



NATIONAL POLICY OF EDUCATION (NPE) AND THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY: A DISCOURSE OF ITS LAPSES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Education

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ABSTRACT

It is the legitimate responsibility of the government to formulate and implement educational policies in the country, which must be used as a basis for guiding the administrative machinery of the nation. This implies designing an adequate philosophy of education which must take into consideration all the essential ingredients that would be almost flawless. It is to this vein that the Federal Government of Nigeria created the National Policy of Education (NPE). But unfortunately, there has not been a serious and rigid adherence to the implementation of the recommendations in the NPE. Hence, it is on this context that this study seeks to identify the lapses and factors affecting the implementation of the national policy on education and the philosophy of Nigerian education. The paper revealed that there is no particular statement to show what the philosophy of education itself is. The absence of the statement is therefore a serious omission in the 2013 edition of Nigeria's national policy document on education. The paper also revealed that adequate planning for implementation of education policy is very vital for the achievement of educational objectives, and that qualified teachers, availability of instructional materials, conducive school environment are necessary for the proper implementation of education policy. The study also recommended that the definition and objectives of the educational philosophy of education should be clearly defined in the next edition of the revised version and should be frequently reviewed to meet up the challenges of the time.

KEYWORDS

Educational Philosophy, Educational Policy, Nigeria, Lapses, and Implementation

INTRODUCTION

The blue-print encapsulates the guidelines, aims, needs and aspirations of a given society, which contains the philosophy from which the educational guidelines were derived. In other words, the development of any nation, to a large extent is predicated on its philosophy of education. It is the legitimate responsibility of the government to formulate and implement educational policies in the country, which must be used as a basis for guiding the administrative machinery of the nation (Olatunji, 2015).

This implies designing an adequate philosophy of education which must take into consideration all the essential ingredients that would be almost flawless. No wonder the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted education as instrument par excellence for effecting national development (Oyedede, 2015). But unfortunately, Education in Nigeria has been criticized by the stakeholders and educators of falling in standard and poor quality. This could be possible in some countries that have their philosophy as an off-shoot of an ideological revolution, e.g., Bolshervik's Russia, Fidel Castro's Cuba and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's Tanzania (Nwafor, 2014). The Federal Government of Nigeria in her efforts to streamline education and skill acquisition and development formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) which contains goals, status, modes of operation and processes of attaining the pre-set aims and objectives of education with clear statements on skills acquisition and development in Nigeria. Surprisingly, there has not been a serious and rigid adherence to the implementation of the recommendations in the NPE. Which might affect the quality and adequacy of manpower that a nation needs for its national development. Hence, it is on this context that this study seeks to identify the lapses and factors affecting the implementation of the national policy on education and the philosophy of Nigerian education. Historical Background of the National Policy of Education in Nigeria Tracing the genesis of the national policy of education can be significantly traced to the Nigerian civil war which took place between 1967 and 1970 with great adverse negative effect on the socio – economic development and consequently on the country's educational system (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin 2015). According to Fafunwa (2004), the experience of the three years' war however rekindled Nigerian faith in education as the vehicle for national rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation. Fafunwa pointed out further that before the civil war, many Nigerian educators and parents had already been concerned about the lack of relevance of the Nigerian educational system in meeting the pressing economic, social and cultural needs of the nation. However, at the 1964 biannual meeting of joint committee on education (JCC) was held in Enugu state. Nigeria, and a decision was made to hold a "National Curriculum Conference" which should involve a cross section of the Nigerian Public – parents, business organizations civil servants, religious bodies, farmers,

workers, union, youth clubs, women's organizations and professional bodies (Olatunji, 2015).

The conference under the auspices of the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) was not only concerned with curriculum development, the objectives of education, among others, but also with the task of reviewing the old national goals and identifying new ones (Nwafor, 2014). The idea behind the proposal was that the generality of the Nigerian people should have an opportunity to deliberate on the type of education they want for their children. The National Curriculum Conference was held in Lagos in September 1969. The discussion of the seven major educational aspect of the conference theme, nine specific decision areas were identified as crucial to the attainment of the conference objectives.

These decision areas were:

1. National philosophy of education
2. Goals of primary education
3. Objectives of secondary education
4. Purpose of tertiary education
5. The role of teacher education
6. Functions of science and technical education
7. Education for living
8. Control of public education

In 1973, just four years after the National Conference, the Federal Commissioner for education, Chief A.Y. Eke organized a national seminar on "A National Policy of Education". The seminar went on amplify, improve and adopt the recommendations of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. In 1977, the Federal Government issued its first white paper on National Policy on Education; eight years after the 1969 Curriculum Conference and 4 years after the 1973 seminar (Olatunji, 2015). This became the first comprehensive and indigenous educational document in post-independence Nigeria. The 1977 National Policy document on Education was revised in 1984, 2004, 2007, although the draft (2007) edition was not published. As at the time of writing this paper, the 2013 edition of the National Policy document on Education is the most recent edition of the national policy document on education in Nigeria.

Concept of Philosophy of Education

The concept of philosophy of education has been viewed from several perspectives by many scholars and great thinkers. Nwafor (2014) stated that it has been difficult to arrive at a universally acceptable definition of philosophy of education, since there are four perspectives from which it could be approached. This includes the traditional, analytic, technical and non-technical definitions – definitions of which we do not have time and space to pursue here. But it has been noted that

Philosophy of Education mirrors the needs and aspirations of the society for which it was formulated (Apologun, 2012). It is in this regard that the Nigerian Philosophy of education is essentially rooted in the national goals and objectives of the Nigerian state.

However, some eminent scholars defined philosophy of education as applied philosophy primarily concerned with the application of philosophical principles, to the practical conduct of education (Okoh, 2003). In other words, philosophy of education has a wider scope that touches virtually every sphere of education in that it performs a central but critical function for all segments of education. In simple terms, philosophy of education “oversees the activities of other aspects of education, by providing them the necessary tools or instruments and techniques for a clearer conception of their roles and operations” (Nwafor, 2007).

For Akinpelu (2005), philosophy of education could be seen as an attempt to articulate the ideological commitments of the society through a set of programme designed to realise and perpetuate their commitments. From this view, it is categorically clear that philosophy of education must have an ideological base, and as such must contain the ideals and aspirations of the society. In short, philosophy of education should spell out the national educational objectives; it must analyse, examine and evaluate how consistent, integrated and comprehensive the educational programmes are; and also assess the extent to which the nation’s hopes and aspirations could be realised.

Lapses in the Educational Philosophy of Education

The National Policy on Education (NPE) is the national guideline for effective administration, management and implementation of education at all tiers of government (NPE 2013). It is therefore a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements for quality education delivery in Nigeria (NPE 2013).

Section 1, subsection 3 of Nigeria’s National Policy on Education (2013 edition) states that:

“Nigeria’s philosophy of education is based on the following set of beliefs:

- Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
- Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfilment and general development of the society;
- Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.”

Therefore in line with above national goals, Nigeria’s philosophy of education have been articulated to guide the development, integration and provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country.

- However, while the set of beliefs on which Nigeria’s philosophy of education is based are clearly itemized in the national policy document on education (2013) there is however no particular statement to show what the philosophy of education itself is.
- Similarly Section 1, subsection 4 of the policy states that: “This philosophy of Nigeria’s education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.” Again, while what the philosophy of education is based are mentioned, the policy document is silent on what the philosophy of education itself is.
- Section 1 Sub section 3(d) of the National policy document on Education(2013) which is one of the set of beliefs on which Nigeria’s Philosophy of Education is based has it that “education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian, irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges”. The policy document is silent as to whether or not there would be exemptions to this provision especially in peculiar situations such as that of children whose

physical or mental condition is such that school attendance is not advisable. Also, the document did not specify the level or levels at which education is compulsory; whether at the basic, secondary or tertiary level.

- Moreover, Section 1, Sub section 4 of the national policy document (2013) states that “This philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels-----.” However, Williams (1972) clearly showed the problem inherent in the claim of granting equality of opportunity for all by the narrated story of a society where great prestige is attached to membership of a warrior class, the duties of which require great physical strength. This class had in the past been recruited from certain wealthy families only. However, it could be rightly inferred that the ideal of equal educational opportunity cannot possibly be achieved. This been the case, this particular clause on which the philosophy of Nigeria’s education is also said to be based as stated in Section 1 subsection 4 is flimsy.
- The policy document in section 1, subsection 4 does not give any insight as to the sense in which equal educational opportunities is being used. Never the less, the second sense is as problematic as the first. The phrase “equal education” in the second sense involves taking a number of steps to see that each candidate is placed in a position where he or she can actually acquire education.
- To further confirm the nebulous nature of the concept of equal educational opportunities as used in the National Policy on Education, Olatunji (2015) raised a barrage of questions as to what equal educational opportunities for Nigerian citizens actually means; Does it mean having the same number of educational institutions in each state of the federation? Does it mean tailoring the number of institutions in a state to its population? Does it mean opening more schools in states that are educationally backward? Does it mean allowing educationally backward states to catch up with the rest? Despite the fact that the National Policy on Education has gone through a number of revisions over the years, the most recent edition of the Policy; 2013 still does not provide any clue to these and similar questions which are very fundamental.

According to Section 1, subsection 6, of the national policy document, the goals of education in Nigeria are:

- development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen
- total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;
- provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
- inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity and
- Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.”

In addition, Section 1, sub-section 7 of the same policy document, has it that the specific goals of education in Nigeria are to:

- Ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the development of the individual;
- Ensure quality education delivery at all levels;
- Promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction
- Ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society and the world of work;
- Collaborate with development partners, the private sector, non-governmental organization and local communities to support and fund education and
- Promote information and communication technology capability at all levels.”
- The third goal in Section 1 subsection 6 which has to do with the provision of equal access to qualitative education, unfettered access and equity to education, have the same problem with section 1, subsection 4 as discussed in the earlier part of this paper.
- The fifth goal in section 1, subsection 6 of the policy document which talks about the development of appropriate skills, mental,

physical and social abilities and competences to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society is also not without problems.

- The question that this goal leaves unanswered is; what skills are appropriate and what mental physical and social abilities and competences are to empower the individual to live and contribute positively to society.

The fourth goal in section 1, subsection 6 makes reference to the inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity. This goal however is silent about the type of values to be inculcated and how. In addition, there is need for an explanation of what national consciousness consists of. Olatunji (2015) rightly observed that the problem with this fourth goal is largely one of inadequacy rather than relevance. This according to him is because the extent of ethnic loyalty among the various ethnic groups in the country suggests the need for education to aim at transforming such loyalty to loyalty to a wider (national) society. Olatunji pointed out that a number of steps have so far been taken by successive governments but the nation does not seem to have succeeded in transforming ethnic loyalties into broad sense nationalism. Some of the steps taken according to him are:

- The establishment of the National Youth Service corps programme which takes fresh graduates out to work in states other than their own for the first year of graduation
- The posting of chief executives of Federal Government owned universities to serve in universities outside their ethnic areas
- The creation of more states with a view to breaking the ethnic solidarity of large ethnic regional groupings
- The 1979 constitution which made it mandatory for political parties to cut across ethnic boundaries in order to prevent the formation of such parties along ethnic lines.

Conclusively, it is commendable that the goals of education and the specific goals of education in Nigeria are stated in Nigeria's national policy document(2013); though few of the goals are vague as pointed out in this paper, the aspects of the goals and specific goals that can go unchallenged could go a long way to fortify and illustrate the nature of the nation's national philosophy of education. However since there is no specific statement of the nation's philosophy of education itself in the policy document, the usefulness of the stated goals of education becomes greatly reduced. This statement also in concomitant with the argument of Kariuki (2009) that meaningful education practice is founded on a specific statement of philosophy of education. The absence of a specific statement of philosophy of education is therefore a serious omission in the 2013 edition of Nigeria's national policy document on education.

According to Wingo (1974:2) any educational system is an embodiment of the philosophic, or scientific or economic ideas which the people hold. While the 2013 edition of Nigeria's national policy document on education, and particularly the set of beliefs on which Nigeria's philosophy of education is said to be based could be said to imply the acceptance of certain fundamental values and attitudes which represent a philosophical standpoint, this paper argues that from this standpoint, a clear philosophy of education statement could be derived and clearly stated. Furthermore, in the light of the attitude of most Nigerians to public utilities and public duties which leaves much to be desired, disciplined citizenry as an ideal will be relevant if featured in the national philosophy of education statement. As an ideal that is realizable through education, it will also go a long way also in combating the very challenging problem of corruption that the nation has been grappling with for years. Another ideal that could be considered in coming up with a philosophy of education statement is equality of outcome or result. This could be an alternative to the principle of equality of opportunity which is fraught with problems as discussed in an earlier paragraph. As a result of differences in genetic makeup and individual interests, the emphasis should be that in whatever area of endeavor or whatever type of education one finds himself most capable; the recognition given for one's position and the remuneration attached to such position should be made equal to those of others in different but comparable areas of specialty.

Factors Impeding the Implementation of the National Policy of Education

In Nigeria education system today, policy outcome is below expectations or poor due to lack of patriotic leadership as well as

Government's consistent poor attitude towards the education sub-sector, manifesting in dishonest financial allocations to the sector and in the apathy towards teachers welfare during the process of translating policy into practice. Below are factors impeding the implementation of the National Policy of Education in Nigeria:

1. According to the analysis of results and discussion of findings by Ozurumba and Ebuara (2013), it was revealed that the challenges before our leaders in execution of education policy is the one that needs an astute and articulate implementations. An evaluation of education policy implementation was to be a continuous process.
2. For the implementation stage to meet the needs of the society, carefulness, commitment, administrative willingness and efficacy or efficiency are required for the successful implementation of the stated and designed programme of activities (Nwosu, 2010).
3. The success of an educational system would be threatened when those who control the schools are not fully acquainted with the philosophical ideas that are driving the system and how they affect the process of education (Omatseye 1983).
4. The success of Nigerian educational system will continue to be threatened as long as the philosophy that is supposed to be driving the educational system is not clearly enunciated and widely communicated to the stakeholders.
5. It is suggested therefore that the national philosophy of education statement over which the national policy document on education is silent together with associated goals and values that are nebulous be addressed by the relevant authorities so that the educational system can be given adequate foundation that will make it thrive better (Olatunji, 2015).
6. It is not a gainsaying that if Nigeria is to meet up with the demand of manpower in the modern world of advanced economy, successful and productive implementation of her education policy is imperative (Adebisi, 2012; 2014).
7. If lapses like integration of all aspects of education, re-organisation of the entire education system, and the concept of life-long education are taken into consideration, and the programmes and policies religiously implemented, Nigeria will experience accelerated national development (Nwafor, 2014).
8. Research conducted by Duze (2011); Adelaja (2012); Imam (2012); Vanguard (2012) and Oyediji (2015) revealed that poor implementation of education policy engendered by the declining competence and commitment of teachers; inadequate provision of facilities; non-maintenance of available facilities; non-availability of personnel; lack of funds and administrative will; lack of interest and seriousness on the part of students which lead to examination malpractice; indiscipline, Quest for paper qualification, Politicizing Education, and the lost glories of traditional education which flourished on the appropriate acquisition and utilization of skills.
9. Adequate planning for implementation of education policy is very vital for the achievement of educational objectives. According to Corkery, Land and Bossuyt (1995), lack of attention to implementation strategies during policy formulation results in shortages of required resources or an underestimation of the complexity of the policy. Also, Egonmwan (1991) states that policy formulation; implementation and monitoring are difficult in a situation where the policies and strategies for the implementation and monitoring are empirically not sound.
10. Oyediji (2015), in his research findings revealed that qualified teachers, availability of instructional materials and good and conducive school environment are necessary for the proper implementation of education policy and consequently high academic achievement of students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions, it can be deduced that the major problem with some of the set of beliefs, on which Nigeria's philosophy of education is said to be based, is not with the principles they represent as such but with their ambiguity coupled with some procedural and practical difficulties inherent in them. With cognizance taken of these shortcomings. It was also revealed that the success of Nigerian educational system will continue to be threatened as long as the philosophy that is supposed to be driving the educational system is not clearly enunciated and widely communicated to the stakeholders. Some vital implications for a successful education policy implementation evolved from the findings of this study have showed that the challenge before our leaders in execution of education policy is the one that needs an astute and articulate implementations. An

evaluation of education policy implementation was to be a continuous process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The definition and objectives of the educational philosophy of education should be clearly defined in the next edition of the revised version.
- The policy programmes could be frequently reviewed to meet up the challenges of the time.
- Education policy implementers should therefore devote more time money and resources to education sub-section.
- A Policy is of no use if it is not well implemented, hence successful implementation of educational policy must be adequately monitored. Because without implementation will frustrate national development. In view of this there is need for stability of government policies and programmes to enhance attainment of education objectives.

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