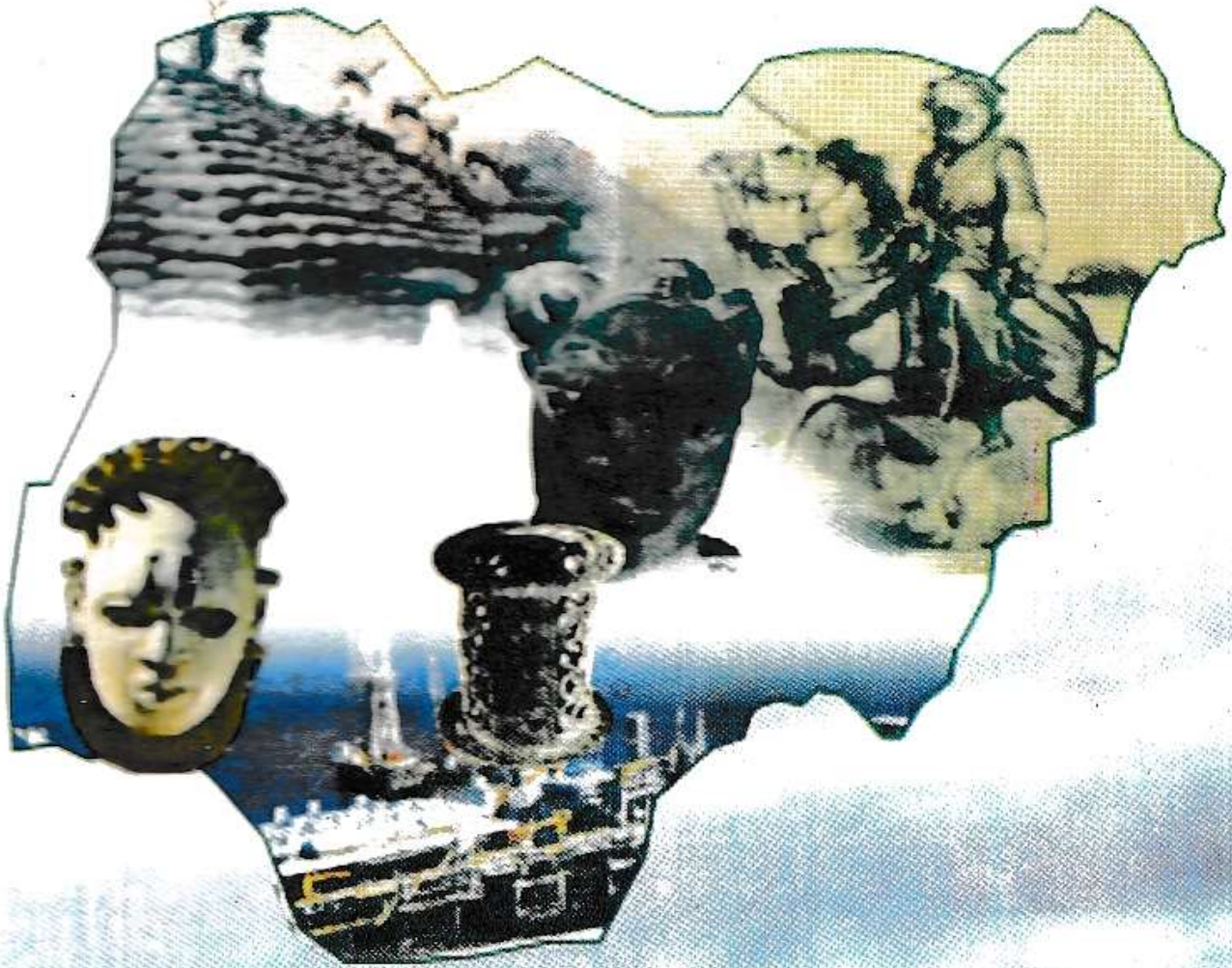


# **THE NIGERIAN NATION:**

## **Nigerian Peoples and Cultures**



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# CHAPTER 15

## EDUCATION AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT

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### INTRODUCTION

Education, a systematic training and instruction especially of the young to bring about knowledge and abilities has always had attention even in traditional times. This is because of the realization that the development of character and mental powers results from, and is connected with such training.

In fact, from the beginning of creation, there has always been one form of education or the other. Man has always been conscious of procreation such that he has consciously or unconsciously evolved a way of training up a young one so that the latter would, at the least, step into his shoes if not perform better than the former when the former; the adult, is no longer living. From this position, several definite attempts at educating her citizenry had and have been made in Nigeria, for example, before and after she acquired nationhood. In this paper, an attempt would be made to x-ray the various modes of education geared towards manpower development in Nigeria and their influences on contemporary practices.

### TRADITIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Education in the pre-colonial days was closely linked with the traditional beliefs and values of the time. Man was seen as a bridge between the gods and the ancestors on the one hand and the unborn generations on the other hand. Human life, human dignity, extended family system as well as communal life style were greatly valued. It was, therefore, man's duty to ensure that these beliefs and values were enshrined in the young. Put differently, these were the philosophies which guided the educational enterprise of the time.

In practice, education was pragmatic, ensuring a link between the ancestors and the in-coming generation. The young child normally gets initiated into the family occupation. This, he does through helping out from youth while parents are at work. This he (the young child) does until he is able to take on some independent assignments. At some point in his life he

becomes an expert in the profession and can be said to operate independent of the parents. At this point, he can introduce innovations in the trade according to his exposure and the exigencies of the time. In this way he is said to have perpetuated the occupation of his family ancestors thereby becoming a custodian of this occupation so that would hand same over to his children and younger family members, who represent the in-coming generation.

It is worthy of note that the traditional system of education provided a system of training according to areas of need. And so, irrespective of what the family occupation was into which the child was systematically initiated, there were other conscious efforts to train children in areas of need to the community. Such areas usually sought to fill positions such as the family chief priest, who would present the family's petitions and sacrifices to the gods, medicine, and other areas like blacksmithing. Where the occupation for which the child would be trained was different from that of the family, the child would be attached to a master and he would learn through apprenticeship scheme. With his master too, he learnt in stages. First, he would observe his seniors at work and run non-technical errands. Next, he would help with work and gradually carry out some tasks on his own. In this way he gradually acquired "perfection."

It is worthy of note that in the traditional system of education, there is little coercion. The individual learns at his own pace. He has freedom of choice of the profession he would enlist into. The whole community is the teacher to the child and where there are specific teachers these teachers are sympathetic. The home is the usual setting and certification comes only when the master is satisfied with the level of expertise.

Other forms of education during the period include initiations into several reserved societies like the *Ekpo*, *Ekpe*, *Obon*, and *Ebre* societies, for the Ibibio people. In these societies especially during initiations, specific instructions were given aimed at promoting bravery, some skills and confidentiality. For the Ibibio, and the Efik, young maidens were also instructed during the period of their confinement in the fattening room. All this took the form of informal and non-formal education.

Specific similarities between the traditional system of education and the contemporary practice which, one would be tempted to say, the latter inherited from the former on some aspects of the philosophy of present-day education. The national goals of Nigerian educational system as stated in the National Policy on Education (1998), all seem to be upshot of the philosophies of traditional education in Nigeria even before colonisation, viz the building of:

a free and democratic society

- a just and egalitarian society
- a united, strong and self reliant nation
- a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. (NPE, 1998:7)

Furthermore, the present philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, the full integration of the individual into the community and the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens. These are clearly upshot of the traditional philosophy and practice of education although not written down at the time.

### **ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

Islamic education has been prevalent in Northern Nigeria. This has been occasioned by the people having early socio-economic relations with the Arab world and the trans-Saharan trade. Islam is both a religion and a way of life. The religion is said to influence the total way of life of its practitioners and believers.

A true Muslim (a person who practices Islam), believes in the existence of one God (Allah) who revealed his as teaching to Prophet Mohammed as recorded in the Quran. He believes that Prophet Mohammed is God's messenger. According to Thakur and Ezenne (1980) the Muslim also believes in the existence of other angels who mediate between God (Allah) and man. To him there is "Satan" or the devil, who is assisted by evil spirits.

Other areas of the Muslim's belief include:

- Allah the all-knowing and the all powerful
- Predestination in that all is pre-planned by God beforehand
- Life after death, i.e., resurrection of the dead and judgement in the life to come.

In as much as God created all things, all things including all humans must live their lives in readiness to return to God for judgement on the last day.

Islam demands five important duties from believers.

1. Belief in one God (Allah )
2. Pray five times daily, facing the *Ka'aba*
3. Give alms to the poor (*zakkat*)
4. Fast, especially during the month of Ramadan.
5. Try to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life time. (NTI, 1990).

These are referred to as the five pillars of Islam. Performance of these pillars is a moral duty to a Muslim.

Islam believes that knowledge comes as revelation from Allah. Most of the required knowledge is contained in the Quran. Understanding of, and obedience to God's words are the means of acquiring knowledge.

Islam has great regard for knowledge and education. The human being, in Islamic belief, is born pure and uncontaminated. There is the tendency for the human to either move towards angelic perfection or towards satanic behaviours. Since the ultimate is for the human to lead a good life on earth so that he may get eternal blessing in the next world, man must be educated and in this direction. Because of this, the Muslim system of education is strict, demanding adherence at the early stage.

There are three stages of education in Islam:

1. The Quranic schools where the main textbook is the Quran. Here, young children up to the teenage age, are taught reading and writing on tablets called *allo*. A lot of memorization is also carried out at this level. The time-table is determined by a "Mallam" the teacher.
2. The secondary level is the *Makaranta ilmi*. Here, teenagers learn subjects such as Arabic, grammar, literature, Islamic law and muslim theology.
3. The third level of muslim education is somehow personalized. The student identifies a learned scholar, takes tutelage under him for some years until the teacher is satisfied that the student has sufficiently learnt. At this point, he (the teacher) certifies his student and the latter can now be called an *Imam*. The main curriculum is based on selected classic books.

Quite a few significant points must be noted about Islamic education. It evolved from the people's way of life and remains close to their way of life even up to present day. The Nigerian and indeed African way of life which promotes community living is enhanced whereby the poor can comfortably live, with adequate support from the rich in the society. Just like the traditional way of life also there is a supreme being who is recognised and revered although this supreme being may not be a deity, it still stands out that Allah is all-mighty and all-knowing. It is also worthy of note that irrespective of the modern nationally accepted system of education, Quoranic schools and the other systems described above are still prevalent in Nigeria. Muslim children still attend these schools either on full-time or part-time basis, to benefit from what they provide.

The main influence drawn from Islamic education for the benefit of contemporary system is the concept of life-long education and that of individualized instruction. Apart from these, remunerations are also expected to be tied to productivity just as the *mallams* are rewarded for their productivity.

## **CHRISTIANITY AND EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

As far back as 1515 the Western European who traded in slaves, mirrors and gun powder in Nigeria, had started a school in the palace of the Oba of Benin. When the slave trade came to an end in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, European countries were interested in having colonies in Africa. This led to European and American missionaries coming to "convert" Africans including, of course, Nigerians. This was the beginning of Christian education in Nigeria.

- Christians belief in a trinity
- God the Father, all knowing, all-powerful, who created heaven and earth;
  - God the Son – Jesus Christ, sent by the father to redeem the world from original sin of Adam and Eve – the first parents ever created. He died on the cross although innocent,
  - The Holy Spirit who inspires and directs the Christian's action.

This belief is not from reason but by faith. Knowledge is viewed as coming from God and the true knowledge is the knowledge of God. God's revelations are recorded in the Bible. However, some importance or recognition is also given to the understanding of the world. Christians also belief in judgment after man's life on earth therefore even if man gains the whole world but loses his soul, he is considered to have lost everything. Guidelines on life on earth is given are what is called "The Ten Commandments".

The main aim of Christian education is for man to lead a good life on earth. Man is expected to discover his talent and working with it, he improves upon himself and his environment. To achieve this, Christian education provides formal schools with formalized school subjects such as languages, science, mathematics, liberal arts and professional subjects. Apart from these, man is supposed to prepare himself for life after death by practising his religion. Pure religious teaching for life in and outside Church is carried on ub sunday Schools and other Bible classes.

NTI (1990) estimates that the influence of Christianity on modern education has been more direct than either that of the traditional or the Islamic systems of education. Here, it estimates that Missions such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Baptist Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic and the like came, with the slate on the one hand and the Bible on the other. The first public schools in Nigeria are said to have been started by Christian Missions. Examples include a school in Badagry in 1842 by the Methodist Mission and schools in Abeokuta (one for boys and one for

girls) and another in Calabar by the Methodist and the Presbyterian Mission respectively.

The next Christian/ colonial influence on education came from the need for interpreters, clerks, messengers and technicians to serve the colonial masters. These gave need for the colonial government to start schools. This, they tried to do for both Christian and non-Christian communities of Nigeria. For these schools, they adopted the Mission school syllabi. Secular education as established by government provided first for the primary and secondary levels. Later it provided for the tertiary level of education.

From the foregone discussion, it can be observed that the traditional system of education was basically non-formal the Islamic system recognized the need for secular education but did not provide for it. It was only the mission schools which started secular schools with formalized subjects which were adopted by government.

### **EDUCATION IN NIGERIA DURING THE COLONIAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS**

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western education had come to stay in some parts of Nigeria especially in the southern part. In the north, Western education did not start as early as it did in the south because of non-proximity to the missionaries. However, some missions such as the Sudan Interior Church Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic made their way to this region and started schools in Ghirko near Zaria, Bida and Busa. This was the picture of educational spread in Nigeria during the colonial era.

Education during the colonial era was said to be aimed at the formation of character and the habits of discipline. Grants were given to the missions. These boosted their efforts. These grants signified approval that what the missions were doing was worthwhile. Schools concentrated on training and fulfilling moral vocational and literary aims. Specifically teachers training colleges were opened apart from primary and secondary schools, such that by 1938, there was many of these types of school. The main reason was that as schools grew, there was need for teachers.

From about 1952 when the regional government started their education programmes, education witnessed the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Western and the Eastern parts of Nigeria. In the West, UPE was started in 1955 and a significant percentage of government budget (40%) was earmarked for the scheme. This led to the establishment of Grade III Teachers Colleges whose products would teach in the then crowded primary schools.



As the primary schools produced thousands of their graduates, there was the need to start trade centres which taught carpentry, joinery, metal works, electrical and automobile works. For higher vocational education, Thakur and Ezenne (1980) note that technical colleges were established. In 1961, the Western government instituted the Banjo Commission to review its educational regime. Among the recommendations were the replacement of untrained teachers with trained ones, production of Nigeria-related textbooks and the expansion of science, technical and commercial facilities in the schools.

In 1957, the UPE was also started in Eastern Nigeria but it was short-lived. This scheme was plagued by a number of financial and managerial factors, such that in 1958, the Dick Commission was set up to review the system. The commission identified rivalry among the missions as contributing to wasted efforts. It recommended among others, the provision of adequate literacy for all young boys and girls and a reduction from an 8-year to a 6-year duration for primary education.

Similarly in Northern Nigeria, there was the Oldman Commission and its report of 1962 which appreciated the gains of UPE. However, Northern Nigeria continued with a seven-year primary school system, secondary grammar schools, teacher training colleges, craft centres and centres for women. This was done in working partnership between the regional government, native administrations and the voluntary agencies. Islamic education was also pursued in its entirety with vigour.

## **EDUCATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE NIGERIA**

As can be observed, the foregone discussion had concentrated on education at the non-formal, primary and secondary levels. The need for higher education became felt around 1960. Apart from the University College Ibadan which was founded in 1948, affiliated to the University of London, there was need to establish other tertiary institutions in the country. Following the Ashby recommendations, four more Universities were founded by 1960.

The sense of independence also invoked education for self-realization and self-actualization. The Curriculum Conference of 1969 and the Ashby report, tagged "Investment in Education," laid the foundation for expansion in education at all levels. This was, however, disrupted by the civil war of 1967-1970. When states were created, education came under the control of the Ministry of Education. There was an explosion in educational development enrolment with the "oil boom" of the 1970s. What was observed, was increased involvement in the primary and secondary schools all over the country in proportion to acceptability of

secular education. The number of Universities increased from the original five to thirteen by 1973. In 1976, UPE was re-introduced although faced with numerous problems. In 1977 the first edition of the National Policy on Education was published to give guidance to educational dispensation at all levels. All these were done in order to build Nigeria as a free, democratic and just society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, and a land of bright and full opportunities for all her citizens (NPE, 1977).

From this time onward, education has been divided distinctly into pre-primary, primary, secondary vocational, tertiary, mass literacy and non-formal sections. Each of these has specific aims and objectives. The National Policy on Education has been revised from time to time with the last edition being 1998. In it, educational services, financing, administration and supervision guidelines are specified.

Specialised manpower training can be said to begin at the senior secondary level after basic literacy training at the pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school levels. Manpower training spans through vocational education with the aim of providing trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and business, particularly crafts, among others. At the tertiary level, education aims at contributing to national development through high-level relevant man power training. These policies have been vigorously and systematically practised but not without some intervening variables.

### **IMPACTS OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA EDUCATION AND MAN POWER DEVELOPMENT**

In the process described above, the Nigerian system of education has been able to train highly skilled manpower to man various facets of the economy and development. Particularly after independence and the civil war when Nigeria was faced with the task of re-construction, the education of Nigerian citizens has been most responsive to the needs of the nation. In the early 1970s, the practice was to send Nigerians to be trained abroad in specific areas of need. For this, scholarships were sought, acquired and used. Most popular among these was the Commonwealth scholarship. This practice inculcated in Nigerians the desire to study abroad. The effect was that several Nigerians at one time or the other applied to go out for or actually studied abroad. Today, the taste of Nigerians has been tied to foreign goods and importance as a result of the general desire to feel foreign instead of Nigerian.

Other features include over-emphasis on literary education to the detriment of vocational and technical education such that from the 1980s till the present a refocusing is attempted by government to make education more responsive to the nations vocational and technological needs.

Middle manpower development which was targeted by the establishment of Colleges of Education & Technology and Schools of Arts and Sciences has had its aims defeated, as qualifications from these schools are looked down upon by the recipients. Rather, these qualifications are used as stepping stones to University Education.

University education is today seen as the ultimate for every citizen such that little care is taken of the course read and the utility value of the course. The resultant effect of this is the high rate of self employment among University graduates.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter has attempted to x-ray educational philosophies, policies and practices in Nigeria from the pre-colonial era to the present. Similarities and impact of the various systems have been exposed. From the present system of education, it has been observed that there are some social and economic problems such as mass unemployment and drain syndrome, which are the upshot of contemporary practice of Education. It can therefore be recommended that there is need for revision of practice to respond to the policy so that the observed anomalies can be addressed. This is recommended in the hope that manpower trained by the educational system in Nigeria, should suit and be gainfully employed in Nigeria.

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