

SOCIO-HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA IN RELATION TO LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

*The Western Education that came to Nigeria basically for evangelization reason went beyond this initial purpose to produce seasoned administrators, technocrats, engineers and technicians. These products of western education used the knowledge given by education in developing the Nigerian society in diverse forms. However the tempo of this development was not sustained as a result of inept leadership that revolves everything around **oil** to the utter neglect of all other resources nature endows Nigeria with. This Paper x-rays the historical development of western education in Nigeria as regards labour productivity and development in the good old days and recommends going back to that period of technological ingenuity to rekindle the latent spirit of science and technology that propels development.*

Keywords: Development, Education, Labour, Productivity, Nigeria.

Introduction

Socio-historical development of education in Nigeria in relation to labour productivity and development is an enterprise worth venturing into at this point in time in our nation's history. This is to determine whether western education is developing or not and if it is developing, how far have labour productivity and development been advanced. A thorough and unbiased review of socio-historical development of education in Nigeria as we shall see in this paper will reveal that much has been achieved. From the slavish and undignified posts of interpreters and messengers to the dignified positions of Medical doctors, Lawyers, Engineers and so on.

Despite this development, the optimal level has not yet been reached. We are waiting for that time when the civil servant will see the government work as his own and put in his very best in it and the government in turn will reward the worker (in form of adequate salary) with what will encourage him to perform optimally. The frequent strikes and threats for strike that are being experienced in the Nigerian civil service and education sector should be looked into and resolved once and for all. Moral and religious teachings that have been scrapped from our junior schools (primary and secondary) curriculum should be re-introduced as this will help to train pupils who will be God-loving and respectful of neighbors and therefore be good and patriotic Nigerians.

Education – Meaning

Etymologically, there are two distinct derivatives of the concept of education. Firstly, it is derived from the Latin word 'educere' which means 'to lead out'. What this entails is that the pupil or student from birth has everything he needs to know, what the teacher does is to help the pupil to recognize or realize what is inherent in him or her. This view of education has the support of such figures as Socrates and Plato (Symposium and Theaetetus). Socrates quite unlike the Sophists believed that he was not teaching his pupils any new thing but as a midwife helped them to give birth to what was in them. He therefore concluded that knowledge is nothing but a mere remembrance. This equally says that one comes into the world with all his or her knowledge and with passage of time it continues to unfold. The second etymological derivation is 'educare' which means to 'train' or to 'form'. The exponents of this view believe that the teacher from outside puts everything in the pupil. Whatever the child knows comes from outside of him, either from the teacher or environment. The adherents, therefore, see education as a form of indoctrination. The Scholastics in the medieval era believed this and supported it with their famous dictum 'nihilintellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu' (nothing in the intellect without first being in the senses). The empiricists in the modern period under the headship of John Locke (1690, *Essay concerning...*) believed that the mind at birth is a 'tabula rasa' (blank sheet) and whatever is imprinted on it comes from outside.

Following Aristotelian dictum (Nicomachean Ethics) 'virtu in medio stat' (virtue stands in the middle) I believe that the merger of the two concepts/etymologies will give us a better understanding of the meaning of education. Woods, R.G. and Barrow, S.C. (1963) & Ijiomah C.O. (1996) shared the same view point when they maintained that in teaching no one concept should be adopted but the two because they contain each other, they are not antithetical but complementary. The British philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell (1976), supports this holistic view of etymological derivation of education by stating that children do not come into the world with already-made materials but with reflexes and few instincts which the environment works on to produce habits that may be healthy or morbid. Russell went on to assert that in line with this fact, that in the huge number of children there is the crude material of a responsible member of the society and also crude material of a rogue. The raw material here justifies educere while the action of the teacher to turn this raw material into good or bad and most approvingly good, justifies the concept of educare. Fafunwa, A.B. (1991) also supports this synthetic approach in defining education as the combination of everything that a child or young adult needs to develop his potentials towards a behavior that impacts his society positively. For Okeke, C.C. (1989), it is a mechanism through which individuals are helped both in formal and informal ways through articulated direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefit and that of the society. Let me conclude this section of the meaning of education by stating what some scholars considered education to be.

Plato saw education as that "training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children. The particular training in respect of pleasure and pain which leads to hate and love what you ought to hate and love is called education". Aristotle believed education to be a process of self-realization by development from within. For to him education should

help the child realize himself to enable him to live a happy life. According to G.W.F. Hegel, it is “a progressive perfection of humanity from a simple, uncultivated, primitive state of the mind through the hard discipline of labour and toil to the consciousness and exercise of its freedom”. For Emile Durkheim, “education is the systematic socialization of the younger generation by which the latter learn religious and moral beliefs, feelings of nationality and collective opinions of all kinds”. John Dewey sees it as “the reconstruction or re-organization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience”. Okafor, F.C. (1988) views it as “the process of acculturation by which the individual is assisted to attain the maximum activation of his potentialities according to the right reason, and to achieve thereby his self-fulfillment or self-realization. Jean Jacques Rousseau puts his understanding of education in a poetic format: “we are born weak; we have need of strength: we are born destitute of everything; we have need of assistance: we are born stupid; we have need of judgment: All that we have not at birth, but which we need when we are grown, is given us by education”.

All these varied definitions of education, though not radically at variance, point to the fact that the two etymological derivations of education are unified and that education is geared towards the refinement of both the individual and the society.

Western Education in Nigeria– History

This is also called formal education as opposed to the informal one, for example, the traditional and to an extent, the Islamic education. By way of definition, Okeke, C.C. (1989) sees it as “a kind of education imparted in a school or college. It is consciously and deliberately planned to bring about specific influence in the educand. So it is synonymous with educational institutions. School is thus a formal agency of education”.

The history of Western education in Nigeria dated back to the 1840s when the missionaries came down with their evangelization mission. It has to be put on record that the Portuguese first came to Nigeria (Bini) in the 15th century and made attempts to convert the people including the Oba of Benin. They did not succeed as such but the son of the Oba was sent to Portugal to learn about the white man’s way of life. The major reason for the failure of the Portuguese in that first missionary enterprise was that they were mainly interested in commerce not in evangelization.

Amongst the missionaries that brought western education to Nigeria the Methodist denomination must be credited for establishing the first formal school in Nigeria. This was done by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft in Badagry and was named ‘Nursery of the Infant Church’. Most of the fifty odd pupils were children of Sierra Leone emigrants, although a few of the local converts also sent their children to school. Mr. and Mrs De Graft were replaced in 1844 by the Rev’d Samuel Annear and his wife. (Fafunwa, 1991). The Methodist enterprise around Badagry was enforced by that of C.M.S., who equally in 1846 established a mission station and a school at Badagry.

The western education in Nigeria did not only start from the Badagry area alone. According to Fafunwa (1991), while the Methodist and the C.M.S. were operating from the Badagry end, the Church of Scotland Mission based in Jamaica, West Indies, sent an exploratory mission to Calabar in the same 1846. The group was led by the Rev’d Hope M. Waddell. Very interesting

in this exploration was the fact that Hope Waddell and his colleagues, to their greatest chagrin, discovered that King Eyo and his son were already literate in English language and were versed in reading, writing and arithmetic. Their literacy was as a result of earlier contact with the European merchants who started coming down to Calabar area around 1767.

At this stage of western education in Nigeria, the content or curriculum of what the pupils were taught was not systematically formulated. However, everything was geared towards the Christian religion. The main purpose of education in the early stages was to teach Christianity with a view to converting all those who came within the four walls of the mission house. Thus, the missionaries controlled the curriculum, teachers, and other things in the schools they established.

The British government which colonized Nigeria and major part of West African countries at this stage showed no interest in educational activities in these countries. This is so despite the fact that most of the foreign traders carrying out commercial activities in these areas were from Britain. Fafunwa, (1991) maintains that “up to 1882 the colonial government in Nigeria paid little or no attention to the educational needs of the people and the field was left entirely to the missions. This period can therefore be justifiably termed the era of ‘exclusive Missionary education’ in Nigeria. The first government show of interest in education in Nigeria, a false one, was between 1870 and 1876 when the colonial government in Lagos made some explicit attempts to offer assistance to some missions in their educational work. It earmarked the sum of 300 pounds for the support of the missions but failed to pay the grant after all. This was the extent of government policy on education prior to 1882”. Okeke, C.C. (1989), on the other hand asserts that “this little show of interest by the government was a selfish one. This is so because the main aim was not just to train Africans for their own benefits but for that of Britain. It was mainly for political and commercial interests of Western Europe. Few literate Nigerians were to serve as clerks, interpreters and messengers. Such development created in the people the awareness that literacy was a necessary factor in order to secure paid employment”.

However, after 1882, Christian missions continued to open schools with the full and concrete support of the colonial government of Lagos and Protectorate. The Muslim inhabitants of Lagos then expressed some dis-satisfaction about this government support to missions while they were neglected. This led the government to found a school to cater for the Muslim children. This ironically became the first primary school opened by the government in Lagos in 1888, Fafunwa, (1991). In 1909, the first government secondary school, Kings College was founded in Lagos. In the Northern part of the country, apart from the numerous densely populated Quranic schools and very few scantily populated mission schools, the first government school was founded in September 1909 in Kano, precisely at Nasarawa outside Kano city. The teachers were Hans Vischer, a colonial and twelve Mallams recruited from Sokoto, Kano, and Katsina. Later on residents of other provinces in the North opened few classes for the sons of the Chiefs. Vischer’s schools received financial support from the native administration treasures of the various emirates as well as from the central government in Lagos. The Nasarawa schools were secular.

Before the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914, the Nasarawa schools at Kano included two elementary, one primary, one secondary and one technical school. After the amalgamation, Frederick Lugard made some concerted efforts to advance western

education in Nigeria to the best his ability. According to Fafunwa (1991) he couldn't compromise qualitative education received by Nigerians and therefore could not tolerate the proliferation of unassisted schools.

The First World War that took place soon after the amalgamation took its toll on education as in everything else. The expansion of education was seriously hampered. However, after the war and the administration of Lord Lugard, educational progress picked up again. Incidentally, the period between 1930 and 1950 experienced a lot of setbacks in almost all areas of human endeavors due to world-wide depression (1929 – 1935), Second World War (1939 – 1945), Nigerian Nationalist Movement (1930 – 1950), which led to self-government (1952 – 1959) and Independence in 1960.(Fafunwa,1991). All these came together to slow down the pace of educational development in Nigeria. But it has to be placed on record that despite all these, the idea of the first tertiary institution – Yaba Higher College was conceived in 1930 but the institution was officially opened in 1932 for serious academic activities. For the establishment of this institution in particular and development of education in Nigeria generally during this difficult period, an unqualified credit is given to Mr. E.R.J. Hussey, who became the director of education in 1930 and reviewed the entire educational system and made proposals for its reform.

From the 1930s onward, education in Nigeria was implicitly liberal in nature and school subjects in the humanities were emphasized. The products of humanity-based courses were accorded better status, thus, encouraging liberal arts education to the detriment of science and technical education. Fafunwa (1991), decried this imbalanced development of according low priority to technical and vocational education as one the major defects of Nigerian educational system. He observed that education in Nigeria was conceived largely as purely literary education. Vocational and professional courses were not emphasized in the school curriculum. This was as a result of the nature of the job that Nigerians and indeed Africans were allowed to do by the colonials – clerks, interpreters and messengers. Even the establishment of Yaba Higher College at that period did not help matters as such because the products of the school were not accorded the same status as their British counterparts.

However, with the regionalization of education in Nigeria in the early 1950s and the attainment of independence in 1960, education in Nigeria had a brighter future because policies could be formulated and carried out as much as possible by the various regions. The foremost consequence of this brighter future was the emergence of Universities in Nigeria after independence. The first fully fledged university in Nigeria being the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1960, contrary to some views that it is the University of Ibadan. On the premiership of Nigerian Universities, Fafunwa (1991), noted "University College, Ibadan, was opened in January 1948 as an extension of the University of London in Nigeria, but it did not emerge as a fully-fledged University until December 1962, two years after Nsukka, and three months after Ahmadu Bello, Ife and Lagos had been founded as autonomous institutions. Although Ibadan is the oldest higher education institution in Nigeria, the UNN, is considered the first University in Nigeria."

Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria

Before the advent of western form of education in Nigeria, technical and vocational education was considered as education par excellence. The method then was kind of apprenticeship by

way of imitation of the adults and by practice. This pattern of education, that is, non-formal or traditional amongst other things included practical agriculture, trade, crafts and arts and occupational or professional type of work like medicine, priesthood and divining.

In terms of saying what technical or vocational education is, Okeke (1989) considers it as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Again the western type of technical and vocational education in Nigeria, especially in view of labour productivity and development was first introduced by the Missionaries through their establishment of Industrial Institutes at Abeokuta, Lokoja, Onitsha and Topo near Badagry. The imperial government did nothing in this aspect of education.

It is equally good to note that despite this show of interest by the missionaries towards technical education, its progress was naught when compared with the liberal education. Limited resources available to the missionaries were the main reason for this. According to Fafunwa (1991), the voluntary agencies were unable to increase or popularize technical and vocational education on the same scale as literary education since the former was much more expensive in terms of staff and equipment. Fafunwa in a funny way said that the Christian missions were more interested in a native's ability to read the bible than in his ability to turn screws and prime water pumps. Another reason advanced was that most of the British policy makers were literary men and women who studied classics at Oxford, Cambridge and London.

The imperial government later on showed some interest in this type of education but this was motivated by selfishness. Fafunwa (1991) noted that the first school or course to be established for training local personnel was the Government Survey School in Lagos in 1908. The reason for this was that the government lacked trained European staff capable of handling its many expanding departments especially the department responsible for surveying the country. In view of this, it became necessary to found a survey school where Africans could be trained. The imperial government also established these schools: - (a) The Junior technical staff training course for the training of Nigerian technical assistants for supervisory duties – 1931. (b) The Nigerian Railway departmental training course to train selected station staff that must have had at least five years of railway experience- 1901. (c) The Marine departmental training course to train those who will occupy senior posts on Nigerian Marine vessels- 1928. (d) The Post and Telegraph departmental training course to train sub-inspectors of Lines- 1931. The idea behind all these training courses was that upon completion, the Nigerians so trained were to be employed as assistants or subordinate officers to their superior colonial officers. That was the situation in the pre-independent Nigerian civil service.

The trend changed for better for technical and vocational education in Nigeria following the attainment of independence in 1960. On the eve of independence, precisely, in September 1960, a commission popularly known as the 'Ashby Commission' appointed by the Federal Government in April 1959 (to investigate into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-secondary school certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years 1960-1980) submitted its report. Okeke, C.C. (1989) articulated the fruits of the Commission's work thus; *" Following the recommendations of the Ashby Commission in 1960, technical and vocational education got some boost. Twelve craft schools were re-established and three technical schools established by the*

Government of Northern Nigeria. By 1966, thirty-three technical and vocational schools existed in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. In the Western Region, four trade centers for boys, women's occupational center Abeokuta, technical Institute at Ibadan (now the Polytechnic Ibadan) were established. In addition to separate institutions in various parts of Nigeria, technical education was integrated as part of the curriculum of some secondary schools Eastern Region and Lagos".

In terms of labour productivity and development, it has been established beyond doubt that technical or vocational education has made a giant stride far more than liberal education. The Nigerian government realized this and gave all her support to it in many explicit ways – the establishment of technical institutes such as the Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology, Colleges of Education (Technical) as well as Universities of Technology. These are to provide the much needed impetus to technical and vocational education.

The introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in the early 1980s which among other things included 'Introductory Technology and Business Studies' as subjects to be studied at the junior secondary level is to provide early orientation to students towards technical and vocational education. However, this noble intention of the Nigerian government has not been realized. Right thinking Nigerians watched with utter dissatisfaction the gradual decay of all the equipment the government used the tax payers' money to procure in favour of 6-3-3-4 system of education. So many students today come out from secondary schools without for one day entering into introductory technology workshop. One of the reasons given for the failure of the Introductory Technology course was the lack of well trained and dedicated personnel to handle the course and lack of interest by many of the students as a result of poor orientation of the aim of technical education. Technical education as a matter of fact aims at (a) Providing man-power in applied science, technology and commerce. (b) Providing the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development. (c) Providing people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man. (d) Providing professional orientation in engineering and other technologies. (e) Giving training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. (f) Enabling young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology (National Policy on Education). These aims of technical education if sustained supported and implemented, Nigeria today would have been on an enviable level in terms of labour productivity and development.

Consequences of Western Education in Nigeria (In Relation To Labour Productivity and Development)

There is no doubt that initially, western education in Nigeria was more liberal than any other. The products of such educational ideology were merely clerical workers and allied professions. This is mainly termed 'white-collar job'. Later on technical and vocational education was introduced and emphasized through many agencies.

The desire or urge to habilitate functional education, to encourage to a greater degree of self-reliance amongst her citizenry inspired the Federal Government of Nigeria to inject the 6-3-3-4 system of education into her educational philosophy. This system above everything else emphasized science and technology education. Thus, science and technology are being

introduced right from the primary school level. And the method or modes of pedagogy that will enhance exploration, experimentation and creativity amongst pupils have been stressed. At the secondary level, the syllabus has been broadened to accommodate academic, pre-vocational and vocational subjects. According to Okeke, C. C. (1989), at the junior secondary level, students are supposed to be exposed to both academic and pre-vocational subjects in order to provide diversified opportunities to students in response their variegated interests and abilities.

Still in the spirit of 'catch them young', comprehensive schools were established to take care of both the liberal and vocational types of education contemporaneously. Comprehensive secondary school is quite distinct from ordinary secondary school. The Comprehensive secondary school is one whose programmes correspond to the educational needs of all youth of the community. Under this approach, various curricula are combined into unified organization and both academic and vocational subjects are incorporated. It is guidance-oriented and dignity of labour is emphasized. Okeke, C.C. (1989). At the tertiary level the government is making concerted effort to harmonize and erase the seeming disparity that exists between the products of liberal education and those of the technical one. For the government B.Sc. or B.A. holders are now at par with H.N.D holders. There was a time when both practice and policy distinguished between the two and liberal education was considered superior to technical education in terms of employment and salary structure. Some Nigerian universities even till today discriminate against the holders of H.N.D. in terms of admission into post graduate studies. They are required to do some remedial programs to be qualified. This practice goes against governmental directive and intention for a hybrid education. The Federal Government recognizes that both the liberal and technical education is equally important for our national development. That accounts for the establishment of Universities of Science and technology, Universities of Technology, Colleges of Education (Technical), Science and Technical Colleges, schools of Arts and Sciences. Thus, she is now correcting the earlier mistakes of emphasizing one to the utter disregard of the other.

The consequences of the Western education are observed in areas such as agricultural mechanization process where cassava, maize, beans processors were designed, manufactured and operated locally for easy processing of farm produce. Coconut de-husking machines, coconut oil processors, palm oil and palm kernel processors and plough machines were fabricated locally and compare favourably with foreign ones. Also from our agricultural Research Institutes biotechnology in animal husbandry and production as well as in crop production have been employed to expand and enrich these products. The emergence of small and medium scale industries mainly in the Southern part of the country in the late 70s, 80s and early 90s testified to the fruit of western education in Nigeria. Earlier during the Nigerian – Biafran war, the Biafran engineers were able to designed and manufactured home made armoured cars and rockets, engine oil from coconut, the famous 'ogbunigwe', shore batteries and allied weapons. Even beer was produced from cassava and car brake fluid from coconut water. In the oil and gas sector both foreign and local personnel explored the crude oil, drilled it and refined it in our refineries they built and maintained and set up an efficient distribution network for both crude and refined petroleum products including exporting both crude and refined petroleum products. An unknown author beautifully but nostalgically articulated the consequences of western education in Nigeria using automobile sector and household utilities as case study in the 1980s- *"We were a net exporter of refined petroleum products. Today we import*

all our refined petroleum products. We rode in locally assembled cars, buses and trucks. Peugeot cars in Kaduna and Volkswagen cars in Lagos, Leyland in Ibadan and Anamco in Enugu produced our buses and trucks, Steyr at Bauchi producing our agricultural tractors. And not just assembly, we were producing many of the components. Vono products in Lagos producing seats, Exide in Ibadan producing batteries, not just for Nigeria but for the entire West Africa. Iso glass and TSG in Ibadan producing wind shields. Ferodo in Ibadan producing the brake pads and discs. Tyres produced by Dunlop in Lagos and Mitchelin in Port Harcourt. And I mean tyres produced from rubber plantations located in Ogun and Rivers States. We were listening to Radio and watching television sets assembled in Ibadan by Sanyo. We were using refrigerators, freezers and Air conditioners produced by Themacool and Debo. We were putting on clothes produced from UNTL textile mills in Kaduna and Chellarams in Lagos- not from imported cotton but from cotton grown in Nigeria. Our water was running through pipes produced by Kwali pipe in Kano and Duraplast in Lagos. Our toilets were fitted with WC produced at Kano and Abeokuta. We were cooking with LPG gas stored inside gas cylinders produced at NGC factory in Lagos. Our electricity was flowing through cables produced by Nigerian wire and cable, Ibadan and Kablemetal in Lagos and Port Harcourt. We had Bata and Lennards producing the shoes we were putting on- not from imported leather but from locally tanned leather at Kaduna. We were mainly flying our airways, the Nigerian Airways, to most places in the world. The Airways was about the biggest in Africa at that time. Most of the food we ate were being grown or produced in Nigeria,"

All these are indices of development through western education but they were not sustained and allowed to degenerate and disappear as a result of over reliance on *oil*. Today Nigeria imports almost everything.

To propel real development in Nigeria this papers recommends the following: - i. laying of good and sound foundation for our children from inception, the layers of this foundation must be properly grounded. Hence, the restoration of Teachers Training Colleges is an imperative. ii. Restoration of Comprehensive Secondary Schools and establishment of more technical Colleges and Polytechnics are required. iii. Erasing the dichotomy between the H.N.D. and B.Sc. holders has to be honestly put in place both in Public and Private sectors. iv. Government has to create an enabling environment for industrialization and encouragement of private sector with attractive policies. v. Government has to patronize local products by way of policy that discourages foreign taste and encourage local and indigenous taste. vi. Government has to invest more in education than she is doing currently. Adopting the recommendation UNESCO of 26% of annual budget for education will surely turn things around for better.

Conclusion

So far we have seen that the socio-historical development of education in Nigeria is an interesting one. This is interesting from the point of view that the initial aim of education was not the end product. Initially, it was for evangelization purposes but it has ended up advancing labour productivity. It scarcely takes interest in evangelization today. We have to remember that soon after the Nigeria – Biafra war; the government took over all the Mission schools in former Eastern region and converted them into government schools with secular ideology. The government scrapped both moral and religious teachings from the school curriculum. In East Central State then, under the administration of Mr. Ukpabi Asika saying of prayers was banned from all schools within the state.

The Nigerian government got it right by embracing hybrid form of education as the engine of development of the country. This option goes contrary to the ideas of people like Gilbert Ryle who demarcated between the knowledge of 'why' (liberal) and the knowledge of 'how' (technical). For Ryle, liberal education should not in any way be mixed up with that of technical. Obviously the position of Ryle and his collaborators may sound good but it will not give the needed development that education aims at.

That education in Nigeria has grown to the level of immense labour productivity despite some setbacks like labour crisis is a welcome development. What the government needs to do more is to revive and implement all the well intentioned education policies that are abandoned or not seriously implemented. Emphasis on technical education should be sustained and advanced. The Teacher Training Colleges should be re-introduced to have well trained teachers for a solid foundation for our children. Lastly, the government and the workers should be partners in the development/growth of the economy by way of reasonable and worthy monthly payment and reciprocating commitment to duty.

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