

NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC RELIANCE AND REHABILITATION

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Introduction

On the 12th day of January, 1970 the Nigerian civil war came to an end. The rebellious eastern region which called itself Biafra surrendered to the superior forces of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

This brought to an end the 30 month old (1967 - 1970) war. The victorious Commander in Chief of the Nigeria/Armed Forces, and Head of State declared that "there is no victor or vanquished" in this civil strife. He added was vividly reflected in the Federal Military Government's Second National Development of 1970 - 1974. Whose objectives were to make Nigeria:

- ** A united and self-reliant nation
- ** A great and dynamic economy;
- ** A just and egalitarian society;
- ** A land of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens;
- ** A free and democratic society.

The experience of the civil war which came as a result of accumulated problems must have influenced the minds of the Military Administrators to choose education as a tool to achieve the noble objectives of the nation spelt out in an ambiguous language above.

The National Curriculum Conference

The Federal Military Government organized the first ever broad-based National Curriculum Conference in Lagos September, 1969 in which every sector of the Nigerian socio-economic and political institutions religious bodies, teachers associations, other professionals (medical, legal, engineering etc.), university teachers and administrators, Ministry officials, Youth Clubs Businessmen, representatives of the then government of the 12 States of Nigeria. The significance of the conference was noted by Adaralegbe (1972) as follows:

It was not a conference for educationists alone; it was necessary to hear the views of the masses of the people who are not directly engaged in teaching or other educational activities, for they surely have a say in any decisions to be taken about the structure and content of Nigerian education. This explains the wide coverage of participation. Furthermore, the conference should be purely Nigerian affairs although we have participants from as far away as Europe, the United States and other countries in Africa as observers.

The conference observed and reviewed all short-comings of the old system of education and identified new goals of Nigerian education to be in harmony with the objectives of the Nigerian nation mentioned earlier in this paper.

The recommendation of the September Curriculum Conference was given to the Ministry of Education which subsequently organized a seminar of education professionals from Federal Ministry of Education, State Ministry of Education, Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Secondary School Principals, Primary School Administrators, conference of teachers' colleges, Christians Council of Nigerian National Universities Commission, Islamic Religious Groups, Nigerian Education Research Council, Army Education Corps, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Agriculture, Nigerian Employers Consultative Association, National Union of Nigerian Students, Federal Ministry of Education, UNESCO Team and distinguished Nigerians representing various interests.

The seminar adopted the five national objectives recommended under the Second National Development Plan (1970 - 1974), (Adaralegbe, 1972).

The Seminar adopted recommendation number 59 which suggested that a 6-3-3-4 system of Education be introduced in the country (Adaralegbe, 1972). The Seminar also proposed the philosophy and objectives of Nigerian education as reported by Adaralegbe (1972) as follows:

Nigeria's national philosophy of education must be based on equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary school system.

The seminar suggested for this philosophy to be in harmony with the objectives of the Nigerian nation, it must be directed towards the need for self actualization, effect citizen and national unity. This is certainly in line with the theme of this conference rehabilitation and self reliance.

They then dealt with each level of education comprehensively and made recommendation on how to implement each level. Pre-Primary Education, Primary Education, Technical Education and, Adult and Non-formal Education, Special Education and Teachers Education. It also tackled Education service: Administration and Planning and Financing.

The seminar went ahead to recommend a National Policy on Education in line with the stated objectives of the Nigerian nation.

The recommendation of the seminar was submitted to the Federal Government for deliberation, approval and implementation.

It was only in 1977, according to Fufunwa (1995) that Federal Government under the leadership of General Obasanjo issued a white paper on National Policy on Education, eight years after the 1969 Curriculum Conference and four years after the 1973 seminar.

In 1979, the Federal Government again issued another white paper according to Fafunwa, (1995), called; Government view on the Implementation Committee, Blueprint on "the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education". The Government accepted most of the recommendations put forth by the Implementation Committee, a new National Policy on Education was then, born.

National Policy on Education for Rehabilitation and Reliance

If one examines the document which contains the new National Policy on Education (Revised), one will find out that the whole idea came as a result the failure of the old system of education which was in place before the introduction of this new one. The disaffection of the old system of education was loudly echoed by Chief Federal Adviser on Education, Dr.S.J Cooney in his keynote address at the Nigerian National Curriculum Conference between 18-21 September, 1996 and quoted by Adaralegbe, (1981) as follow:

..... Our education was not planned. The system which was prevalent in the past, and which still persist in most areas, is that which tends to produce children who can read and write and pass examination and which qualify them for employment only as clerks (PPXXV-XXVI)

The new National Policy on Education aims to correct that serious defect. It is certainly for rehabilitation and self reliance from the primary school through the universities. It is a comprehensive document and could achieve its objectives if it was religiously implemented with adequate attention to detail and material support.

The Philosophy of new Nigerian Education Policy is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equality of opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both within and without the formal school system. The philosophy of National Policy on Education is therefore economic rehabilitation and self reliance. It was also geared towards inculcating the values of; respect for worth and dignity of the individual, faith in man's ability to make rational decisions, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations; shared responsibility for the common good of the society respect for dignity of labour and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children (National Policy on Education 1985)

For this philosophy of education to be in harmony with Nigerian national objectives, it has to be moved towards self actualization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, policy, scientific and technology progress.

The government will according to the National Policy on Education take various steps to implement the policy including education for overall community needs, life-long education, self learning, possibility of an individual to chose between continuing his full-time studies, combining

work with study or embarking on full-time employment with the prospect of resuming studies later on and others.

The next section of paper will examine each stage of education from the pre-primary level to university level and examine how each stage could be used for rehabilitation and reliance.

Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education is described in the National Policy on Education document as education given in institutions to children between the ages of three (3) and five (5) years before they entered primary level of education. Amongst the objective of pre-primary schooling are: effecting a smooth transition from the home environment to school environment; preparing the child for primary level of education; inculcating social norms and other values. This level of education is to assist pupils to achieve economic rehabilitation and reliance when they eventually move to the primary level. The pupils were adequately prepared for primary schooling as they were already used to school system.

Primary Education

The objectives of primary education which is given in institution for children between the ages of 6 and 11 plus are amongst others: inculcating of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; character and moral training; providing basic tools for further education advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

It is clear from the objectives of this level of education that it is for economic rehabilitation and self reliance, if it was properly taught. An individual could go ahead for further training, but even if he stopped at this level, he could be gainfully employed in the local crafts of the society.

If he decided to be a farmer, he could be a modern farmer-could keep proper records of his activities. This could make him a good example of modern living.

The Junior Secondary School

Fafunwa (1995), maintained that the central theme of the new National Policy on Education is three years of Junior Secondary Schooling whose broad aims include: preparation of pupils for useful living within the society, preparation for higher education, equipping the students with technical and scientific skills, inspire pupils with desire for achievement and self improvement.

This level of education also is for economic rehabilitation and reliance. The products of the system could not be a liability to the society if properly taught.

The Senior Secondary School

The Senior Secondary level of the National Policy on Education is of three years period for those students who are able to pursue the course as determined by aptitude and other tests. This level of education prepares students for a living or for further professional training in tertiary institutions.

The senior secondary schooling according to the National Policy on Education is certainly for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

The secondary school system should certainly prepare those who chose to look for job opportunities to do so, that is to say; Technical, Commercial, or Comprehensive schools in co-operation with business and industry are in good position to tailor their curriculum to the available or projected job market. The products would be economically rehabilitated and be self reliant.

Higher and Professional Education

Higher and professional education refers to post secondary section of the National Education Policy which is obtained in Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Technology, Correspondent Colleges and others.

The objectives of higher education among others, are: acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper values - orientation for the survival of the individual and society. That is to say education for economic rehabilitation and economic reliance. Some professionals like lawyers, doctors,

teachers and engineers could easily get high paying jobs both within and outside public sector of the economy if properly educated.

So like the former system of education which produced only products who are qualified for white collar jobs, the present system is very comprehensive. It is for self-reliance and rehabilitation. The products of this system would have respect and dignity of labour.

Problems

The document of the new National Policy on Education is very comprehensive. It is an excellent document. It is however, very difficult to implement. It is a very expensive method --providing technical, scientific and business workshops and laboratories is not easy especially now when the country is facing economic stagnation. No level of the new National Policy on Education was properly implemented. It is difficult for any government in Africa to implement this document not because of lack of resources. It is the high level of indiscipline and corruption of the leadership. The money is there, but over 80 percent of it is stolen. The leadership is dishonest.

The policy was conceived during the much-talked about oil boom. The Federal Government thought it could implement it. But the ideal is now a thing of the past. It has collapsed, we witnessed lack of qualified teachers, lack of equipment, lack of accommodation, overcrowded class rooms at all levels including the universities in government schools in most states of the federation.

The Plateau State Commissioner of Education, Mr. S.G Mafuyai was reported on the back page of the *New Nigerian* issue of Friday 4th, November, 1977 saying; "..... no government in the country can fully finance UPE scheme because Federal Government had stated in clear terms; it cannot finance UPE as early as 1977."

If the first stage of education could not be properly financed, then what about the other stages? The whole scheme to say the least, is a failure. What do we have now as our education system? The new one or the old one? Or no system at all.

Suggestions

The government should mobilize every sector of the society to implement the scheme faithfully. It is the only sure way for economic rehabilitation and reliance. There is nothing wrong with the system. The problem is with the implementation.

The new National Policy on Education emphasized the importance of language, especially mother tongue, G.C.E - General Certificate of Examination was replaced by the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE). Joint Admission and Matriculation Board was introduced to conduct selection examination in placement in our University and other higher education institutions. Technical education was emphasized. The objective was to make education function - for rehabilitation and economic self reliance.

Conclusion

The paper examined the National Policy on Education and how it can be utilized for economic reliance and rehabilitation.

It began with the main reason for the introduction of the system - dissatisfaction with the old system which only encouraged production of white collar job seekers.

Every stage of the system-from pre-primary to higher education was discussed. Every stage except pre-primary was oriented towards economic reliance and rehabilitation.

The National Policy on Education is really a remarkable document. It is very comprehensive.

The problem is with the implementation. For example, the new policy recommended that craft workshops, including local crafts be established in each level of the system to prepare graduates for livelihood if they decided to drop out from schooling even at the primary school level. This is against the international labour law which prevents the employment of child labour. The policy is also very expensive because the leadership is not prepared to spend so much on education. The economy of the nation can take it, but most of the resources are stolen through corrupt practices.

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