

THE PLACE, CONTRIBUTION AND IMPACT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

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Abstract

The position of the paper is that given all the attention formal education has received from the nation there should have been more fruits accrued to it than the sour grapes it has produced so far. Non-formal education is presented as the better of the two systems for economic rehabilitation of the Nigerian state. The paper's position is that more attention in the form of finance, policy formulation be directed to non-formal education.

Introduction

At independence, Nigeria was not a developed country. The need then was for the post colonial government to develop, execute and implement as well as continually evolve a culture of evaluation and maintenance of its infrastructure/programmes. One of the areas that needed attention there was education. Education as inherited from the colonial masters was not aimed at production. The traditional informal education which favoured the dignity of labour at independence had gradually given place to education for its own sake. It became a status symbol making the mere ownership of certificate a status symbol, This resulted in men and women abandoning the idea of traditional occupations acquired through non-formal education for the white-collar jobs created through formal schooling. This class of people acquired false notions of superiority to many who possess it while fostering an inferiority complex in those who did not have it. The genesis of this foundation has to date produced graduates who cannot use their hands. Unfortunately the multifaceted criminal acts of examination malpractices in our formal institutions produce semi-illiterates whose main aim is to get to the top at whatever means being half baked school learners but full baked criminals. The vicious circle continues.

The Development Policies In The Nigerian Educational Sector

This is not, however, to postulate that nothing was done to improve or correct the grammar school system inherited from the colonial masters. The first positive attempt at evolving a viable educational policy for Nigeria started with the Ashby Commission set up in 1959 (Ujo, 1994). The white paper issued by the Nigerian Government in 1961 formed the foundation of the educational policy in the first National Development Plan which was introduced in 1962. Five universities came into existence as a result of the Ashby Commission. These popularly known as the first generation universities were the:

University of Ibadan, upgraded from University College established in 1948.

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

University of Lagos, Lagos

University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo

Educational policy in the first National Development Plan 1962 to 1968 targeted increase in enrolment in the universities, secondary, teacher training and technical education. In the second National Development Plan of 1970 - 75 the government embarked on a policy of massive expansion of educational facilities.

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) introduced during Gowon's administration which was to make primary education free from September 1976 was also introduced. The unity schools or Federal Government Colleges were established during this period as well as the establishment of the National Universities Commission in 1974 to regulate the activities of the Federal Government owned universities whose numbers were on the increase.

The educational policy during the third National Development Plan 1975-1980 contained in it what appeared to be the most ambitious of all in the National Policy on Education. The initial groundwork towards the new policy was a culmination of expressions of general dissatisfaction with the existing educational system which did not seem to satisfy fully the envisaged national needs aspirations and goals of an emerging nation. As a result of the National Curriculum Conference held in 1969, a section of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was convened in

1973. The seminar which included voluntary agencies and external bodies deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be. The outcome of the seminar was a draft document which after due comments was received from the states and other interest groups. The final document was the National Policy on Education, published in 1977 but came into operation in 1985 as the 6-3-3-4 system of education

Government's intention was that the far reaching provisions set out in all sections of the policy should transform all aspects of the national life overtime. To this end, the government set up a National Educational Policy Implementation Committee to translate the policy into workable blue print that would guide the bodies whose duty it would be to implement the policy. The committee was also to develop monitoring system for educational plan as it evolved. Among other things the 6-3-3-4 system considered adequately, the role of science and technology in development. Specifically, for the interest of this write up section 7b of the National Policy on Education was devoted to non-formal education. Subsection 74 reads: Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education encompass all forms of functional education given to youths and adults outside the formal school system school as functional literacy, remedial and vocational education, (p. 36)

Subsection 75 page 36 spells out the following goals of the mass literacy adult and non-formal education.

- (a) Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education;
- (b) Provide functional and remedial education for these young people who did not complete secondary education;
- (c) Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills;
- (d) Provide in-service-on the job vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and
- (e) Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Sub-section 76 goes on to spell out the establishment of a National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education enjoining each state to do the same to complement the Federal Government's effort. Machinery was also set in place for monitorization and evaluation of mass literacy programmes and facilities.

What Went Wrong?

However, two decades into the evolvement of what appeared to be the panacea for Nigeria's educational woes, the Honourable Minister of Education Professor Babalola Borishade convened a National Summit on Higher Education on the theme "Repositioning Higher Education in Nigeria"¹. The summit had become necessary because within the past ten or more years, the Nigerian higher educational system had been bedeviled by myriads of problems such as strikes, leading to closure and disruption of academic calendars, cultism, and examination malpractices. These unsavoury events have eroded the quality of education. Many of the products of the nation's universities, polytechnics and colleges of education are known to fail competency tests given by employers of labour. The growing trend towards lack of recognition of degrees, diplomas and certificates from the Nigerian higher educational system is a matter of great concern.

Among the observations made by the committee was the fact that already, several reports of studies on higher education in Nigeria had been submitted to government including the Ashby Report, the Longe Report, the Etsu Nupe Report, the Vision 2010 and the Yabani Report without much improvement in the system. Another observation worthy of note is the fact that the social vices in the tertiary institutions are not peculiar to the staff and students of these institutions but also to the larger society.

The Reality of Formal Education In Nigeria

The foregoing exposition on formal education in Nigeria has been made to appreciate the fact that in practice the hopes and aspirations of the Nigerian government towards the education of its citizenry is not markedly different from what obtains elsewhere. The concept of education whether formal, informal and non-formal meets the world concept. For example, the International Council for Education Development (ICED) (1973) grouped education into three categories; formal, non-formal and informal education.

Formal Education is defined as the hierarchically structured full time chronologically graded system running from primary school through University and including in addition to general and academic studies a variety of full time and professional training and generally controlled by a Ministry or department of education" (p. 12). Informal education is the life-long process for acquiring incidental attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through daily experience and the education, influences and resources of one's environment. Through informal education, a child masters the fundamentals of his mother tongue, acquires a substantial vocabulary before he goes to school and learns social role functions. Non-formal education on the other hand is defined as any organized educational activity outside the established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning objectives, (p. 12).

These definitions agree totally with the educational practices in Nigeria. However, formal education in Nigeria has not proved or yet yielded itself as an avenue for economic reliance, in recent times. The vast majority of formal education products in recent times are waste pipe through which the nation's hard earned resources are flushed out. The value in the pride of being sincerely educated is gradually going out of the country. The craze to be certificated without knowledge is becoming alarmingly frightening. People use their certificates for lucrative employment not based on what they know but whom they know. As a matter of fact in some institutions job placements are given without interviews fitting square pegs in round holes to the detriment of the nation.

Non-Formal Education - Its Place And Impact For Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

There are some reasons why non-formal education is strategic to any meaningful attempt to enhance the development of any country's human resources. In other words, non-formal education performs some crucial functions particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Due to the apparent unintended deficiencies of formal education, non-formal education fills sonic kind of gap by providing some minimal learning for the vast majority of adults and youth who have been partially exposed or never been exposed to any form of formal education. Thus the non-formal school system has a place for the large group of youth who have never been to school or who have dropped out before finishing or have completed primary school but could not proceed to secondary school.

The seriousness of the unemployment problem in Nigeria is attributable/principally to the formal education system. The graduate leaver unemployment problem is caused mainly by the apparent rapid expansion of facilities for formal education without adequate growth to employment opportunities. The second major reason for promoting non-formal education arises from the deficiencies of formal primary and secondary education in catering for the needs of socio-economic development as well as for the fulfillment of individual aspirations. In other words even if it were possible for all children to receive primary and secondary education, there will still be need for remedial non-formal education. This is because the organization and methodology of formal education are such that they alone cannot be expected to handle realistically, the task of equipping the children and adolescents with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for employment, household management, family responsibilities as well as participating in community service. With the UPE and now UBE, the number of children seeking entrance into secondary schools have outpaced facilities with very small fraction of the learners progressively entering the higher levels leaving the "chaff behind. Worse still and especially in Nigeria, a country that believes in titles, the orientation of the formal school system has served mainly to build expectations, goals and values related to life and occupations in the urban areas, in the modern sector of the economy even though the majority of the people live in the rural areas. Thus formal education can only drive such youths to the urban centres and thereby increase the growing urbanization problem with its drug abuse, crime and HIV problems including urban unemployment.

Non formal education serves as a means of extending the skills and knowledge acquired through formal education. It serves this purpose for those who need additional training to get into productive employment or by offering a variety of continuing training opportunities to those who have completed certain levels of formal education. A large group of those already employed acquired new knowledge and skills to keep abreast of technical progress or new development in their area of specialization. For example, civil servants, business managers, graduate teachers and the like need to and do update their skills by attending staff training courses in the form of seminars, workshops, in service, on the job, vocational and professional training.

Recent Trends In The Right Direction

As part of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), 1986 of the Babangida administration certain organs were established to cater for the needs of mainly unemployed youth. Among these were:

Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). One of the functional and specialized departments of MAMSER was Mass Education, (Ujo,1994), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRR) Here again there is a national programme for co-operative and credit for road side mechanics and artisans (p. 128) The National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The NDE had as its objectives:

1. The re-activation of public works.
2. The promotion of direct labour.
3. The promotion of self employment.
4. The organization of artisans into co-operative organizations.
5. The encouragement of the culture of maintenance and repairs.

The NDE is expected to realize these objectives through the following four programmes:

1. National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Department programmes. The training schemes under the programmes are:

- (a) The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme.
- (b) Waste to Wealth scheme.
- (c) Schools on wheel scheme.
- (d) Disabled work scheme.

2. Small scale and graduate employment programme. The Schemes under these programmes are:

- (a) Job creation loan guarantee scheme.
- (b) Mature people's scheme.
- (c) Enterprise management support service.
- (d) Entrepreneurship development programme.

3. Agricultural sector employment programme special public works (p. 129).

Similarly, the Obasanjo government launched another comprehensive home grown poverty alleviation programme christened the National Economic Empowerment and Strategy (NEEDS). Already the World Bank has pledged support for the NEEDS programme for the next two years (Daily Trust 2004 : 8.).

In another development the NDE under the Women Affairs and Youth Development Minister has solicited for funding for its Start Your Business Projects (SYBP). The minister has called for partnership and support of all stakeholders in ensuring schemes and ventures for job completion of six model training youth centres ... and other initiatives aimed at strengthening youth organizations and network for increased participation of youth in nation building. She lamented that Nigerian youth are faced with a long list of challenges including unemployment, good education, youth restiveness, cultism, drug abuse, lack of employment and capacity building; entrepreneurship and poor health especially the HIV/AIDS scourge. (Daily Trust, August 20: 24) It is through such non-formal education that the youth will be given a sense of hope. What is wrong with the Nigerian youth is the environment with its induced problems.

Daily Trust (2004, August 20th) reports £4120rn World Bank loan to urban youth employment and development project (UYEDP) to facilitate its project. The same page of Daily Trust carries news on efforts at resuscitating the National Youth Fund (NYF) to provide less cumbersome micro credit to young people.

Advantages of Non-Formal Education In Economic Rehabilitation

Non-formal education has some advantages when compared with formal education. Training through the on the job training such as the indigenous apprenticeship system is less expensive than formal training. It does not for example require the purchase of additional training equipment. Further-more, rarely does the question of under utilization of expensive equipment arise in the case of on the job training. It is usually a major problem in formal educational training institutions such as

Trade Centres and Vocational schools. In fact in some cases the facilities of such formal institutions are used for non-formal training thus reducing the degree of under utilization.

Non-formal education particularly on-the job training is flexible because it can be adapted to several work situations and it is a means whereby employers of labour can easily adjust to shortage of skills manpower and technological changes. On the job training minimizes the possibility of people being trained without eventually securing a job. This helps reduce the scare in unemployment, they are not willing to join national or state queue for employment. Non formal education like literacy education, community development and agricultural extension gives quick result in comparison to formal education.

Suggestions/Recommendation

There is an urgent need to plan and develop all forms of adult education. Through the indigenous apprenticeship, adult education and vocational training in particular can be encouraged.

The government's present effort in encouraging the dignity of labour through the different programmes already outlined should not lose steam. The apprenticeship system should be modernized. The technical and management skill of small scale entrepreneurs should be upgraded to improve the quality of training they impart on their apprentices.

Finally, the pre-vocational courses being taught in secondary schools should be matched with adequate staffing and equipment so that at any point of their education such students may go on the apprenticeship scheme if they choose to or some scheme for out-of-school vocational training.

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