EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
The paper analyzed the crucial role of education to national development in the third world countries with Nigeria as the case study. It particularly examined the issue of education for self-reliance and national development. In the process, key terms like ‘self-reliance’ and ‘development’ were clarified. The paper noted that although the Nigerian education is rooted in self-reliance as stated in the National Development plan and the National Policy on education, the problem is that of poor implementation which resulted from age old mentality of the colonial education system. This has strangulated the nation’s quest towards political, economic and human development. The present educational practice stifles the graduates’ initiative to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical use. The paper recommends among
other things that the Nigerian education should be geared towards self-realization, self-sufficiency and self-reliance and this can be effected through emphasis on vocational and technical education.

The importance of education in the overall development of a nation cannot be over emphasized. Osokoya, (2008) has rightly observed in this direction that more than ever before, nations and international Organizations are spending vast amount of money on education on the main assumption that educated population contributes to the socio-economic development of the society as a whole and to the well being of individuals within the society. He further observed that this widespread belief that education is a major means of achieving industrialization permeates the world, and both technologically developed and developing countries attempt to design education programmes to achieve their economic goals.

Education has therefore become one of the major areas of investments for economic development. In Nigeria’s philosophy of education, NPE (2004:6) it is believed that (a) “education is an instrument for national development in this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development and ideals are all aspects of education; (b) education fosters the worth and development of the individual for each individual’s sake, and for the general development of the society. The policy further states that “education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental changes in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by any educational revolution. It is indeed this revolution that motivated this writing.

On the other hand, contrary view exists on the subject. The belief that education is a panacea, a solution to the problems of the world has recently been called to question, because as Osokaya, (2008) has observed, such assumptions are clearly over simplified and exaggerate the potency of education as a vehicle for achieving all round development. He further observed that indeed, education sometimes act as an impediment to development, and when education does not cause development, its influence is often complex and very subtle. Expressing a similar view, Weiler, (1978:80) argued that educational expansion as we now know, ‘does not necessarily make people of countries more prosperous, instead it may and does leave the former without jobs and the latter with increasingly burdensome claims on public funds.’ The above views are very cogent to Nigerian educational system right from the colonial education system to the present one. In the Nigerian nation, as Aminigo, (2003) has noted, that the past three and half decades have seen the rapid development of formal education. He further noted that higher enrollment rates, abundant provision of
facilities and institutions have been the order of the day. But unfortunately however, these increases have generally neglected economic and local realities and considerations. As a result, a lot of the products of our institutions presently amount to surplus and unemployable manpower. Yet there are many areas of economic activities and production lacking viable hands and manpower. The key question now is what kind of education and education for what does our system of education strive for? In order to provide appropriate education, there must be relevant philosophy of education. This issue has been taken care of in the Nigerian NPE. However in NPE, determining the nature and character of our philosophy of education, the African traditional philosophy of Functionalism should be re-examined more closely. In the traditional African set up, the educational philosophy was geared towards making every citizen useful and self-reliant. This brings us to the issue of education and national relevance. According to Kosemani (2001), for any education to be of value, it should be relevant to the experience and to the real world in which the pupils live. National relevance, he further observes, does not simply mean that education must be Nigerianized, but that it should involve intellectual knowledge and practical application of the fruits of education in such a way to enhance the quality of the individuals’ lives and national development. The full meaning here is that the wrong graduate manpower as is the order of the day in Nigeria should no longer be produced. Also there should be greater stress on vocational and technical skills that would meet our productivity needs as a nation.

The wide economic gap between developing and developed countries is traceable to their level of technological development and the extent to which vocational and technological education is encouraged and pursued. In a similar view, Akpan (1997) believes that any education which has to do with the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for gainful employment is vocational education. It is in this regard that the authors propose the issue of education for self-reliance in this paper. Education for self-reliance should form the basis of the national development plan.

Conceptual Frame Work
This section of the paper, shall analyze the concepts of ‘self-reliance’ ‘education for self-reliance’ and the concept of ‘development’.

What is Self-Reliance and Education for Self-Reliance?
The concept was made much of in the mid-sixties especially by President Julius Nyerere in his educational policy of ‘Education for self-reliance’ which is discussed later in this paper. In Nigeria it also featured prominently in the preamble plan (1970;74) when it formed the first of the five pillars on which the plan rested. This
In literature as Akinpelu (2005) rightly observed, the call for the tapping of one’s inner resources, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, permeated both Socrates’ teachings and the philosophy of the stoic. The concept also manifested itself in the people’s determination and efforts to be self sufficient in food-production in local sourcing of raw materials for the industrial mill and in being proud users of what they can produce locally. Scholars like Kempe (1982) and Ogundowole (2010) explained self-reliance as autonomy of decision-making and full mobilization of a society’s own resources. It also means self-confidence, reliance primarily on one’s resource, human and natural, and the capacity for autonomous goal-setting. It excludes dependency on outside influence and power that can be converted into political pressure.

With reference to National self-reliance they opine that it is a collective self-reliance, a natural product of passion of self-defence in the face of forces that tend to suppress or try to keep one in perpetual subjugation. Self-reliance in this regard point to a nation’s ability to maintain and harness all its natural material or human resources for national fulfillment and progress. Self-reliant education, could be viewed as the development of knowledge, power, as well as the feeling of responsibility in the individual. It emphasizes freedom and independence of the self, it encourages creative thinking as well as practical creative transformation activity, it means self emancipation and self realization. (Ogundowole; 2010). In emphasizing the need for the cultivation of self-reliance attitude Ogundowole, (2010:17) stated that “just as the concept of liberty” served as the magic word in the Locken age, and alienation in the Marxian, the key concept in our present epoch is self-reliance.

It has however been pointed out that self-reliance is not confined to manual or physical capacities only, there is need for self-reliance in one’s intellectual, social and political life. Other disciplines do contribute to the evolution of a self-reliant personality. For example, critical thinking is a crucial appurtenance of a self-reliant person. He or she must be critical and independent in his thinking and action.

On the Nigerian scene however, even though the concept features prominently in the second national development plan and was endorsed by the National policy on Education as highlighted somewhere in this paper, it remained only a rhetorical phraseology from which nothing much practically followed. This is evident from the various constraint against this, education for self-reliance as examined in some sections of the paper.
What is Development?

It is vital to analyse the concept of development as it will help to evaluate whether the present educational practice in the country is really moving toward the development of Nigeria.

The term Development relates to growth, social growth, progress, advancement and modernization. It is used in the positive sense and is highly valued. Furtado (1997) quoted in Osokoya (2008) had given some criteria for analyzing the concept of development, they are:

i. An increase in the efficiency of the production system of a society.
ii. The satisfaction of the population’s basic needs,
iii. The attainment of the objectives sought by various forces in a society which are linked to the use of scarce resources. Osokoya further states that there has been general recognition that the living condition of a population may be a better indicator of the level of development than the economic indicators.

Another dimension as stated by Furtado (1997) is the level of political participation by the citizenry in a country and national integration and Cohesion. When the above stated criteria for measuring national development are applied to the Nigeria situation, it would be observed that the present educational system has really failed to deliver the dividends of development as the poverty level, unemployment level, hunger, social insecurity and political agitation are the order of the day in Nigeria. It is as a result of this ugly trend that the paper, opines that education in Nigeria should be geared toward self-reliance and that emphasis should be laid on vocational and technological education to move both the citizenry and the nation forward.

Self Reliance as a Theme in Nigerian Education System

The Colonial education in Africa, Nigeria in particular was not focused on the production of self reliant graduates. Akinpelu, (2005) noted that the production of catechists and office clerks did not place any special premium on self reliance. He further observed that most of the expatriate bosses would in fact not wish to see their junior workers develop minds of their own. Again, the traditional education as an access and passport to government jobs whether as a teacher or as a clerk did not prepare people’s mind for venturing out on their own. The unfortunate effect of which is a total dependent attitude of mind in its recipients. They have no idea of education as a liberation of energy and creativity for venturing for oneself.

However the National policy on Education first published in 1977 can be described as the first all-Nigeria effort to forge a new educational policy that can be
relevant to her situation (Akinpelu, 2005). In essence, the document represents Nigeria’s desire at self reliance, that is, the shaping of her destiny with her own hands.

A closer reading of the policy will reveal that the spirit of self-reliance permeates the various sections of the (NPE) for example (i.) Section (I) Sub-section (iii) which is the five main national goals, (c) part of it states that one of the goals is the building of “a United, strong and self-reliant nation” 2. (i) Section (ii) Sub-section (8) which lists the values to be inculcated at all levels of instruction, the (f) part highlights the “acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance” 3. (i) Section (2) Sub-station (13e) states that the purpose of pre-primary education shall be to; “inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment” 4. Section (4) substation (18f) states that the goals of primary education are to give the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the society. 5. section (5), section (19) states that secondary education shall; provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development. “Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. 6. section (8), section (59) stresses that the goals of tertiary education shall be to; contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training”, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society. 7. section (8) subsection (71)b, states that the goals of Teacher Education are; to “encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers. 8. Section (8) subsection (80)(b and c) stresses that the polytechnics shall in addition have as their specific goals the following; “ providing the technical knowledge and skills necessary. And economic development of Nigeria “give training and impart the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self reliant” from the catalogue above, the structure of the -2004 edition of the NPE was implicitly designed to promote education for self reliance with emphasis on technical and vocational education so that no child comes off the system at all levels without some knowledge and skills in one or more vocations to equip him or her to be self employed if need be.

In addition to government’s desire for the production of citizens with the “right type of values and attitudes as well as the skills and the capabilities for self and national survival, the 6-3-3-4 education system was introduced. This laudable innovation in our educational system was ill-fated and short lived due to numerous constraints.

Apart from the formal school system, the (2004) NPE notes that the policy seeks to enlist other non formal agencies of education, in an attempt to integrate the
school with the community and vice versa as local craft centres and small and medium scale industries are to be used; and the local craftsmen artisans and master craftsmen, are to be employed to teach pupils.

In close examination of the afore-stated national objectives, Aminigo, (2003) indicated that one major area of need in Nigeria is an understanding of and commitment to the issue of self-reliance that would enhance Nigeria’s development as a nation.

Constraints to Government Efforts at Education for Self –Reliance

Many problems that cripple Nigerian government’s efforts at building a self-reliant nation via her education system have been highlighted by various scholars. For instance Adewunmi (2001), Akinpelu 2005, Nwaiwu 20120 and Ogundowole 2012, have noted that some of the constraints include;

1. Poor attitude of the general public towards vocational and Technical education. The Nigerian society more or less see vocational and technical programmes as education designed for those students who are not science oriented and generally poor academically. This has led to poor student enrollment to study these courses leading to acquisition of practical skills. Nwaokolo (2003), observed that the number of technical institutions in the country is far less than that of ‘grammer’ schools and this led to the present enrollment ratio of 1:102 in favour of general education. He further notes that South Korea which is today among the developed countries of the world was in this type of situation until 1990 when the government adopted the policy of increasing enrollment in Vocational Technical Educations schools and by the end of 1995, the enrollment ratio became 50:50. The story can be the same for Nigeria if the government makes concerted efforts at sensitizing the citizenry via the mass media, and providing incentives to the learners.

2. There is poor attitude of students to work and the apprehension that vocational education courses are too demanding. In this respect, Ogundowole (2010) argued that work is a purposeful creative activity of human being. It is in essence what makes human to be human. He further notes that work or labour liberated man from the cruelty of nature and that it separates humans from other objects in nature. In essence, work makes human to be self reliant. Ogundowole thus condemns the practice in our school of using work, like cutting grass or weeding the farm or school compound as a measure of punishment. This method is antithetical, he notes, as it really helps to develop and consolidate in those students who have developed the prejudice that work is a curse.

3. Similarly, shying away from manual work negates the traditional African culture and education of the head and the hand. Education should not be confined
simply to the head. This was why in our traditional education everyone was engaged in one job or the other, there were no drop outs nor unemployment as is the order of the day today in Nigeria.

Akinpelu (2005), suggested that instead, work should be effectively integrated into the school curriculum through increase in practical productive work. The school he argues should be made to contribute fiscally to its own up-keep in whatever income generating activity that may be open to it. Student should be made to be completely responsible for such services as was the case in Tai Solarin ‘May flower’ school. In essence to promote self-reliance in the youth, a lot of co-curricular activities should be encouraged, particularly in farming.

The problem of imported technology has been identified as one of the bane of our technological take off. The 6-3-3-4 system of education was stalled due to the importation of foreign tools and equipment. These equipment were too expensive and involved foreign exchange which was scarce then and even now. The maintenance of these foreign tools was another factor, but if we develop our technology toward the use of local materials, local initiatives and local resources, it will be cheaper and easily available. A corollary to this is what Adewunmi (2001) identified as inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum, which he regarded as a major problem to basic education in Nigeria. He argued that basic education should be tailored to meet the needs of the learners and the community in which he or she lives and that it should equip the beneficiaries with skills for life-long learning and survival. The curriculum for Vocational and technical education in our schools and colleges do not embrace certain basic fields which are relevant to our present and future needs. The courses designed do not always have enough practical relevancies with regards to industry and government, which leads to unemployment of products turned out.

Dearth of human and material resources has also hindered technological take-off in the country and has drastically limited education for self-reliance. In this regard, Akamobi (2002) argued that vocational and technical education cannot achieve much in producing qualified skilled manpower when human and physical facilities necessary for the training are inadequate. Such facilities he noted include; infrastructure, shortage of qualified technical teachers, poor funding, lack of equipment, low morale of technical teachers. Osokoya (2008) opined that the problem is compounded by an apparent lack of interest on the part of Government in the Vocational Education system. He further reveals that a recent study by the Federal Ministry of Finance reveals that no single vocational school has been established in the last twenty years (F.M.F 2000). From the above revelation it appears that the Nigerian government is paying lip-service to this laudable project of education for self-reliance and national development. In this regard, the government has not matched its words with deed and here lies our poor
technological take-off. It can however be argued that the near non-involvement of other agencies outside the government has seriously contributed to the slow take off of vocational and technological education in the country. As Nwaiwu (2010) has noted, Countries who have made giant strides in technology all over the world have opined that no amount of money from the government alone would be enough for technical education but in Nigeria funding of VTE programmes is largely in the hands of the government. This is why the impact of the fund channeled towards VTE is never felt. Olaitan (1946) thus suggested that adequate funding of VTE would require the full participation of communities, industries, organizations and agencies outside the government. The paper however argue and emphasize that it will be futile to teach self-reliance expect the society itself is ready for it and complements the efforts of the government and school by providing a conducive atmosphere for its practice by the products of the school. All hands should be on deck to realize the emergence of self-reliant individuals and nation.

Case Study of Some Experiments in Education for Self-Reliance

This section of the paper highlights some attempts and experiments in Education for self-reliance both in Nigeria and Tanzania. One of such innovations was carried out in the mid-fifties by Tai-Solarin when he established ‘MayFlower’ Secondary School in the Western Region of Nigeria. Akinsanya (1973) quoted in Akinpelu (2005;102) noted that the philosophical principles of the experiment which are worthy of pursuit include;

The do-it-yourself philosophy, which made the students join even in the construction of their own classrooms, dormitories, dining hall and recreation grounds, in baking of their own bread, washing of their own plates, providing their own magazines and so on.

The self sufficiency idea, made it unnecessary for students to patronize the barber off-campus since there was barbing society. The same situation obtained with the plumber, the carpenter, the painter, the electrician clubs, student’s societies specialized in offering these services all on their own.

The “work-does-not kill-but-rather-toughens-you-up-principle”, which made it a natural element of the curriculum to be engaged in at least one productive physical activity or another, including grass-cutting by female students.

The Vocational and agricultural orientation to education, which made it mandatory for each student to be involved in one agricultural activity or another, and with proficiency in a few of them. Liberty – freedom of speech, of opinion of worship, of taking initiatives, of experimenting and so on, with corresponding acceptance of responsibility for consequence.”
The above tenets of Solarin’s Mayflower experiment in self-reliance embraced the various aspects of the concept in education for self-reliance in the sense that it allowed the students freedom to experiment in various practical ways; this gave them confidence; knowledge, skills and self assurances to try out something now. This no doubt involved some sacrifices whether of convenience or of some ideal standard.

Another experiment was carried out in Tanzania in the late sixties by Julius Nyerere, the then president of Tanzania and the TANU party. It involved a radical shift and revolution in education. It was a total departure from the inherited colonial system of education in Tanzania then. The education policy statement was titled, education for self-reliance’ or known as ‘Arusha’ declaration. At the primary school level according to Akinpelu (2005), the school was completely integrated into the village, by joining the village in agricultural production for its own sustenance. And at the secondary school level, education was re-positioned to prepare students for living rather than for higher education; and the training was agricultural based in line with the reality of Tanzanian life. Even at the higher education level, whatever course a student is pursuing, he or she is expected to do some practical work in his field of study for a period of six weeks.

The main essence of highlighting these attempts at education for self-reliance is to showcase that a nation can radically turn around its own philosophy and system of education if it decides to Nigerian educational system can be modified in this direction to be able to match the policy statement of self-reliance in her National policy on education with action so as to liberate the nation from much dependency on other countries for her domestic needs in food production and in reducing unemployment level in the country, which has resulted in the present social-economic and political crises today in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The paper, has analyzed the vital role of education especially; education for self-reliance. Among other anomalies, it was observed that although Nigeria has a laudable educational programme as indicated in the National Policy on education towards self sufficiency and national development much has not been achieved as words have not been matched with action. The crises being experienced by Nigeria today is traceable to the deep rooted Colonial educational mentality for white collar jobs. For functional education to replace this trend, there is an urgent need for the acquisition of science, vocational, technology education and their effective application the meet the needs of the nation.
Recommendations

The paper has made the following recommendations towards effective education for self-reliance:

1. A national sensitization campaign to create awareness on the importance of vocational education should be undertaken to ensure self-reliance.
2. More vocational schools should be established to expand enrollment and to de-congest the existing few.
3. Professionals in business and industry should be part of any team for curriculum development in the country.
4. Good governance is very necessary for a successful vocational and technical education programme. There is need for political will to be able to match words with actions especially in terms of finance.
5. Communities, individual, industries and other organizations and agencies outside the government should assist to fund vocational education.

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