

Education and National Development in Nigeria: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation needs a functional educational system that can equip learners with requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them relate and adapt successfully to the rapid socio-economic, cultural and political changes in the society. This paper examined education as it relates to national development. It thus examined education and moral development, education and cultural/social development, education and economic development and education and political development of the Nigeria child. To achieve national development through education, Nigeria has to recognize the role of counselling and not only talk about it but let it have a bearing on the educational system and the society at large. The paper recommends that counselling unit be established in all schools at all level of education in Nigeria as well as at every ministry, parastatals, local government councils where counsellors will act as consultants.

Key Words: Education, Development, Moral, Cultural, Economic, Political, National

Introduction

The nations of the world can be classified into two – developed nations and developing nations. A developed nation can be described as that nation in which the citizens have access to social amenities that will improve their well-being. The main characteristics of a developed nation are high income per capita, high human development index, high gross domestic product, more

energy consumption, more produce and trade in consumer goods and very high literacy level. Developing nations were once called under developed nations. A typical developing nation has a shortage of food, few sources of power and a low gross national product (GNP), which is the value of all the goods and services produced by the country during a year. Physical capital such as machinery and efficient transportation system is scarce in developing nations. So also is social capital such as a good education, and health systems and stable government. Diseases, illiteracy, and inadequate equipment keep agricultural and commercial production low. Developed nations have in abundance all that the developing nations lack.

Nigeria is often described as a developing country because of the absence of many indices of development like infrastructure, access to quality education and medical facilities. Education certainly is one of the ways through which a nation becomes developed. Children go to school to learn and be educated in order to function better in society and raise their social standings.

One of the objectives of education therefore is to adequately equip the child with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development (Chima, 2006). In other words, education provides the intellectual feat which is required for social, economic, political and technological development of a nation. Education is intended to improve the personal life of the student in terms of the knowledge and skills, which he requires and which enhance his quality of life and contributes to the well-being of his society (Gbenda and Akume, 2009). Nigeria as a nation, needs a functional educational system that can equip learners with requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them relate and adapt successfully to the rapid socio-economic, cultural and political changes in the society. The importance of education in the development of the society has made government at all levels to be committed to the provision of educational opportunities to its citizenry (Okubanjo, 2006).

According to National Policy on Education (2004), education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development.

National development is the ability of a country to improve the social well-being of its citizens through the provision of such social amenities as medical care, infrastructure, quality education and other social services. This article examines education and moral development, education and social development, education and economic development and education and political development of the Nigerian child in relation to national development.

Education and Moral Development

Moral education refers to the general role of the education process in developing a sense of moral values in children. The moral aspect of a child's education is ultimately aimed at raising the level of moral judgment and behaviour to the optimum as required by the society. The educational system seeks to place a central emphasis on the teaching of the rights and interests of other people and what is considered to be right and proper (Denga, 2011). Education should develop moral and social consciousness among the youths so that they can uphold the moral and social values of their societies. The knowledge acquired through formal education assists citizens to bring desirable change to their community in particular leading to national development in general.

Morality as observe by Denga (2011) is basically concerned with the development of sound character in the child so that virtues like goodness, rightness, truth, respect for law, and authority, forgiveness, honesty, sympathy, diligence, self-imposed discipline and obedience among other virtues are internalized by the child. One of the important aims of the Nigerian educational system is the inculcation of six value clusters one of which is moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relation. This includes, specific moral values of being God fearing, honest, responsible and forgiving. The question one may ask is: is the Nigeria educational system achieving this very

important aim of developing a sense of moral values in the Nigerian child which would consequently lead to national development?

From all indications, educational system in Nigeria has not been able to fully inculcate moral values into the Nigerian child looking at the activities of youths in the areas of examination malpractices, cultism and other social vices in our schools and universities. As Abekhale (2009) observe, the situation in Nigeria has been worsened by the behavioural pattern of our youths, many of them no longer believe in hard work, which our forefathers bequeathed on us. Many are no longer patient; there is no commitment and no aspiration.

To Ejogu (2006), since the mid-1980s, this country has been sliding dangerously into a bottomless pit of moral decrepitude. Every other Nigerian is fast losing faith in himself/herself, in his/her neighbor, and in the father land. To a great many Nigerians, hardwork has become anathema. Today it is permissible according to the author, to steal public fund, use it to build castles and buy chieftaincy titles. It is no longer necessary to study hard for examinations since it is easier to buy fake certificates and testimonial from Oluwole street behind Tinubu square, in Lagos. The Nigerian youths have to be empowered through education which is an activity that primarily liberates their minds from lowly deeds and enables them to fully comprehend the importance of embracing lofty ideals which leads to personal development and consequently national development.

Education and Cultural/Social Development

In most societies, standards of behaviour are passed from one generation to the next. It is the duty of every functional education to transmit the culture of the society from one generation to the next. Education will be meaningless if it is not directed at solving societal problems, conserving the cultural heritage, inventing and discovering new ideas and technologies that are essential tools for cultural improvement (Denga, 2011). Education thus, should be the agent of economic, cultural,

religious, political, military and social development of the nation. Through education, youths learn the customs, traditions, beliefs and lifestyle of their people through literature, history, civic education, social studies and so on. Several activities abound in the school like drama, and religious instruction through which the youths learn how to act certain traditions and also develop into morally correct citizen who is loyal and obedient to rules and authority leading to social development.

The question one needs to ask is, has the educational system in Nigeria been able to bring about cultural and social development which could lead to national development? As Abekhale (2009) puts it, Nigeria is currently witnessing a lot of maladaptive behaviours from youths that put the integrity of the nation at stake. The behaviour of Nigeria youth is fast eroding and require urgent and concise action. According to the author, many Nigerians no longer have dress code, our music has changed and become meaningless, respect for elders is almost becoming history.

The security in the nation leaves much to be desired. Cases of kidnapping and ritual killings are heard or read on the news almost on daily basis. Both the rich and the poor appear to be very unsafe. Even lecturers are reluctantly submissive to the winds and caprices of cultists because their security cannot be guaranteed by any one. Child abuse, child labour, and child trafficking, which were hitherto aberrations in our culture have been embraced as the fastest means of getting rich. Youth's restiveness is growing unabated and student desire better grades without hard work. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that educational system in Nigeria has not been able to sufficiently address the issue of cultural and social development.

Education and Economic Development

Any functional and efficient education system should be able to improve the economic development of the nation. One of the major economic functions of education is to ensure that the needed manpower for economic development is trained. This can help the society to reduce poverty

among its people by enabling them to employ effective tools of production. Apart from the above, nation building and industrialization is a major aim of education. Thus, producing citizens with appropriate occupational skills and knowledge to plan and manage the economy efficiently through education can lead to improving the status of the nation's economy.

The focus of education in Nigeria should be the training of people who will have the necessary skills to engage in production, create wealth and develop the nation. In agreement Harbison in Agbo (2014) asserts that human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations capital and natural resources are factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization, and carry forward national development. To the author, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

In Nigeria, people's standard of living to a great extent depends on their level of educational attainment, apart from chance factors and inheritance of wealth. Looking at the situation in Nigeria now, one would see that many youths are no longer patient, have no commitment and no aspiration. Youths these days strive only to reap where they have not sown. "Uneducated" youths are neither ready to work on the farms nor enroll for apprenticeship training. Their major preoccupation according to Abekhale (2009) is to form organizations that can be hired as thugs by politicians who are struggling to win elections through any means without hard work.

The problem in Nigeria now is such that much more emphasis is placed on paper qualification (quality of certificate) than on quality of knowledge and skills acquired by students in the schools. This has led to examination malpractices among students of secondary and tertiary institutions who graduate with "flashy" certificates they cannot defend. Gbenda (2008) agrees that other factors for examination malpractice include undue emphasis on paper qualification as criteria

for selection of candidates for higher education and employment. Such a situation compels some students preparing for examinations to engage in certain extra activities that would fetch them better grades. In the last decades, the Nigerian educational system recorded an alarming rate of examination malpractice at all levels. Examination malpractice has reached an unbelievable order of magnitude at all level of education where organized examination malpractice is seen as a business venture. This gives rise to poor academic performance, which has plagued the society. It has also led to inefficiency in public life of the products of schools. Many students would want to be awarded certificates without passing their examinations. The effect is that, the graduates of tertiary institutions roam the streets in search of just any job because the training they received did not equip them for the realities of life.

Education and Political Development

A functional educational system should be to promote the political system of the nation in various ways. Any philosophy of education that is not geared towards meeting the political needs of the society is a meaningless philosophy. Democracy is a form of government, a way of life, a goal or ideal and a political philosophy. Nigeria is one of the countries that have democratic form of government. The citizens of democracy take part in government either directly or indirectly. Throughout history, the most important aspects of the democratic way of life have been the principle of individual equality and freedom. Accordingly, citizens in a democracy should be entitled to equal protection of their persons, possession and rights; have equal opportunities to pursue their lives and career; and have equal rights of political participation. In addition, the people should enjoy freedom from undue interference and domination by government. Democratic societies seek to guarantee their citizens certain freedoms, including freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. Ideally, citizens should be guaranteed freedom of association and

assembly, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment and the freedom to work and live where and how they choose (The world book encyclopedia, 1993).

To attain political stability in a diverse nation like Nigeria, students have to be taught how to be patriotic, and how to respect people's social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Through education, unity in diversity can be achieved. Also, through education the youths learn various political systems at home and abroad and are sufficiently aware of their fundamental human right and the rights of others.

Democracy that is practiced in Nigeria today is far from the one described above. Politic in Nigeria has no room for respect for social, religious and cultural background of others. No kind of freedom is guaranteed as undue interference and domination by the government and highly placed politicians is the order of the day. As observes by Gambari in Onochie (2017), democracy has hardly delivered the changes which citizens yearn for. Some scholars have argued that the challenges faced by many democracies around the world have been due to the prevalence of form and ritual over substance and innovation. To the author there have been disaffection with the practice of electoral politics around the world and in Nigeria in particular the evidence was the constant declining of voters turn out. Factors responsible include youth alienation from electoral politics, continuous marginalization of women from the political space as well as exclusion of the minorities from effective participation and representation. To Gambari, democracy and development were unfinished business which implied that one aspect of democracy – development nexus must be pursued together to meet the yearning of the people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the authors agree with the objective of education which is to adequately equip the child with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development. Effective participation and contribution to national development by youths

through formal education in present day Nigeria is yet to be achieved considering the caliber of students turned out yearly who find it difficult to defend their certificates when called upon to do so. Education has not been able to promote cultural and social development among the youths neither has it been able to achieve political stability, unity nor guaranteed her citizens certain freedoms necessary for personal and national development. Something therefore need to be done and urgently too if the objective of education is to be achieved.

Implications for Counselling

Counseling is one of the veritable tools that could be used for the achievement of Nigeria educational goal of equipping the child with necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development by the youths. As Agbe and Agbe (1999) observe, Nigeria has to recognize the role of counseling and not only talk about it but let it have a bearing on the educational system and the society at large.

Agreeing with the authors, Denga (2001) asserts that even a casual look at societies today will reveal that most societies are psychological societies... which need the services of counselling psychologists. Thus our religious leaders, politicians, office holders, youths and parents must embrace counselling if our effort at achieving national development through education is to yield positive result. This paper suggests that counselling units should be established in all schools at all level of education in Nigeria as well as at every ministry, parastatals, local government councils where counselors will act as consultants.

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