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NIGERIA NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is believed to be the bedrock of the country's development. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2005) declared in its National policy on Education that education is an instrument "par excellence" for achieving National development. In other words, any meaningful growth and development of Nigeria must be preceded by a sound educational planning.

Education has been described as the cornerstone for meaningful and sustainable growth, development and sustainable growth, development and achievement in art, science and technology. Abiogu (2014) had affirmed that worldwide, education has been recognized as a catalyst for achieving socio-economic, scientific and technological development. Since education constitutes an indispensable aspect of social realities of a nation, it is therefore of cardinal importance to any society. From the above assertions and postulations, one could easily infer that education is not just a mere discipline, but a philosophical force of its own with positive implications for human development. Obviously, any such education without a policy may not achieve its envisioned end for national development. This is to say that any education devoid of sound policies would be tantamount to the anomaly of a lively tortoise moving around without its carapace.

It is therefore the intention of this paper to expose the importance of Nigeria National Policy on Education for the development of the country. We shall examine the history and trends in national development plans, education and national development plan, education and national development, make recommendations and then conclude.

Importance of Nigeria National Policy on Education

Education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development. The Government of Nigeria, non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals are actively involved in the provision of education in the country. It is therefore desirable for the nation to spell out in clear and unequivocal terms the philosophy and objectives that underlie all investment in education. The National policy on Education seeks to fulfill that role (NPE, 2004).

Government has stated that for the benefit of all citizens, the country’s educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individuals and those of the society, in consonance with the realities of our environment and the modern world. The need for a national policy on education came about as a result of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference which was attended by a cross-section of Nigerians. The conference came into being as a result of a general out-cry of dissatisfaction with the existing education system which had become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals. (FGN, 2004)

The 1969 National conference culminated into a seminar of specialist drawn from a wide range of interest groups in Nigeria which was convened in 1973. This body deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria could be. The outcome of the seminar was the emergence of a draft copy which, after comments from interest groups, led to final document first published in 1977. The document was however, revised and published in keeping with the dynamics of social change and the demands of education. The changes were necessitated by some policy innovations which include (FGN, 2004):

- The lifting of the suspension order on open and distance learning program by government.

- Revitalization and expansion of the National Mathematical Centre (NMC) Abuja

Establishment of teachers' registration council (TRC)

Introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) into the school system among others.

Government's intention was that the far reaching provisions set out in the sections of the policy should transform all aspects of the nation's development stand. A nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing that of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. One cannot therefore, formulate policy on education without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation, which is to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equity and justice, and to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

Nigeria's philosophy of education understands education as an instrument for national development. To this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education. Education fosters the worth and development of the individuals, for each individual sake and for the general development of the society. The Nigeria's philosophy of education therefore, is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the full integration of the individual into the community. Accordingly, education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important and valuable instrument of change. Any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (FGN 2004).

TRENDS IN NIGERIA NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

There is a complete agreement among scholars that the first attempt to articulate a development plan in Nigeria started in the early 1940s with a ten year plan of development and welfare (Jide & Oghator, 2013). As a ten year plan, it was expected to run till 1956 but due to constitutional changes, it came to an abrupt end in 1951. As a result

of limited financial resources, non-consultation with stakeholders and undue political struggles and differences, several plans that did not materialize surfaced.

However, political events unfolded dramatically, a rapid reversal of earlier political stands led to the Northern members of parliament demanding self-government sponsored by the Action Group (AG) in 1956. In view of the above developments, the 1956-62 plans were introduced. This brought independence in 1960 earlier than scheduled. Osifo (2004) recorded that there was a compelling need to draw a plan reflecting the independent status of Nigeria, which also made the 1956-62 development plan obsolete. Subsequently, there were other development plans which we wish expose and discuss as follows.

First National Development Plan (1962-68)

The first national development plan was aimed at high level or rate of development and a realistic study of the financial stands of both public and private sectors. The plan equally emphasized agricultural, industrial, transport and man-power development. It also included the achievement and maintenance of the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living of the populace, aimed at a target saving of about (2004) reported that the plan which was expected to last for six years had a proposed total investment expenditure of about N2,132 million, both in crises culminating in the thirty month civil war (1967-1970) punctuated the implementation of the plan.

Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)

This period was referred to as "oil boom development plan" because it coincide with the period that Nigeria made high earning from the sale of crude oil allied products. Having emerged from the devastating civil war and with lessons to learn, the plan had the folling objectives as captured by Jide and Oghator (2013):

The reconstruction of facilities damaged by the civil war.
The rehabilitation and resettlement of persons displaced by war.
The establishment of an efficient administrative service, and an appropriate economic infrastructure, especially in the new states.
The achievement of a rate of growth of per capita output sufficiently high to bring about a doubling of real income per head before 1985.
Creation of job opportunities.
The production of high level of intermediate manpower.
The promotion of balanced development between the urban and rural areas.
The rapid improvement in the level and quality of social services provided for the welfare of the people.
The second development plan also had some lofty heights to attain such as:
Building a united, strong and self-reliant nation
A great and dynamic economy
A just and egalitarian society
A land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens; and
A free and the democratic society (NPE, 2004)

Third National Development Plan (1975-1980)

The third national development plan fell within the "oil boom" which was seen as the largest and the most ambitious ever launched. The purpose stated in the second development plan. The objectives included:

Increase in per capita income;
Even distribution of income:
Reduction in the level of unemployment:
Increasing the supply of high level manpower:
Diversification of the economy:

Balanced development and indigenization of economic activities (Jide & Oghator, 2013).

The intention of this plan was to curb inflationary frauds in order for the country to attain a high development level. This necessitated the formation of headed the building of the secretariat at Abuja with a cost of 27 million dollars.

Fourth Development Plan

Ijaiya and Usman (200), corroborated that the launching of the fourth national development plan was to consolidate the third national development plan which has more commitment to petroleum resources. According to Ijaiya and Usman, the objectives were:

For the promotion of export of inputs:

For local sourcing of inputs:

For improving the efficiency of government- owned enterprise and acquisition of technological skills:

For the increasing real income for all Nigerians:

Reduction in unemployment:

For power generation and supply:

Re- financing and rescheduling the trade debts to pave way for international transactions for only selected import: etc.

The performance of the plan as economic indicators/indices revealed negative growth in major sectors of the economy in 1985, and manifested other dismal results. Nevertheless, other achievements of this plan included:

Commissioning of the Okul Iboku Newsprint paper project

Egbin power station

Akure Airport

Increase in educational enrolment at all levels

Improvement in health care delivery etc (Onah, 2006)

Functional Education and National Development

Functional education is the type of education structured to ensure self-reliance is the type of education that will make a child on graduation be able to secure job. According to Kingdom and Maekae (2013), functional education is the type of education that accord major investment in human capital development, as this tends to develop the child's entrepreneurial skills. It plays a critical role in long term productivity and growth at both micro and macro-levels.

In accordance with Nigeria 's philosophy of education, we believe that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To achieve this goal, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education. However, acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society, explains why the state of education in Nigeria continues to be our national discourse at all levels. To maintain discussion on education and its reforms to make it contribute meaningfully to national development.

In Nigeria for education to contribute its quota to national development, there should be proper funding of the three tiers of government. If Nigeria government had vigilantly followed the trends in education, the Academic Staff Union of Universities would not have needed to embark on strike; government would have provided update infrastructures in the universities as well as in the secondary and primary schools. When appropriate academic environment is created, research activities will progress effectively and the malady of brain-drain will be drastically minimized.

One disheartening fact which should be summarily dealt with in Nigeria is the tendency of the government in power to neglect matters concerning education. Abiogu (2014) opined it that

something very urgent has to be done in the educational sector since “illiterates” are leading Nigerians.

Functional Education in the Context of Godfrey Okoye University

At face value, all universities are the same. However, when light is shone on their qualities, opportunities, products and adherence to National policy on Education requirements, there are evidential variation. Suffice it to say, that it is on this premise that Godfrey Okoye University (GO Uni) though ten years today sets the record straight in Nigeria with regards to quality and functional education for its students, undergraduates and postgraduates alike.

For just a decade, GO University has witnessed a paradigm shift in higher Education which has emphasized classroom teaching and the practical training-experience of her students within and beyond the confines of the University, often referred to as Experiential Education. This education model and its coordinating practice encompasses several types of learning experiences encompassing several types of learning experience including service learning, cooperative learning, and so on, all geared towards the attainment of goals of National Policy on Education as well as engendering functional education. This functional education has been referred to, by some scholars, as simply authentic learning. Simply put, functional education is learning by doing. It is active learning where students are not passive.

Kola, Gana & Olasumbo (2017) observed that functional education revolves around making students learning real, the effect of which is that such learning becomes useful in real-life situations. Functional education therefore focuses on real world complex problems and their solutions with the sole aim of giving students “real world experiences” (Lombardi and Oblinger, 2017).

It is a truism that students who undergo functional education are motivated to persevere despite initial disorientation or frustration. Herrington and Kelvin (2007) identified nine elements of authentic learning viz,; authentic activities, expert performances, multiple roles and perspectives, collaborative construction of knowledge, reflection, articulation, coaching and scaffolding authentic assessment.

Research studies show that students who had functional educational can face life challenges with their experiences. Such students are often job providers not job seekers: they are innovators and inventors and do not only rely on government for themselves. Indeed, this the type of education GO University offers her students. Imperatively, functional education is based on the natural need of the students to enquire and to know, to observe and to work. It puts students at the centre of the curriculum; under this system of education, the motivation of the students is not external (fear of punishment or hope for reward) but internal (out of genuine interest in the discussed questions and in the activities connected with it). This type of education will develop the intellectual abilities of the students rather than force-feeding them with many facts that are quickly forgotten or accumulated in the memory like a foreign substance without any connection to their life. It is therefore, in the context of the ongoing that this paper x-rays gigantic contributions of Godfrey Okoye University Education to Nigeria National Development viz a viz functional education.

Programmes organized by Godfery Okoye University and its Group of Institutions to Encourage Functional Education

SIWES

STEP PROGRAMME

TEACHING PRACTICE

TOWN & GOWN ASSEMBLY

GOUNI APTECH
ERASMUS EXCHANGE PROGRAM

SIWEA (Students industrial Work Experience Scheme): This programme was created to help students of Natural and Applied Sciences gain practical experience and widen their horizon based on their future profession while they are still studying in the university. This programme offers rich experience to anyone who wants to gain new knowledge and develop important skills. The programme is learner-centered and it gives room for practical aspects of theories learnt in school before graduating. This programme was established basically to impact elaborate practical understanding to students with respect to their various disciplines. It also intends to make students become focused and acquire the practical application towards excellence in their own discipline, and this will make students become employable in the society.

STEP (Student Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion): This is another move by GO University towards implementation of NPE in the area of functional education. This programme was officially inaugurated on the 28th of September, 2018. The programme which was initiated by the University's International Liaison Officer Meggy Kantert became apparently the first of its kind in Nigeria universities. The programme is geared towards developing their skills, knowledge and confidence to pursue an entrepreneurial career. Traditionally, students learn step-by-step to start their own business by providing them with an effective means of creating jobs for themselves and for other people in the society. The programme makes students become more proactive and independent and contribute in reducing the rate of unemployment in the country. According to Very Rev. Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke, the Vice Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University, "step programme is an economic time-bomb awaiting right financial triggering to blow" in essence. STEP helps to shape students to be

productive in the society after graduation and promote national development.

TEACHING PRACTICE: As the name implies, this was initiated to give education students practical teaching experience. Teaching practice is a process whereby student- teachers teach in a particular school as part of their training, it gives student-teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment. Teaching practice provides opportunity for the teaching profession. It provides the future teachers with practical experience in school to overcome the problem of discipline and enable them to develop method of control. Teaching practice also enables students-teachers to acquire desirable traits that will make teachers qualified and employable in the society. It is also to note that when the student- teachers are doing their teaching practice they are supervised by a more experienced teacher who helps to correct errors when they occur.

TOWN & GOWN ASSEMBLY: A nexus was launched by the Vice Chancellor to act as an interface between the outside community (Town) and the university community (Gown), all in the interest of the students. The last town and gown assembly organized in Godfrey Okoye University was on 13th of December, 2018. This programme was targeted at creating an interactive session for the members of the university community to discuss socio-economic and research-relevant issues with members of the community. During the interaction, students were exposed to entrepreneurial and economic possibilities awaiting them outside the university and this in turn will prepare them adequately to face the world after graduation. Furthermore, the interface between Town-and- Gown exposed the students to certain areas of interest so as to make it easier for them to choose career directions and prepare their minds so face the reality of what the society holds for them after graduation. Godfrey Okoye University announced that the town & gown was for organizations (captains of industries, business tycoons, Bankers etc) to tell students what to do to grow their economic prospects after

graduation. Some students even registered with prospective industries and government parastatals of interest, like the Corporate Affairs Commission. The Town was challenged to suggest areas of research which the Gown could embark on in order to improve the standard of living in the society and bring about national development.

GOUNI APPTech: Aptech is a computer company engaged by the Vice Chancellor with the sole aim of introducing the students of Computer Science and Mathematics Department to the latest I.T. technologies that would give the students an edge over others and empower them adequately for employment after graduation. This authentic learning makes students acquire the right industrial skills and hence become their own professionals.

ERASMUS EXCHANGE PROGRAM: Erasmus is an acronym for *European community Action Scheme for the mobility of University Students*. This exchange programme is an initiative run by European Union. It provides opportunities for students to study or gain work experience in different European countries while completing a degree programme. Godfrey Okoye University is affiliated to Johannes Kepler University which is in Austria. Students of International Relations, Political Science, Sociology and so many others are given opportunity yearly to travel to study, exchange ideas and engage in practical aspects of what they are studying. Erasmus programme is learner-centered and it also gives learners opportunity to gain more knowledge about their field of study. For example, students of International Relations in our university travelled last year to Austria in order to exchange programme will help to equip the students with necessary tools for employability in the society and this necessary tools for employability in the society and this will also bring about national development

RECOMMENDATION

This discussions above illustrated the strategic position of Nigeria policy on education in charting the course of national development. The crisis which has engulfed the Nigeria education sector centres on government neglect of funding education, politicization of education, changing political environment, incessant change of educational policies and corruption. The solutions to these problems include government determination to make provision for effective funding of education.

Funding of education should be a tripartite affair and responsibility of Federal, State and Local Government. Also the private sector participation should be encouraged in the funding. They can do that by providing research grants, award of scholarships and endowment of professional and specialists of specific courses in universities. There should also be legislation on multinational companies operating in Nigeria to set aside a minimum of 5% of their profits to finance education and allied projects. There should also be strong political will among political leaders to ensure continuity of educational policies and fight against corruption in Nigeria.

This paper strongly recommends that the Federal Ministry of Education should collaborate with Godfrey Okoye University to bring lasting solution to graduate unemployment in the country by promoting integral and suggests that government should encourage private universities in the country by extending the benefit of the Tertiary Education Trust (TET) Fund to them. By so doing they will see a plan field to help in the implementation of they will see a plan field to help in the implementation of NPE which will enhance national development.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper "Nigeria national policy on education: A tool for national development" is timely as toady's education has met series of setbacks, bottlenecks in terms of administration and funding. Researchers

have identified specific ways GO University contributes its quota towards national development. The papers also emphasizes that the contributions of education to national development has been indicted by funding, politicization of the system, unsteady political environment and corruption in Nigeria. For education to impact positively on national development, some recommendations have been made and if duly followed will address the crisis rocking education in Nigeria.

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