

**EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**IN NIGERIA**

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**BY**

**BOLAKALE ADEBIMPE  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
(T) DEPARTMENT OF  
INT/SCIENCE.  
LAFIAGI.**

**AND**

**JIMOH .K. IBRAHIM**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
STUDIES. ILORIN.**

## **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria is a uniquely vast and beautiful country with hardworking and brilliant people with sound educated minds who want to live as one, but are having a tough time deciding how to go about it thirty eight years of post colonial experience, one may say, is a long enough time for it to have begun to show visible sign of progress in the area of her educational development. One of the key elements of Nigeria historical circumstances is that virtually all primordial efforts by it leaders at physical transformation of society were undertaken without given cognizance to educational development. This paper looks in to what Education National objectives and development are, how to achieve the national objectives, problems of national development, and lastly look at the hope, and the action if any.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In considering the meaning of this topic education and National development let us first of all look at it from a philosophical point of view, as it poses a philosophical question concerning the purpose of education. We shall examine it from that key stand point in terms of the objectives of education as a key factor in the development of a rapidly changing Nigeria society. We shall also touch on some of the social, political and economic problems associated with gigantic tasks of nation building and national development, examine the connection of these problems with education, and also consider the contribution which education can make to the solution of these problems and overall development of the country. Going by the meaning of education, it means different thing to different society, for instance in Europe for many years no person was considered to have studied classical Latin and Greek. In Nigeria traditional education even today, and elsewhere in Africa, the learning of correct behavior in various circumstances is considered to be of greatest importance (James,1969).

Suffice it to say that one of its fundamental objectives is not only the total development of the individual personality but also of the society of which all individuals are apart(Solaru,1964).We know that worthwhile and progress can only take place in society when its citizens are well educated and fully equipped to use their education as a means of solving the diverse and complex problems facing that society, bringing about meaningful changes and thus contributing positively to its total progress(Nyerere, 1967).Many of the highly specialized nations which have a long tradition of formal and non formal education have succeeded, in large measure in overcoming many of their national problems such as poverty, ignorance and disease as well as social and political issues, through a deliberate educational policy and programmes of national development. Thus, education can be use to bring about social progress and therefore, if education is to serve its purpose it must contribute effectively to the solution of the social, economic and cultural problems of the society and meet the aspirations of its people (Fafunwa, 1961).This has been the case throughout the ages, from the time of the ancient Greeks through the middle ages and the time of the industrial revolution up to modern times.

Let us clarify our ideas about the meaning of a concept "DEVELOPMENT". The word development is a rather vague and all-embracing term. In this context, it involves growth and progressive change, it means somebody showing definite evidence of change, maturity and progress in his physical, mental, emotional characteristics. He may have become more self-confident in the way he talks, thinks and conducts his life generally. When we talk of national development, we are thinking in terms of the growth, change, and development that is taking place in that society (Musella, 1970). The change may be physical, for example in terms of the establishment and improvement of what are sometimes called "infrastructures" such things as new roads, railway, communication systems, energy development, building etc or the change may be a perceptible and change in the attitude of the people and in their way of life. They may develop a new attitude to work, become more nationalistic, more sensitive to national issues, more patriotic, and generally become more responsible and discipline (Imogie, 1990). It is when such changes take place in a society that we talk of national development. Obviously, the rate of such national development will vary from time to time, depending on several factors such as the value of its manpower and availability of its resources. The important thing is that the society is progressing and the ultimate aims of its development are the improvement of the quality of life of its citizens. Measure of societal development therefore is the progress recorded and the extent to which it has succeeded in overcoming its complex social, political and economic problems in a manner that improve the standard and quality of life of the ordinary citizens (Itotoh,1989).

Whether a society is developed or developing the people should know when development is taking place. One criterion is whether its people are living a worthwhile and satisfying life. This consideration is important, because apart from the material progress that may be achieved, there should be improvement also in spiritual and moral life of the people. People may make great progress materially and technologically, but if the spiritually and moral values of their lives do not improve, the development society undergoes cannot be complete, because the lack of moral values will create for the society many other problems.

There is obviously -a close relationship between development and education because the key to all development is good education. However, education in itself does not necessarily lead to development and we should not equate education with development and progress. A society may have a large percentage of educated and yet experience little progress in its development. A lot depends on other factors such as the quality and type of education its citizens are receiving and the nature of its political and economic circumstances. In a developing country like Nigeria, education is not only important as a social service but is also a key factor in the overall national development. The importance of education in the development and transformation of Nigeria into a modern society is summed up in the prophetic of words of as by.

To approach our task we have to think of Nigeria

In 1980, A Nation of some 50million (now estimated to about 80million) with industries, oil and a well developed agriculture, intimately associated with other free

African countries on either side of its borders: a voice to be listened fully to in the Christian and Muslim world: with its traditions in art preserved and with the beginning of its own literature: a nation which is taking its in a technological civilization, with its own airways, its organ of mass communication, its research institutes.

### **EDUCATION, NATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT**

There can be no universal agreement on the specific objectives of education. This is because different countries have different educational systems and each country has to decide what the main objectives of its education are; and how these are to be achieved. In many countries in Europe and America, which have long traditions of formal and non-formal education, the objective of education are not concerned with nation unity, integration and technological advancement. This is because major problems associated with these aspects of their national life have been effectively tackled. In the communist countries of China Austria, the objectives of education are related to the building of a socialist state and so their educational systems are geared towards the fulfillment of such objectives.

The developing countries are facing problems of nation building, social integration and economic development and so that educational objectives have to be designed to deal with great problems of national development (Onwuka, 1990) such as fostering a sense of national belonging, patriotism, loyalty, national service etc. In Nigeria, educational objectives are concerned primarily with the complex problems of nation building and national development. The objectives of national developments were stated in the second National Development Plan (1970-74, page131).

For these objectives to be meaningful, our educational systems have to be orientated towards achieving the declared objectives. It is within this particular frame of reference that the National seminal on National Educational Policy elaborated on the role of education and comments as follows.

"The desire that Nigeria should be a free just and democratic society, and full of opportunities for all citizens able to generate a great and dynamic economy, and growing into united, strong and self reliant nation cannot be over emphasized...furthermore, to fostered the much needed unity of Nigeria, imbalances in inter-state and intrastate developments should be corrected. Not only in education the greatest force that can be used to bring about redress, it is generally agreed that it greatest investment that Nation can make for the development of our economic, political, sociological and human resources.")

The awareness of the importance of education and its contribution to national development led to the evolment of a national education philosophy whose objectives have been elaborated in National Policy on Education (FME, 1981) i.e. in the case of Primary Education Objectives include inculcation of permanent literacy, numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.

In the case of Secondary Education, the broad objectives are;

- a. Preparation for useful living within the society.
- b. Preparation for Higher education.

### **ACHIEVING THE NATION OBJECTIVES**

In aiming to achieve the above mentioned and other national objectives, successive Nigerian Governments, fully aware of the important role education can play in national development; have adopted a number of measures (Okeke, 1989) the establishment of the National Youth Service corps programmes has among its objectives.

- a. Inculcating a spirit of service to the nation.
- b. Developing a sense of patriotism and national awareness.

In spite of some of criticism of the programme especially about the conduct of many Youth corps, it is fair to say that the scheme has succeeded to a large extent in achieving its main objectives. Those who have served the scheme have been made to be more aware of their country than they would have been. Furthermore the distribution of members for service in various states of the federation have contributed in no small measure in solving the problems of manpower in the country. Other measures that have been taken to promote and strengthen nation unity and development includes,

- a. Establishment of Federal colleges and other Institutions located in various parts of country, with the policy of mixing students drawn from all over the federation.
- b. Students exchange programmes among some States in the Country.

### **PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In spite of visible awareness that has been made in various sphere of national life, Nigeria is still faced by many problems which handicap efforts at National development. Such problems include (Onwuka, 1990).

- a. Lack of discipline generally in both public and private life, by adult and youths alike, especially in the failure of former to set good example to the later.
- b. Lack of spirit of total commitment to the nation caused by many people i.e. the ruling class.
- c. Lack of proper planning and misplacement of priorities.
- d. Mismanagement of public funds by our leaders.
- e. Misused of scarce resources.
- f. Lack of enough political education.

### **HOPE AND ACTIONS**

Nigeria has all the potentials to become a Developed Country within a reasonable space of time. There is a vast amount of underdeveloped land with abundant of natural resources. Nigeria has the largest population and one of the highest literacy in black Africa (Fafunwa, 1961). There are all opportunities for the nation to develop progress.

However, what is important is not so much that resources but the use to which they are put and spirit of the people who use them. If they are used sensibly with a deep sense of commitment to the nation, Nigeria should be able to overcome many of

the complex problems of nation building and national development, as many developed nations have done. Government has to take some serious measures and put into effect the various programmes so as to achieve the declared objectives. It is fair to say that some measures of progress have already been achieved in many areas of national life. However, a lot more need to be done, as the task facing the nation is gigantic one there is an urgent need to translate the declared objectives of the Government into a concrete programme of action, the political leadership should be prepared to put into practice the principle of democracy and equalitarianism, they should be honest enough to initiate and carryout a concrete programme of action designed to achieve the declared objectives of an equalitarian society.

Once the Government is fully committed to this action, it will then start the difficult task of mobilizing and directing the citizens towards the attainment of these objectives using all the available resources. If this is done, it will then be easy to gear the entire educational system towards achieving the education and National objectives. Such a National philosophy will put new emphasis on the ideals of service to the Nigeria community, putting the Nation above self, working together co-operatively, sharing the common national resources equitably, developing a strong sense of values, self reliance, self discipline, and patriotism, by all adult ruling class and all those in positions of power and influence by showing good example publicly and privately, that they are totally committed to this point of view, then our youths will be greatly inspired to follow good examples from elders.

Taiwo (1975), was of the opinion that what is needed now is the will and determination to put the various ideas and proposals into practice. The system must be planned in a way that will take account of three basic principles.

- a. Employment: all education and training systems must prepare young Nigerians for gainful employment.
- b. Service: Young Nigerians must be encouraged to render selfless loyal and service to the nation.
- c. The nation's youth must be encouraged to and work together happily, regarding themselves as fellow citizens.

The area of the curriculum that has to be giving much greater attention and emphasis is that of vocation, technical, scientific and agricultural education Nwokolo (1977). This will contribute greatly to the development of urban and rural communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

If our society must developed, young men women must .be intelligent, understanding of the increasing complexity of the society, be trained to be enterprising and self-reliant, be involved in the national development of our nation, acquire apply skills to our national problems, live successfully in our future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Then, there is the absolute need for a radical change in the entire political set up. The Government must show sense of sincerity and open administration; equity must be the watch-dog of the Government.

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