AN APPRAISAL OF NIGERIA SEC. SCH. EDUCATION SYSTEM: PAST, PRESENT AND IMPLICATION FOR THE FUTURE.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It was Huxley (1895) in Okafor (1981) who said that "education is just the instruction of the intellect in the laws of nature which includes not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest and loving desire to more in harmony with these laws".

For the Greek philosopher Plato (1947), "a good education consist in giving to the body and to the soul all the beauty and all the perception of which they are capable". The English Educationist Milton (1962) sees education as "that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war". But for the American born pragmatist Dewey (1966) education is that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.

It is the process of accommodating the future to the past or the utilization of the past for the development of the future. Tyler (1953) believed that education is a process of changing the behaviour patterns of people. For the Nigeria born Professor Uga Onwuka education is a never-ending process by means of which learners acquire the knowledge, skill, habits, sentiments and values which will enable them live usefully and happily in their society.

We will end the chain of this definition with the one of Nigeria's most educated philosopher Prof. Festus Chukwudi Okafor who in a strict term assert that education is a process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain

the development of his potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment. In a life's ultimate objectives. It is for life and for living. Okafor (1981) believes that what makes a man to live and to function is the concern of education. Hence education that has no functional value is characterized as deficient.

THE NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is fundamental that every system of education is based on some outlook of life or some philosophy. Every educational system reflects the dominant characteristics of the people who produce it. Through this system the accomplishments of past civilizations are preserved, spiritual life of the race or people is propagated, and its social heritage of language, literature, as well as philosophies and institutions is transmitted to the youth. All cultural heritage, whether it be religious, social, aesthetic, political, economic, or whatever else is examined, evaluated and imparted within the educational framework; i.e. the truth, ideas, values, customs, mores and other elements that are recognised as indispensable to the next generation, are passed on from generation to generation through education. The difference of opinion perceptible in educational theories and practices in Nigeria stem in part from differing interpretations id emphasis given to life and to life's ultimate purpose. These interpretation may constitute a particular school of thought or another and these schools of thought advocate their educational system. In the past Nigeria adopted a parochial school system patterned largely after the scholastic philosophy (Okafor, 1981). But today Nigeria is adopting a functional school system patterned largely after the America's pragmatic philosophy. These two systems have to do with the necessity of considering the means and ends of an education enterprise. The issues of means and ends have kept educationist restless. When the need to balance the "Means" and "ends" in education is

lost, the planners and implementers of educational curriculum tend to emphasize one more in the expense of the other. Machiavelli (1992) for instance in his pursuit of ends asserted that "the end justifies the means". But today education is laying more emphasis on the appropriateness means. This exemplified in the tendency to concentrate on efficiency and methodology. Einstein (1960) in Onwuka (1988) warned against carrying the issue of means too far when he said "perfection of means and confusion of goals seem in my opinion to characterize our age". The aforesaid has been the problem of Nigeria education system (secondary) from the coming of the imperialist government to the present day. There has not been a perfect blending of these two aspects of education and that recalls the saying of the wiseman Seneca (1871) "that when a man does not know to what port he saileth, then no wind is favourable.

2.0 EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE PAST

The Nigeria Secondary School education system of the past is characterized by some sort of theoretical jimicks devoid of practicals, sole pursuit of cognitive domain pursuit of obsolete goals of thinking in abstractions, using teacher dominated approach to learning, learning concepts in a type of topical disjointed manner, and evaluating of our student with one shot examination. (like almighty WAEC June, Almighty WAEC December) (Harbor - Peters 1999). The output of that system were efficient rhetoric's, static self-styled accountants, secretaries, and parochial executive officers. These products were unable to conquer their environment because of their nature of education.

The education system of the past produced some good zombies in many field of endeavour. She produced little or no physical scientists. Some teachers of this system lacked objectivity. On this Neff (1970) said that if a teacher has never been afforded opportunity to learn the meaning of objectivity, how does he subject his own biases,

prejudices, and convictions to impartial evaluation? For him a teacher who has succeeded in cultivating an attitude of objectivity impartiality and critical mindedness on himself is more likely to cultivate similar traits in his students. Such a teacher knows when to be sympathetic, when to encourage and when to be severe, because he has learned how to lift life above the vagaries of chance and to locate it at level of thoughtful appraisal and intelligent control.

The teachers and education administrators (Principals) of the past system were more or less like masquerades lording things over the learners with their authority in an autocratic manner. Principals of schools were types of demi gods to be worshipped by their teachers and students. Scientific approaches to teaching, leadership and decision making were lacking. And on this Okafor (1981) summarized the state of things when he said "it is not demonstrative of professional maturity if the teachers can explain the rationale for his actions merely in terms of magister dixit (authority) feeling". He further said that in order for him to be involved intelligently in the critical consideration of many of the contemporary issues in education, such as financing, church state relations, et cetra, he should be able to know how to identify evidence, the variables in the construction of hypothesis, the determinants of logical reasoning and the distinctions involved in the identification of relevancy.

In the approach to reality, to things, and to situations he should be able to distinguish between subjective assertions and propaganda in contradiction from objective evidence.

Looking at the curriculum content of our secondary school system in the past the following concepts are conspicuously lacking: statistics, set theory, probability, co-ordinate geometry matrices, differential and integral calculus, intro tech, computer appreciation, etc. Hence with the absence of the above in mathematics and many others

in physics, chemistry, agriculture etc. there is a clear indication that Nigeria of the old was not preparing for a serious scientific breakthrough like what we have in the Western world.

3.0 THE S.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE PRESENT

The education system in the present has a lot of improvements over the past, one sharp proof is that what we use to know in the past as extra-curricular activities in our colleges are now core subjects and are more lucrative than the real subjects. Such include agriculture (horticulture), music, and the Health Physical .Education. (jumpology). And you will believe with me that the quickest way of becoming a millionaire in Nigeria today is through sports (HPE) Health & Physical Education. The general situation of the system today is described by Toffler (1980) in Drummond (1992) when he observed that the change in the present-day educational system is no more than an attempt to refine the existent machinery making it ever more efficient in pursuit of obsolete goals. The rest is a kind of Brownian motion self-cancelling, coherent, directionless. What has been lacking is a consistent direction and logical starting point. Hence it is the belief that even though the system is better today it is lacking direction and pursuing antiquated goals. Be it as it may, function of education as a afford, self-knowledge, providing the ability to enable people become aware of themselves, being aware of their background, their relationship with others, the people's awareness of their potentials and weaknesses and the facilitation of people's behavioural changes are observed in Nigeria today. Our education in the secondary school level is more positive and forward looking. Although modern mathematics was scrapped in 1977 out of ignorance it has grown to be the base for the technology development today – computer. The knowledge that are to be gained therein are gradually being received with the curriculum of the 6-3-3-4 system. We have today. the

new curriculum which emphasizes education activities concomitant with living, emphasizes the experiences of life itself as against the traditional curriculum that prepares a child for life. The traditional subject matter areas like history, government, geography, mathematics and science which were compartmentalized before are now arranged in themes adopting a thematic approach. The traditional system has shifted from teacher centredness to child centredness education system. The child in the secondary school is now a participant in learning activities, enriching his experiences and engendering his or her growth.

The present system adopted what Okafor (1981) calls methodology of openness which compels learning to involve action. The students today learn by doing. This methodology involves reconstruction, reorganisation and transforming of experiences to direct the course of subsequent experience. Infact it is the scientific approach. This approach makes learning flexible and accommodates individual differences (andragogy), with this new approach physical disability is no more an impediment to education as before. There are teachers of special education in many secondary schools here in Nigeria. Also today our education has shifted to a problem solving aspect of learning thanks to the introductory technology, technical drawing, auto mechanics, wood and metal works in our curriculum. With the new methodology the teacher no longer assumes a supereminence position in the classroom business. He is gradually turning to be an adviser, a helper, a facilitator, a director and a guide in an education arena.

In the education management of the system, the emergency of Post Primary School Management Board in all the states of the Federation makes the running of the system easier and permeating. The system is characterized by continuous innovations in education instruments and instructional approaches. There is a tremendous

improvement in human resource training. Most importantly computer systems have been introduced in the secondary school system. But the greatest problem in the present system is that of instability in the systems-run. By this I mean that there exists frequent disruptions in our secondary school education. There is no academic session in this country that never experience at least one industrial action of the secondary school workers (tutorial and non tutorial) or students unrest in one state or the other. At times it becomes a national problem, sometimes the strike or disruptive measure lasts one whole year.

Nonetheless a great achievement has been recorded in the area of evaluation with the introduction of continuous assessment in our secondary schools. With the present system there is hope for scientific take off in Nigeria in the aspiration that the corruption sore in our schools be healed in the near future.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Any sound education good for any generation has five essential learning aspects.

a) Knowledge of the world of things.

b) Knowledge of the world of people.

c) Knowledge of the world of ideals.

d) Knowledge of the world of use of tools (some)

e) Knowledge of the world of creation and admiration (Onwuka 1988)

An education system is said to be stable when that aforementioned aspects of education are constructed into an equilibrium point. These five essentials can be categorized into two schools of thought: platonic and pragmatic schools of thought.

The platonic school placed emphasis on the individual rational perfection that will enhance the students attainment of a proper intellectual cultivation, enriched mind,

refined sensibility quickened appreciation of culture and discipline. The pragmatic school emphasises vocational or practical work efficiency which will assist an individual toward efficient practical action in a practical world. For this school of thought education must be functional. Our past system seems platonic and the present bends to the pragmatic. None of these is stable on itself and we are working for a future system that is comprehensive and stable in nature. For a future that is bright educationally Okafor (1981) said "it should not be a question of "either/or" rather, with necessary modifications the approach should be that of both/and". The perfection of the human intellect should not be negated in the educative process and discipline should not be jettisoned. On the future system, Bounsma (1975) said that there must be some openness in curriculum construction to some ultimate considerations. The curriculum must reflect both the diversity and the uniformity in the nature of humankind. We are looking forward to seeing education that foster free thinking and experimentation that accelerates the pace of evolution and facilitates racial improvement much more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

The greatest problem besieging the Nigeria secondary education system is that of the systems control and the human resources management. If you ask any man or woman in the remotest area about education today the reply will be that our children do not go to school any longer. Or that the teachers are not paid and the students are sent back home. Or that one principal or the other has been charging us an arbitrary fees thereby killing our education and he (the principal) had been causing a massive transfer of his teachers, using trick to stripe the school of teachers who should educate our children. If you ask the principals their answers sound obvious – that the teachers are not co-operating and many of the students uneducated and uncontrollable. If you chance the students and ask them the problem of the school they will simply tell you

that the principal and his/her teachers are not serious. that they only complain of this money or that money owed to them by government or parents. If you ask the government officers in the ministry of education they will seem to be in congruence to the student that the teachers are redundant, engaging in other business and earning salaries without working. Teachers on their own accuse the government for non or irregular payment of their salaries and allowances. They accuse the society for hostile attitudes and no incentive for teaching job. They accuse the principals of a draconian leadership that has no human face. The teachers believe they have a cause to be angry because "a hungry man they say is an angry man". All that the above is pointing is the fact that there is a lack in our human relationship in our school system and human resource management. We in the school system lack quality management and control.

For the future we are optimistic that with the democratic movement now in this country. I am convinced that our leadership in the school system will amiable total quality management and sustenance are given priority attention. On this Drummond (1992) said that whereas conventional management stresses human resource management, building a quality culture in school system is about developing resourceful humans to enable them to manage. The progression consists of a gradual change in emphasis which moves through three-phases:- human resource management; managing and developing resourceful humans; and resourceful humans managing. This is a virtuous circle which consists of developing the organisation in a manner which simultaneously develops the people which further enables the people to develop the organisation.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion of this paper the authors wish to emphasis that the aim of training and education must be to enable employees (principals, teachers, non-tutorial) to realize

their potential as part of a continuous improvement strategy. This means that they have to go beyond the basics. The managers of the system should maintain a dynamic equilibrium in which everyone understands what they are doing yet roles are constantly developing. Logically continuous improvement surely has positive implication for the quality of working life.

Finally it is my hope that the quality of working life envisaged in our education of the future will bring about re-skilling of education planners and school workers including the evaluation agencies like WAEC & NECO. It will bring about proper training of the teachers, increases job satisfaction and reduces stress (Jackson 1990). All individuals in the education enterprise will become increasingly self-regulating. Workers redundancy will be replaced by an overlapping spheres of influence. Most principals of schools will shift from being autocratic, prerogative managerial elite's to leaders in the sense of negotiators, facilitators, resource procurers, and democratic figure heads. There will be a shift from the act of punishing stringently bad workers in the system to the act of giving incentives to the good achievers of the education industry this will produce more confident workforce for a better education system in future.

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