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PROPER EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

Upon all the hue and cry about the dwindling level of education in the country, there seems to be no much change for the better. Parents seem prepared to sacrifice a lot to get their children educated. The government also is making far reaching statements about education but all these do not seem to do much, as none of these sectors seem sincerely committed to the course of education. Suggestions and recommendations continue to be made but the implementation seem to be slow. Researchers feel it is their duty to continue in finding solutions to these problems. So this paper calls for "proper" education rather than lip-service as a precursor to national development. The paper discusses several contributions of "proper" education to development.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of national development has continually bugged the minds of Nigerians in contemporary times. This is very much so as citizens no longer feel proud of their country. They would rather claim some other country than let it be known that they come from Nigeria. Only a few Nigerians feel very much concerned about what happens to Nigeria as a nation. The result is that the concept of national development becomes a worry for well meaning citizens as there seems to be little commitment towards the country and its affairs.

This paper therefore proffers a solution to the growing lack of commitment to the nation. Specifically, it examines what constitutes national development, the present Nigerian Educational Enterprise, education as a vehicle to National Development and strategies towards improvement in the future.

What Constitutes National Development

The word 'develop' denotes to grow larger, more mature, to lay open, bring out the potentials of an organism and to bring to a more advanced or highly organised state. Development which is the noun formed from the verb to develop denotes the act and process of developing. It also envelops the result of these acts. National development, as far as this paper is concerned will be taken to mean the act and the result of bringing a nation to a more advanced and highly organised state.

To consider this with Nigeria in focus, national development will connote a country where there are the desirable social amenities - a country where the citizens live and grow in, contributing to the continual improvement of the country and the country offering the citizens potentials of self development.

A country where citizens irrespective of tribe and ethnicity live and interact together each encouraging the other in growth.

While considering national development, Anyanwu (1995: 14) conceives a nation of increased "Scientific, industrial and technological productivity with its attendant emphasis on agriculture, industrialization and perhaps mineral wealth".

Nigeria considered in the light of the above definitions is a nation which is only trying to place emphasis on science and technology in its own developmental enterprises. It is a country which has wealth as a result of its natural endowment in mineral resources and not necessarily as a result of its efforts in agriculture or industrialization. Upon all its efforts as reported by Obinaju (1995), it is a country which still promotes tribalism and ethnicity such that a new word has emerged which has now been accepted and applied to most of our national enterprise. This word is "Quota system".

It is also note worthy that the Babangida administration had placed particular emphasis on developing the rural area but impact is yet to be felt as most of the rural areas in Nigeria still lack potable water and electricity to initiate and encourage rural industrialization. With theses considerations, one sees Nigeria at a risk. If there is National Development in Nigeria then the pace is very slow. It is bugged down by factors which have been elicited above. Something needs to be done urgently if there must be appreciable improvement in its strife towards national development.

The Present Educational Enterprise in Nigeria

Any country that is conscious of greatness and development pays special attention to its educational enterprise. Nigeria seems not to be aware of this fact. In the present dispensation, defence and security seems to be a more favoured construct to education. This is probably why the public schools are no longer offering what would be term "functional education". Parents are seen preferring private schools at the primary and secondary levels of education to public ones as only the former seem to be serious about what they are doing. These parents, are prepared to sacrifice a lot to get their children educated. In both public and private schools children sit in dilapidated classrooms, those who can afford it bring desks and stools to school apart from buying books and uniforms. In some schools special levies are charged. tuition fees are still paid in secondary schools. Comparatively, the situation is of course worse in public schools. These are some of the considerations which make Obinaju (1996) conclude that education in Nigeria is at the brink of collapse. Yet the government maintains that education at the primary level in the country is free and education at both secondary and tertiary levels is highly subsidized.

The state of the art of the Nigerian system of education has permitted quite a number of occurrences to seem to institute themselves in schools. Instead of the practical experience where children learn to produce things on their own, teachers prefer that children bring cash to school in exchange for handwork and craft (Obinaju, 1996:6). There is also lack of commitment on the part of teachers which also results in lack of seriousness on the part of the students (Obinaju, 1997). All these form crises in the education system which impede National Development. This notwithstanding, many researcher still believe in the potency of education to bring about National development.

The consideration that education can still bring about national development implies that there are ingredients within education which have either not been introduced or have been neglected. These ingredients when put in place would make education be terms "proper" as it would be armed to delivering the desired goods.

Education as a Vehicle Towards National Development

Several researchers have proffered that the most potential vehicle towards national development is education. Abang (1997) considers environmental education, Anyanwu (1995) examines language development while Obinaju (1995) perceives social studies education. All these are viewed as contributing to national development through environmental protection, patriotism and national integration.

Looking at education more closely, one would want to understand whether education has in the part contributed positively to national development or whether education has the potential of ushering in appreciable improvement in national development.

In the first place, interaction which is brought about by the National Youth Service Corps Scheme, (NYSC), the National Universities Game (NUGA) and unity schools has been very helpful in educating Nigerians about the culture of the other ethnic groups in addition to promoting ethnic tolerance. Despite this, the trace of ethnicity is still not completely extinguished. Nigerians still need further education in direction which promote further integration, for national development to be enhanced.

This implies that "Citizenship education" which is stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1981:12) needs to be more vigorously pursued. A programme which is geared towards inculcating in the citizens pride for the country should be developed and consciously taught in our schools. With this programme in place, our leaders and those who are in any position of authority should be re-oriented towards being mindful of their acts and utterances about the nation. When every citizen sees Nigeria as a treasure which must be protected at all cost, actions towards national development will be ensured.

"Dignity in Labour" which used to be one of the guiding principles of the Nigerian school system seems no more to be pursued. Every Nigerian seems to be pursuing cash and most often in fraudulent ways. In fact, the Nigerian of today is seen to be successful and important only on the basis of the weight of his bank account

and not on the basis of his resources. The education system of Nigeria should train towards intrinsic satisfaction in what one can practically produce. this would only be possible if there is recognition of practical achievement from the wider society.

By implication, recognition on the basis of financial input should attract governmental sanctions. If one is probed and sanctioned because of questionable income, it will reduce in our citizens the urge to acquire quick money so as to get recognized by the society.

The education system should inculcate more seriousness in every sector of production. This should start by the government being more committed to whatever it wants to do. Since education has been identified as the most potent vehicle towards national development, it behoves on government to be serious with it. It should budget sufficiently for it, buy sufficient equipment and in time, repair dilapidated buildings, and to say the least make education free at least up to the primary level so that every Nigerian child can attend primary education. So far making education free has been "Lip Service". Free education as observed by Obinaju (1996a) means that the school should have desks and stools in place for pupils, books and uniforms should be provided and no levies either in the form of Parent-Teacher's levy or handwork substitute should be charged. When this is done, and teachers are paid regularly, it would be said that government, on its own part, has started to show commitment to this sector. Teachers too would have no excuse for not performing their duties.

A challenge is hereby placed on government. A decree which places a stop to training children below the age of 21 abroad should be promulgated. Another which closes down all private schools should also be passed. These decrees when enforced will place everybody on the same footing. When the proposals above have been put in place, both the government and individuals will be forced to show more commitment to what is happening in public schools than what obtains at present. These are the only ways we would be said to be benefitting from proper education. Public schools will be made to respond to the needs of both the rich and the poor. Almost all Nigerian children will have the opportunity to pass through this system and imbibe what it offers. The training of Nigerians can therefore be controlled to some extent and the course offerings can also be directed in a way which will benefit Nigeria as a nation.

Summary and Conclusion

Proper education, means education which is geared towards achieving its desired goal. Before now the aims of education and the practice on ground seemed to go in divergent ways. Proper education would mean that these two would be directed towards achieving the same objectives. There would, of course, be no room for "lip-service".

For Nigeria, proper education would ensure tribal integration, patriotism, dignity of labour, religious tolerance, honesty and liberal service towards the survival of a mother land. In this paper what the

indications of national development are have been discussed. What is lacking in our educational system for it to produce the desired effect, national development, have also been discussed. Along with these discussions, suggestions have been made to improve the existing situation. It is the belief of the author that if education is properly harnessed, national development would not continue to give us heart ache but would be a reality.

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