

EDUCATION AS A FACTOR FOR ACHIEVING VISION 20:2020: COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on Education as a factor for achieving vision 20:2020. It chronicled some past reforms like the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The Economic Stabilization Acts of the 1970 that never made meaningful impact. It described a vision as a dream, a blueprint or mental picture. It opined that vision 20:2020 may be another grand deception id the present comatose Nigerian educational system bedeviled with inadequacies such as low illiteracy level, poor curriculum, poor funding, since no vision can be attained without due cognizance given to the educational sector and a functional counseling programme. It recommended, among others the need to make ICT facilities affordable and available, enhancing vocational and technical education and improving on teachers welfare and status

Some Nigerians who have been privileged to the leaders have all along given the impression of patriotic acts. They have given the impression that their governance would transform the country from the present undignified level of mass poverty and underdevelopment to a “haven” of peace, progress and good living. As part of their pseudo-step, many successive governments in Nigeria have introduced one form of reform or the other. These includes the economic stabilization act of the 1970’s and early 80’s, the structural adjustment programme of then Babangida era in the late 80’s geared to stabilizing the economy and the vision 20:2020 (Falana2004). He went ahead to say that another grand deception christened vision 20:2020 by the present governance of Goodluck Jonathan is in the pipeline even when the critical areas of the educational system is in a state of comatose. Education is proved beyond reasonable doubt as the core of national stability, political and economic growth and development. To what extent can Nigeria think of reasonably achieving her vision 20:2020 without giving education its due recognition? It is seemingly an indispensable transformational tool, a pivotal around which growth and development revolves. The crux of this paper is to reiterate that no meaningful development can take place without Education. The national policy of education (2004), defines education as an instrument per excellence for effecting national development. Therefore, it is primary instrument for the achievement of vision 20:2020. Ajayi (2002), also stated that, no nation can rise above the quality of its educated citizenry and that for any meaningful development to take place in any county appropriate attention has to be given to the development of its educational system.

From all intellectual dissection, there is no realistic education policy towards vision 20:2020 in Nigeria today. Government is presently pre-occupied with commissioning of boreholes, market stalls, investing colossal amount of money on sports, money from excess crude oil often shared among the three tiers of government for the leaders’ personal aggrandizement without serious effort to invest on human resources and yet talking of becoming one of the competitive economies in the year 20:2020. People are the wealth of a nation. Investing on teachers is synonymous with investing on education and that will turn around the economy of the nation and boost for vision 20:2020.

This was why Abuh (2004), remarked that education is a tool for integration of the individual into the society so as to achieve self-realization, developing national consciousness, promoting unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technical progress.

What is vision 20:2020?

A vision according to Hornby (2004) is the ability to think about or plan the future with great imagination and intelligence. An image is the imagination, a mental blue-print on a future so as to actualize a programme of action. The idea of vision 20:2020 began to gain currency in May 24th, 2009 when late President Yar'adua assumed the leadership position of the nation. By vision 20:2020, Nigeria hopes to be one of the 20 largest economies in the world and in order to consolidate her leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economies. This ambition is intricately tied to the belief that Nigeria has what it takes to compete globally based on her present economic and democratic structure. Nwachukwu (2009), opined that Nigeria has a lot of resources with tendency for an increase, in spite of this, the country has witnessed a deteriorating welfare with economic degeneration for over decade.

The State of Nigeria's Educational System

The issue of economic development, to a reasonable extent is tied to the priority tied to human development. Unfortunately, Nigeria government is treading the unpatriotic path of neglecting the importance of education in national development. According to Akindele (2009), a lot of Nigeria graduates are not employable and UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of the country has only been approximating less than 5% of its annual budget to education. Okecha (2009), equally remarked that in 2009 budget, a total of N 33.6 billion was allocated to this section which showed less than 20% of the total budget against UNESCO's recommendation. Yet Nigeria is mockingly yearning towards reaching the top economies of the world. What a joke? There can be no meaningful progress in the country's educational system if it is starved of adequate funds. In his own contribution, the Edo state Governor: Comrade Adams Oshomole said that the paltry average of Nigerian expenditure on education is regrettable. Already 70% of Nigerian graduates are unemployable due to poor education (Daily Sun, 2009). This neglect has led to the brain-drain situation in the country.

In his own assessment of the education system in Nigeria, the then Minister of Education: Egwu (2009), enunciated that the present status of the educational system has not met the required pedestal of efficiency and functionality to equal the challenges of carrying the country to threshold of the top economies of the world 2020. These inadequacies in the educational system, as evident in exam malpractices in the educational institution, high level of illiteracy, poor funding, dilapidated infrastructure, preponderance of mushroom universities which according to him, has brought Nigerian certificate under state of devaluation. Egwu reiterated the absence of accessible and affordable ICT facilities which are supposed to correlate with human development indices. These inadequacies are occasioned by inadequate standards for computer literacy for students, teachers and education officers, and even education officers and administrators, inconsistent and un-implementable government policies. For instance, in the UBE programme, every primary or junior secondary schools in Nigeria is expected to have one general science laboratory for elementary science and domestic science, one ventilated and improved toilet for a maximum of 40 pupil/students per toilet and one teacher to handle only 40 students in a class. The pursuit of these has been unrealistic. Again, the first batch of teachers who served on the federal teachers' scheme has up till now, not been fully absorbed by the state. The scheme is already failing, however, as corroboration to the above, Akuezuilo (2008:3), revealed the following ills of Nigeria education:

- i. The enrolment figure at all levels had increased astronomically without corresponding expansion in the physical facilities,
- ii. Inadequate planning and shortfall in projection hampered government policy and projection on education, a case in mind in the (1976) UPE scheme of the Federal Government and now this same scourge may affect the UBE scheme,

- iii. Students' learning achievement in science at all levels have continued to go down over years,
- iv. The government has not been able to properly design, articulate and specify the role stakeholders like civil society, development partners, PTA, e.t.c. in education. The stakeholders are usually co-opted at implementation stages as facilitators,
- v. There was regular occurrence of unpaid salaries, the degeneration of education facilities and infrastructure at all level and the attendant common place strikes across all the tiers of the Nigeria educational sectors,
- vi. Importantly, the relationship between education and other development sectors such as between education and industry, education and poverty-related issues, education and wealth creation, education and population growth, education and employment generation, education and agriculture, education and basic health programmes have received little attention. All these invariably affect the social life of the people. It is clear from the on-going that the education sector has been under serious distress.

It is clear from the on-going that the educational sector has been under serious distress. The level of literacy is analogous to the level of development. This was why Fafunwa (1974), opined that "it is not mere coincidence that all the countries that less than 10% illiteracy are developed and those with over 50% are underdeveloped".

The UN report on world social situation declared that education is essential for satisfying and rewarding life. It is fundamental to enhance the quality of both human and national development. Education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country, the capacity for self satisfaction, growth and development (Odoh 2008).

The Teacher as Factor in Education

Teachers are the main determination of quality of education. If they are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated, immoral, and antisocial, the whole nation is doomed. If they are ignorant in their disciplines and impact wrong information, they are not only useless but dangerous. The kind of teachers training and posted to the school may well determine what the next generation will be (P. 6).

In the same way, Ukeje (1996), posited that if education is the door that leads to modernization, it is the teacher that holds the key that unlocks that door but unfortunately the Nigerian teacher has not been given positive attention. Not only is the ego of teaching profession raving in Nigeria, teacher profession is seen as the refuge for mediocrity, for people who may be industrious but unimaginative, for individuals who are seen as flotsams, jetmans in the society, seen as the profession that is synonymous with poverty, seen as permeated by individual who from youth reveals average drive for power, average ambition, escapist (Umoru, 2004, Ilorin 2006, Encyclopedia Britannica).

Yet these are people who transmogrify pupils into social and moral paragons, parent's substitute, confidant to student, judge of achievement, and organizer of curriculum, bureaucrats, disciplinarians or controller of students' behaviours (Encyclopedia Britannia). All these make the teacher indispensable in the educational section where all visions of a country depend. An educational system where the teachers are not properly taken care of especially those at the primary and secondary levels will end up producing people with wrong attitude without commitments to change the society and make positive contributions. It is the teacher by virtue of his calling who change policies to practice and program into action and that is why he cannot afford to make mistakes because they will spell doom for the country and the generation yet unborn. How can a vision be realized without the teachers? The teachers today in Nigeria have no professional weight of the sense of professional responsibility of the corporate self-respect of a lawyer, the physician or the engineer. A profession that people see as a last resort, an initiation to poverty, and their right treated as privilege and every Nigerian government uses them as scarification lambs.

For now, there is a dearth of teachers in schools. Most of them who are available for the service are not qualified. Looking at lecturer – student’s ratio in the universities, the ratios are: Kenya 1:8, Zambia, 1:7, Mexico 1:8, Brazil 1:10, UK 1:9, Nigeria 1:19 while UNESCO stipulates 1:10 teacher at all level of Nigeria educational system are not in adequate supply, not all the available ones are qualified and ready to work (Okecha, 2008). This portends great danger for vision 20:2020 therefore, vision 20:2020 today may just be a mirage.

In conclusion, the magical wand for vision 20:2020 is education; otherwise it will be a transition to nowhere.

Counselling Implications

From the foregoing, it is an incontrovertible fact that education is germane to the realization of a positive vision like vision 20:2020 but of equal importance is the inclusion of counseling services in the school system. Education is very central to a vision and made more impactful with counseling services.

Counseling is the hub on which the achievements of educational goals lie. The differential, developmental and integrative functions of education can only be achieved through a functional education for a vision with the provision of counseling services in the educational system.

When an individual better understands himself and the world around him through counseling services, there is more effectiveness, productivity and happiness in

the individual. There is the ability to achieve greater awareness of not only who they are but who they can become through formalized acts in the school to make counseling operational and available to students through personal, social, vocational and education counseling. (Shertzer and Stone, 1976).

The attainment of vision 20:2020 is intricately tied to a functional educational system, equally tied to a functional counseling service. Counseling is a lubricant, a precursor, a pathfinder and a catalyst to the attainment of educational goals for vision 20:2020. A vision of this nature that is geared towards making Nigeria as one of the highest economy in the world cannot achieve such feat if the citizens are maladjusted, irresponsible and lack adequate functionality. The need to be well integrated in the society with appropriate behaviour dispositions, thoughtful, reasonable and focal which is the hallmark of “gestalt” and counseling is very crucial in this vision.

The educational process is a cooperative enterprise involving the parents, teachers and other agents which could make an individual a functional being for a vision to be actualizable and that the educational process has componential parts among which is counseling. A lack of it, therefore, is likely to make education incomplete which could truncate the vision for the wellbeing of the nation, the vision should integrate counseling services in all work setting and for all people.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- i. No vision can be actualized without giving due cognizance to the educational sector. Therefore, effort should be made to make provision for a reasonable allocation to the educational sector for up to date infrastructure, enough money to pay teachers and qualitative teaching aids.
- ii. For our dreams to be realized as one of the competitive economies comes 2020, effort should be made to boost vocational and technological education for producing graduates with manipulative skills. This will equally make up for self-reliance, reduce unemployment rate in Nigeria. A country with a preponderance of unemployable youths is surely not a candidate for the top economies of the world, come 20:2020.

- iii. There should be a critical assessment of educational policies and principles in line with vision 20:2020
- iv. Efforts should be made to make ICT facilities affordable and accessible, for this will increase the quality and accessibility of education for vision 20:2020.
- v. There should be a change in the curriculum especially in the areas of entrepreneurship skills.
- vi. An effective counseling service is an imperative for the attainment of educational goals for an achievable vision 20:2020.

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