knowledge or, the school system has not been able to help the learner to acquire the knowledge expected to be internalized.

It is along this line of failure of the learner to acquire the tools he/she ought to acquire from the subject that this paper views the problems associated with literacy art education in Nigeria. Very few people today still share the interest in reading literary work. Most people prefer to look at local films from television stations, satellite transmission or the European and American films which abuse the minds of the youth with crimes and violence. In this way, the advantages of literary art are, according to the observation of Obike (2003), missed such that the youths today are intellectually backward, owing to their failure to read and be led by the works of great minds along the path of intellectualism? This lamentation over poor readership of literary works by the youths of today is not peculiar to Obike. Other writers like Akuede (2000), Egbo (2000), Peterse (2002) and Aliyu (2003), have echoed the same concern. In fact, Aliyu (2003), raised the question of what would be the future of literary works (like the novels and plays) in the face of poor and dwindling readership? This loss of interest in literary works result as a result of preponderant emphasis on the science subjects.

Aim and Advantages of Literary Art Education

Literary Art education has two objectives. The first is to assist the learner to acquire an immense competence in the use of language, because, according to Soile (1998). Literature is the quintessence of language. Literature is the basis for the study of any language. The second aim of the study of literature is for the intellectual upliftment that accrues through the exposure to the thoughts and knowledge of great minds that wrote the works being studied. These thoughts expose the learner to greater understanding of nature and the world around, in line with article (d) of the overall vision of the National Policy on Education, which, to recall, states inter alia:.,

...the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (NPE 2004: 8).

In enhancing the acquisition of mental... abilities and competences' so as to enable the individual operate fully within the society, literary Art education is indispensable. It is the basis of a successful intellectual take off by the individual the society. This is why the foundation of all education is language study both in oral and written forms. Every academic achievement in other areas are rooted in a good understanding and competence in the use of the language of pedagogy of that field of study.

From the above discussion, it is understandable that the major benefit of literary art education is its utilitarian role in the establishment of a sound mental, moral and intellectual drip by the society, as well as its inspiration of abilities and competence in the individual, enabling him to make reasonable contribution to the development of the society and the world in general.

Assessment of Education Policy

Educationists in the country are poor in the assessment of educational programme according to Aliyu (2003). The reason for this is that the nation appears to be in a hurry to catch up with a shadow of what she wants to see established. For this reason, before one programme is permitted to get rooted

and assessed, another programme takes over. For instance, hardly had the UPE been established and yet to be assessed, it is overtaken by the UBE, and its other components like nomadic and migrant fishermen education. Another programme was tried in 2006 -universal feeding of school children so as to keep them in the school as an incentive towards achieving the objectives of the UBE. This scheme has flopped, probably because those who master-minded it have left office and are no longer in the position to influence the feeding contracts going the way they wanted. No reasonable assessment of these programmes has been conducted because the programme comes in so much a hurry than can be coped with.

Prospects of Literary Art Education

Literary Art education is an educational programme that transcends all academic boundaries because it establishes a strong intellectual foundation for future academic endeavour. It is unfortunate that owing to ignorance, the society does not see much value in it. There are literary artists and writers who, although had their training in engineering and medical science, decided to forgo their aspirations in their former fields for a better future in literary profession. For example, Chinua Achebe, was admitted to the university of Ibadan to read medical sciences but later opted out for literary art. Timothy Aluko, is known today as a writer rather than as an Engineer, Late Cyprain Ekwensi was never known as a pharmacist but as a Novelist. Again, whoever would have thought that Soyinka could have forgone being a medical doctor or engineer for literary artist as a poet, a novelist and a dramatist and won the Noble prize for literature. The point here is that the society is not knowledgeable enough to appropriate the potentials of academic achievement in literary art simply for its bias towards medicine and engineering.

However, there is always a new beginning to make. This new beginning will be to give literary art education a new approach, which will inspire fresh interest in the subject; through the following steps:

- i. Inspire a new curriculum for literature in which the aims and objectives of the subject are emphasized and outlined for the learners to begin to appreciate;
- ii. The new curriculum should also emphasis on job or occupational opportunities that abound for literature or literate art graduates. For example, such graduates can teach in secondary and tertiary institutions; can be administrators, journalists, broadcasters, actors, writers, publishers, social welfare workers and occupy leadership position in organization etc;
- iii. Effort should be put in place to train a new breed of competent literary experts who, in turn, will train others to achieve competence in literary and language art;
- iv. Finally, the concern over poor readership of literary works in the country and the fear of intellectual dwindling of the youths can be alleviated with an upsurge of a campaign to go back to the literary works. This message must be preached in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions where a course content on it should be developed. Who knows, some of the youths that, owing to laziness, run away from literary art works, may turn around to become great writers in future. This way, literary art works, may turn around to become great writers in future. This way, literary art education can be made to achieve it goals in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The basic issues have been identified as hindrance to literary Art education in Nigeria. These are lack of follow-up and adequate implementation of educational policy guidelines, and general ignorance of the society towards the study of literary Art. Literary art education offers a whole dimension to academic and intellectual actualization in the country. This is because this area combines both the study of the language of pedagogy and the exposure to the intellectual depth of the subject matters taught.

Learning, no matter the field involved, is no longer limited to narrow requirements of a society, but now a global phenomenon. Education, today, is intended to launch an individual and a nation into the world wide web of knowledge for which language is a vital organ. This is the set goal for education in the twenty-first century for which literary art should be made to contribute to its achievement

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