



Regenerating The Nigerian System Of Education Through Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

This article dived into the Nigerian educational system, with the attempts to suggest ways it could be regenerated through the inculcation of basic education. The paper x-rayed what actually went wrong with the nation's educational system and the various efforts enunciated to regenerate it from the mentality of colonialism. The writer position stands on the premise that if the Nigerian education can be regenerated, the government should ensure that basic education captures the child's talent, right from the primary school. The paper noticed that the education curriculum is embedded with basic process skills geared towards training the individual for life-long benefits. One of the anti-dots is lack of competence on the part of the teachers who should be retrained to use indigenous resources to teach the child. Finally, the authors recommend that education should be tailored towards the needs of the society and utilize the potentials of the child at the basic level.

Keywords: Regenerate, Regenerating, System of Education, Basic Education

INTRODUCTION

A genuine system of education when critically studied and analyzed should yield some distinctive value-systems, which must be identical with that of society (Osaat & Omordu, 2010). As a social institution, education is invented by man to satisfy social needs. These needs however, differ from one society to another and from time to time. In this regard, the role, direction and character of education is a function of the prevalent philosophy of life and circumstances operative in any society or nation at any point in time. Therefore, education is supposed to bring about certain skills and attitudes that are desirable in the society.

The foundational system of education in Nigeria was the imposition of Western culture and values by the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian society. Gbamanja (2002) has it that, "the burning desires for total independence in Nigeria, is to determine their own destiny in all aspects of life, including education". This further aggravated by the realization that the colonial system of education was neither scientific nor technological, causing a high rate of unemployment. Consequently, there is urgent need for a re-orientation, repositioning, re-engineering in the nation's educational system with a sharp focus on basic science education. As Olutoye cited in Iroegbu (2007), puts it, "any nation which fails to keep pace with modern trends in technology will be doomed with perpetual underdevelopment".

The Concept of Basic Education

The Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN (1999:23) quotes the Jomtien Declaration and Framework of action on education, 1999, that basic education... is not defined in terms of years of schooling; neither is it limited to formal schooling. It sees education in its broadest sense as a close articulation of the formal, the non-formal and informal approaches and structures for the awakening and all around development of the human potential. The broad aim is to lay the formation of life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning –to- learn self-awareness and life skills (Okorosaye–Orubite, 2008:39).

The Objectives of basic education according to Universal Basic Education, (UBE, 2002 :6) include;

- i. Developing in the citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- ii. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- iii. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- iv. Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complement and approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- v. Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values for laying a solid foundation for life-long living.

The Basic Education Programme in Nigeria goes beyond the formal, informal and non-formal aspects of education. Its scope therefore includes the followings;

- i. Programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development.
- ii. Programmes and initiatives for the acquisition, functional literacy, numeracy and life skills, especially for adults (persons aged 15 and above).
- iii. Special programmes for nomadic populations;
- iv. Out-of-school, non-formal programmes for updating the knowledge and skills of persons who left before acquiring the basic needed for life-long learning;
- v. Non-formal skills and apprenticeship training for adolescents and youths who have not had the benefits of formal education.
- vi. The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the junior secondary school (UBE, 2002:6-7)

The Concept of Regeneration

Regeneration is synonymous with repositioning or re-engineering where something in existence is refurbished or rebranded to a better or acceptable and capable of solving the prevailing problem. It could be considered as a paradigm shift from an old method or idea of a particular situation to fit into a new one for the purpose of innovation. This presupposes the fact that there was an existing system which has failed or is non-functional.

Ewessor and Umeoduagu (2007), in Uruemuareyo (2010), assert that regenerating basic education would create;

- i. Psychological development where every child would be stimulated, as no child is expelled for non-payment of fees.
- ii. Some incapacitated parents would be encouraged to bring out their wards for learning process in school.
- iii. Societal values, dignity and respect would be won for students as their uniform provision would bring about true uniformity in appearance and cleanliness can be controlled.
- iv. The pupils or students' emotional stresses would be removed through the provision of these basic necessities. This would engender equality among students to some reasonable extent.

Why Regenerate Nigerian Education?

Like any other Scholar, Anikpo (2005) posits that, "Colonial education in Africa and Nigeria in particular was not intended to prepare Nigerians for independent and self-reliance" the objectives in clear terms were to provide manpower for the colonial economy.

Secondly, it was to indoctrinate the people through missionary evangelism for the purpose of living virtuous lives devoid of complaints. Before independence, the ingredients of success comprised, high education, large income and luxurious homes. These qualities were symbols of greatness, which the man possessed. After independence, this culture of indulgence was carried over to the educated Nigerians, which consequence was delineated from productive activities in industries, science and agriculture. The curriculum removed Nigerians from practical reality and channeled every educated Nigerian to white-collar jobs.

The emergence of education as a tool for social up-liftment and mobility through examination, which later transformed to cheating and other vices contributed much to the problem. These two phenomena represent the challenges to reposition education in Nigeria. The prominence in examination as all need certification for success in Nigeria succinctly debased the moral uprightness of the individuals to acquire it. However, this was not checked and stopped and today, it has blossomed and has become a national crisis. Consequently, those that cheat in the examination succeed while those who struggle for themselves fail or narrowly pass.

The crisis has transcended to tertiary institutions, occasioned by the economic hardship which the university teachers are struggling to escape by producing handouts in the past as a source of augmenting their income. Anikpo (2005) points out that “as the institutions reacted, the handout metamorphosed into books which students are compelled to buy”. He further reports that those who cheat themselves into the University equally find their ways out as illiterates which made no difference when they entered.

The outcome of the chronic impediments on the Nigerian society is that certificates obtained from the country’s tertiary institutions for those who cheated are questionable outside the shores of Nigeria.

Anikpo (2005) citing Osundare laments that:

“Our university can no longer guarantee that necessary peace of mind for the student in their hall, the researcher in the library, the scientists in the laboratory, the philosopher under the tree. Nowhere on our once serene campus can the poet now afford to stand and stare...”

The situation above describes the scene and THE situation of the Nigerian Universities. This situation apparently calls for a remediation, which this paper suggests could be redeemed through the instrumentalities of the basic education in Nigeria.

Efforts to Regenerate Education In Nigeria

The inadequacies inherent in the colonial educational system in Nigeria culminated into the various curriculum conferences in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the introduction of the 6.3.3.4 system of education. The Curriculum Conference held in Lagos from 12th - 18th of September, 1969 was a huge success. It was the beginning of a national programme to revitalize and renew education in Nigeria. The conference spelt out details of what it considered as national philosophy, goals, purpose and objectives of Nigeria education and made recommendations for a national reform. The second national curriculum conference took place in June, 1973, whose aim was to fashion out a national policy on education from the recommendations of the 1969 conference. The published blueprint in 1977 states as follows:

- To translate the policy into a workable blueprint and to develop a programme for the implementation of the policy.
- To coordinate and monitor the implementation of those programmes developed under the policy.
- To advise the government on and to assist in providing the infrastructural and other requirements for policy implementation.

The first segment of the policy was the Universal Primary Education (UPE) launched in September, 1976. Two years later, the 6.3.3.4 system of education started with the intent to be more functional. Before the 6.3.3.4 system came to be, Nigeria has since independence affected educational changes from 9.5.2.3 to 9.6.5.2.3 in terms of primary and secondary education structures. (Eheazu, 2005).

The current (6.3.3.4) structure is an attempt to provide opportunities for development of the technically inclined students at the end of their junior secondary schooling. The various structural changes are patterns of regenerating education to develop individual potentials to meet the social and innovative demands. Mkpa (2003) notes that “the programme 6.3.3.4 system was initiated with much enthusiasm, but collapsed at the implementation stage”. This was basically due to faulty statistics, inadequate funding and poor planning.

For the educational system to be re-generated to meet with the present global quest of learner-centered, there is need to revisit the 6.3.3.4 system earlier stated in Nigeria. The need to strategise following the guidelines as enunciated below:

1. Handicrafts Subject at the Basic 1-9 Level

The issue of handicraft introduced earlier in time with the junior secondary level was a welcome idea. Although, the collaboration with the community experts failed because, government was not ready to fund the resource persons. Meanwhile, the teachers were not trained. The handicraft as a subject then was exchanged with money equivalent for score. The basic knowledge expected was lost. But, all hopes are not dashed as the same idea and concept could be tailored to entrepreneurship. What the pupils need is to guide them acquire the necessary basic process skills. On this premise, the education curriculum needs to lay more emphasis on the revisit of the handicrafts as a subject. This is because this aspect of education marks the beginning of teaching of the Nigerian indigenous technology in the present education system (Apagu, 2006), cited in Amaechina and Anosiri (2013).

2. Talent Search and Skills Development

Every Nigerian child is endowed with special skills. The need to focus on talent search should occupy the attention of stakeholders. There is a need therefore to revisit the idea of Junior Engineers, Technologists and Scientist (JETS) club in secondary school that was yielding hope in the past. It should be an avenue to identify talent, such a person should be helped to discover himself more as he is encouraged. The dividend was what Adefaye (2007), reported that, two students of government owned secondary schools in Ondo State were chosen to represent Nigeria in the World Science and engineering fair in the USA. The Nation needs to re-awake in search of talents among the young ones for the good of the society. The leading countries in the world today that have imparted on the area of science and technology succeeded, because they revisited their concepts of skills development starting from primary school.

3. Relevant Curricula Offered in Vocational/Technical Schools.

For the nation to revisit the basic education system, re-engineering of the curricula offered in vocational education in the country needs re-generation. It should be noted that schooling in Nigeria should not be seen as mere participatory of the individual, because others do.

The need to look at some courses that are not relevant to a particular programme should be considered, even from the basic level. The curricula should undergo revisit to address the nation's economic peculiarities. Before now, the Nigerian educational system has for long considered the curriculum at the global perspective, without considering the needs of the Nigerian society. It is said, charity begins at home; this is the core issue of regeneration of our educational system to meet societal demands.

The latest effort to regenerate education in Nigeria is the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE). How then can the nation regenerate its education through basic education?

Way Forward

This paper suggests that the Nigerian educational system can be regenerated if all or some of these conditions are satisfied.

- The government should ensure that Basic Education is made an inalienable right of the Nigerian child.
- Basic education should gear towards developing the “whole” man so as to realize himself and contribute to the development of the society at large.
- To realize the objectives of education in general and basic education in particular, education in Nigeria should be properly funded by the government as its social responsibility.
- Proper education must be all-round: physical, mental and moral. Thus, the curriculum must be designed as to give room for a balanced development beginning from the basic level.
- Education at all levels should be made to respond to the needs/problems of the Nigerian society.
- Education should be guided by a rational policy.
- The basic system of education should be flexible enough to accommodate anybody who drops out for one reason or the other.
- All forms of training outside the formal school system should be given public recognition.

- The equivalent between different levels of education in both formal and non-formal systems should be determined and established so that a person can walk from one sector to the other. This will work towards eliminating the much rigidity found in the system especially at the basic level.
- Certificates obtained from the non-formal system at the basic level should be recognized for employment purposes at appropriate levels. This will work against the much emphasis placed on paper qualification in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes by advertising the indigenous resources as a panacea of revisiting Nigerian educational system. The basic education is a necessary foundation of re-engineering of the Nigerian child for the purpose of unveiling the latent talents useful for a life-long living. The need to re-visit the collaboration of indigenous resource persons and the class teacher would add value to the much clamour for indigenous technology; particularly, the present digital era, where the child is native to information communication technology (ICT). There is need to tap from the child's potentials, which the curriculum is expected to address. In all ramifications, re-engineering should begin at the basic education level, where the child's potentials should be identified and properly guided.

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