

# FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING SELF-RELIANCE IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Secondary education aims at preparing the individual for useful living within the society, and for higher education. Ironically, secondary schools in Nigeria seem actually to have contributed to high levels of unemployment by failing to provide the children with skills and aptitudes for work outside the public and parastatal sectors of the national economy. The orientation of formal education towards producing government bureaucrats and clerical workers has changed very little since the colonial period. Secondary school graduates have been unable to adapt to a changed socio-economic climate. The parents, the government and the children themselves also contribute to lack of self-reliance in secondary education. In this paper, the need for and problems of secondary education for self-reliance were examined. The implications were also examined and ways of enhancing secondary education for self-reliance were suggested.

## **Introduction**

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education as provided in the National Policy on Education (1998) are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society, and for higher education. In other words, secondary education aims at preparing the individual to be self-reliant, that is, to take charge of affairs in a responsible manner, and be able to participate in making decisions which affect his life (Tengey, 1997). To achieve these goals the National Policy on Education (1998) provided, through the secondary education diversified curriculum, the means for further studies. **In** cases where it is terminal for those who cannot go beyond this level of education, effective means of livelihood are provided so that they are able to take their places in the world of work. Highlighting the importance of secondary education, Olatunde (1969) pointed out that, it is the dam from which the most able of teenagers and adolescents are absorbed and turned into useful young men and women. He emphasized that when the process of education from primary to post-secondary is considered as a chain, the secondary stage is a very important and strong link.

Despite the realization of the importance of secondary education, a good number of children are denied access to secondary education due to early marriage, poverty and religious beliefs (Iheanacho, 2002; Iheanacho and Badejo, 2002). Children as a rule enter the secondary schools with inadequate preparation for secondary studies. The secondary schools are thus in reality glorified primary schools. Parents look to education as an economic investment, which it is and the more examinations that are passed the higher the financial benefits derived. Secondary education, therefore, becomes examination oriented instead of aiming at fitting the children for life. The orientation of schooling towards the outdated expectation of while-collar public sector office jobs aggravated the situation. Teachers who are the key actors charged with enhancing the passage of youngsters towards adult responsibilities and the world of work tend to be constrained by lack of training, professional isolation, frequent posting transfer and uncertain economic future (Maclure, 1997). This paper, therefore, examines the need for and problems of secondary education for self-reliance. It also examines the implications and suggests ways of enhancing secondary education for self-reliance.

## **Need of Secondary Education for Self-Reliance**

Proper economic growth depends on proper human resource development. In other words, there is need to make secondary education self-sufficient and job oriented as provided in the National Policy on Education (1998). With the introduction of craft, the National Policy on Education wanted secondary education to produce self-sufficient human beings. Therefore, mere introduction of work experience and vocational courses is not enough. What is needed is desirable attitude of mind also. Besides training the youths in productive craft, secondary education must also prepare their mental attitude that if ready jobs are not available, they should employ themselves, thus keeping up their

productive efficiency. This will enable them to harness the natural resources and turn them into finished products. It will also go a long way in easing the unemployment problem in Nigeria, thereby improving the living standard of the youth and contributing to the economic development of the nation.

### **Problems of Secondary Education for Self-Reliance**

Many children in public secondary schools in Nigeria today are lacking in self-reliance. They are too receptive and lack initiative and inquisitive prowess. The teacher is only concerned to cram the children with information such as could help them to pass their examinations. The more he is able to do this, the more successful he regards himself or he is regarded as a good teacher. Banjo (1969) observed that almost all the subjects are taught in the form of notes to commit to memory whether understood or not. This is because majority of the secondary schools lack good libraries, science laboratories and supplies, workshops, studios, sporting facilities, etc., for the leaching of both pre-vocational and academic subjects provided in the National Policy on Education (1998).

Unfortunately, the government is not helping matters, schools are built regardless of the suitability of their locations or availability of facilities, which results to improper educational planning and poor funding. The children have no opportunity to progress at their own rate due to the automatic promotion policy existing in most States of the Federation. The most disheartening thing is the quality of those sent yearly to the classrooms to train the minds of the nation resulting in low quality products. Over crowded classrooms, teachers' engagement in private studies, lack of continuity in staffing, obsolete teaching techniques, poor and inadequate physical facilities, have become part of the educational system in Nigerian public secondary schools today. Adesina (1980) and Kupolati (1988) blamed poor and shoddy inspection and supervision of schools, lack of systematic planning at state and local levels, where the bulk of the nation's educational programmes rest, for this deplorable situation. An insight on the implications, therefore, will go a long way in solving the problem.

### **Implications**

As a result of the declining quality of teachers and obsolete teaching techniques, secondary school children in the end are not capable of logical reasoning or original thinking. They are completely ignorant of simple scientific facts and have not developed an inquiry mind. In ironic contrast to the broad goals of secondary education provided in the National Policy on Education (1998), secondary education in Nigeria appears to contribute little to the occupational livelihood of most school graduates. Teaching in the classroom, and the general orientation of daily school activity, have little connection with local community occupation and needs. Many children are turned out half-baked and unfit for any employment. Consequently, they end up being apprentices to illiterate mechanics, carpenters, etc., who often ridicule their formal education. Secondary education, therefore, seems actually to have contributed to high levels of unemployment by failing to provide children and the youth with skills and aptitudes for work outside the public and parastatal sectors of the national economy. The automatic promotion policy denies children the opportunity to progress at their own rate. The implication is falling standard where at the end of the secondary school course, a child is sometimes still unable to speak a sentence of English correctly, nor is he able to write down correctly a simple sentence in either English or his own language. In other words, he is whom Ali (1988) referred to as notorious illiterate who cannot read or write, or semi-illiterate without useful skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. He becomes a misfit who is alienated from society and from his parents. He craves for city life and the good things of life. Unable to acquire these because he lacks the skills for success in life, he turns to drug addiction, prostitution or armed robbery. The orientation of formal education towards producing government bureaucrats and clerical workers has changed very little since the colonial period, secondary school graduates have been unable to adapt to a changed socio-economic climate. Consequently, unemployment and the incidence of youth delinquency have grown.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Evidence from this paper shows a complete neglect of the goals of secondary education and deprivation of children of their constitutional right of functional education. This calls for attitudinal

change, which must anchor on positive and functional strategies for enhancing secondary education for self-reliance. Nigeria will not move forward if the bulk of the citizenry are ignorant, unemployed and wallowing in abject poverty.

It is, therefore, recommended that secondary school orientation should shift towards employment that is more attuned to current and prospective local realities and needs. To this effect secondary education emphasis must be on technical mastery rather than simply on the absorption and regurgitation of information. Vocational aptitude should be the emphasis of learning, especially in this era of economic crisis. Secondary education must foster the acquisition of manual skills and a propensity among children to gravitate towards self-employment after completing school. Every secondary school must have well equipped workshops, studio, laboratories and library if secondary education for self-reliance has to be achieved. Enough trained and qualified teachers should be employed, especially at the junior secondary school level, to enhance technical competence and self-reliance among secondary school graduates. Secondary schools should be linked to agricultural firms and industrial units. Programmes of work experience and vocational education, science and technology should be intensified. Above all secondary education must be funded adequately if the broad goals provided in the National Policy on Education should be achieved.

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