

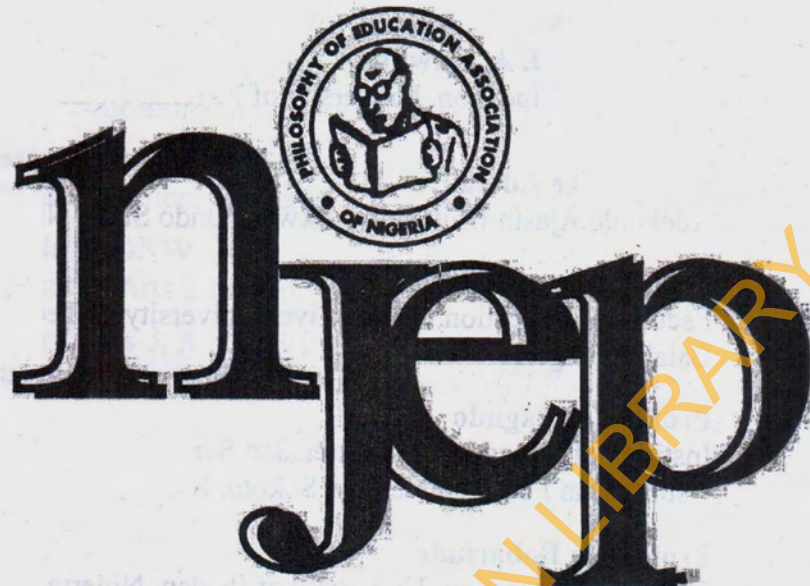
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NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME 32, OCTOBER, 2021

**FORTY YEARS OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (PEAN): PROSPECTS,
PROBLEMS AND THE FUTURE**

Published by
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FORTY YEARS OF PEAN AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

S. IDOWU MEROYI, Ph D

Abstract

Guidance and monitoring are essential in every human or social endeavour to attain success. Unguided and unmonitored activities are likely to fail hence, the imperative of guidance and monitoring in human activities. Groups, associations and bodies do volunteer to carry out activities of supervision or scrutinising undertakings of individuals, societies and organisations even without profit motive, all in the spirit of ensuring standards and attaining set objectives. The Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (P. E. A. N.) is an academic body involved in the development and practice of education in Nigeria. As part of her responsibilities to the Nigerian society in the forty years of her existence, it is pertinent to examine activities of the education sector in order to determine its relevance to the growth aspirations of the country. There are arguments as to the reasons for the alleged failure of Nigeria's education system; some had attributed it to the attitudes of people in the society, while others claimed it was the policy guidelines. This paper therefore sets out to examine the National Policy on Education (N. P. E.) as a document to determine its adequacy, relevance or otherwise in the practice and administration of Nigeria's education system. The Philosophical Research Method (P. R. M.) as well as the Content Analysis (C. A.) mode were adopted to scrutinise the policy document. The paper concluded that funding and implementation of policy guidelines have been the bane of the effective and efficient practice of education. Recommendations were made thereafter.

Key words: National Policy on Education, Process of education, Goals and objectives of education, Content Analysis.

Introduction

Guidance is a dynamic and an important component in the quest for accomplishment and success in many human as well as social endeavours. It involves the provision of advice or counselling, it can be considered as a process whereby a thing, issue, process or an action/activity is directed or advised in order to achieve desired objectives. In many situations, ill-advised, uncontrolled and unguided activities tend to end in disarray and confusion. The need for guide as well as control in human endeavours therefore, becomes very imperative. Education is a social activity which needs to be guided, controlled and monitored from time to time in order to tread the path of success. It is a process that requires regular observance without which there could be failure.

All over the world, countries develop plans, and produce documents from time to time to guide the practice of education, which help to direct activities in the sector. Nigeria as a matter of necessity after independence from the British colonial master, came up with the National Policy on Education (N. P. E.) in 1977, which was partly an outcome of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. Some African revolutionaries and nationalists according to Ogunyemi, argued that colonial education could only produce dependent school leavers who would perpetually rely on the erstwhile colonisers to address their developmental challenges as individuals, communities and nations. It was alleged that the colonialists had institutionalised a distorted and disoriented educational process which Rodney stated emphatically had promoted subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment. All these and the general dissatisfaction of the country with the colonial education system which was designed to cater for the interests of the colonial masters, and considered to have subsequently become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals necessitated the call for a policy change which

is expected to transform all aspects of the nation's life over time. From this decision, much was expected from the educational process in Nigeria especially, in the all-round development aspirations for individuals and the country at large. Despite the efforts in producing the education policy, much is still desired; the anticipated all-round development and transformation are still far from being realised or attained. Several complaints had trailed the capacity and ability of the educational sector and its policy to meet the national aspirations of the country. This calls for concern and scrutiny of the sector as well as the policy document to determine their efficacy and appropriateness in achieving the set objectives of the nation.

The Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (P. E. A. N.) is an academic group of educators and educationists concerned with the development and practice of education in Nigeria. As philosophers, the association engages in objective criticism, assessment, evaluation, monitoring and guiding activities in the education sector in order to ensure successful endeavour. This is usually done through critiques and examination of issues in the practice of education. This study, which is from the stable of Philosophy of Education, therefore, sets out to undertake an enquiry into the nation's National Policy on Education with the intention to decipher possible reasons for the alleged disappointment and failure of Nigeria's system of education in accomplishing desired national goals and objectives.

Nigeria's Education and Emerging Issues

The National Policy on Education (N. P. E.) as a document describes education as an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development, it therefore states the philosophy and objectives that form the basis of the nation's education process which are believed to be relevant to the needs of the individuals as well as those of the society, and likewise hinged on the realities of Nigeria's environment. In essence, the policy document outlines various provisions that are intended to transform all aspects of the nation's life over time because education is considered an instrument for national development, which can also foster the worth and development of the individual and promote a progressive, united Nigeria. Thus, according to the policy document, Nigeria's philosophy of education is hinged on the development of individual into a sound and effective citizen, as well as the full integration of the individual into the community.

Based on the contents of the policy document and optimism to realise stated national goals and objectives, several questions had agitated the minds of observers; if the objectives and philosophy are not strange to the nation's environment as contained in the policy document then, why has it been difficult for the process of education to achieve the set objectives and implement the guiding philosophy? Why have the far-reaching provisions outlined in the various sections which are expected to transform all aspects of the nation's life over time become an arduous and difficult task to accomplish? Why is it difficult for the process of education to integrate the individual effectively into the Nigerian community? Why has the goals of self-realisation, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress challenging to attain? On the part of the association of philosophers of education who are expected to be watch dog and monitor activities in the education system, what efforts have been employed so far in the forty (40) years of existence to address, call the attention of stakeholders to, and correct the ills in the sector? All these and several other questions as well as issues are expected to be examined in this study in order to attempt a possible solution to some of the nagging problems facing Nigeria's education sector. This will also serve as part of the activities of P. E. A. N. in addressing issues and proffering solutions to problems in the practice of education which is the major concern of the discipline of Philosophy of Education.

Philosophy and Goals of Nigeria's Education System

In order to make Nigeria's educational process relevant to the achievement of set national objectives, the country designed her system of education in such a way to achieve certain main national objectives. From the outlook of the National Policy on Education (N. P. E.), the philosophy and goals outlined in the policy document appeared laudable and perhaps, may not be

considered out of place. Several countries across the globe have similar policy and ideals but the question agitating minds again is; why is Nigeria's policy document faulted, censured and questionable in reality or practice? A scrutiny of the policy document might help in this task to reveal possible factors that may be responsible for policy summersault of the document. To carry this out, the philosophical research method of speculation, analysis and prescription as well as the Content Analysis (C. A.) of the National Policy on Education (N. P. E.) document shall be undertaken. This is hoped to lead to probable detection of plausible reasons behind the supposed anomalies identified with Nigeria's education system. Content Analysis (C. A.) according to Wikipedia is the study of documents and communication artefacts, which might be texts of various formats, pictures, audios or videos. It is a research tool useful to determine certain themes or concepts within some given qualitative data by which researchers can analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of words, themes and concepts. In other words, it can be employed as a tool or method to recapitulate any form of contents in order to expose certain aspects of the document for particular purpose. Content Analysis (C. A.), which is otherwise referred to as Document Analysis (D. A.), is a form of qualitative research as stated above, in which documents are examined and interpreted by the researcher(s) to provide meaning to an assessment of manuscript or records. The Content or Document Analysis is in essence, an evaluation tool which is capable of assisting in revealing the nuances of contents of document(s) analysed. It is also an important tool required in qualitative researches in fields like Philosophy and Philosophy of Education for the interpretation of the contents of texts or manuscripts through systematic analysis of identifying concepts, themes or patterns.

Content Analysis of the National Policy on Education

The essence of this section of the study is to have a critical look at, and consideration of, the education policy in Nigeria. It shall focus on the 6th edition of the National Policy on Education produced in 2013. The reason for focussing on this edition is because it is the latest edition produced after possible reflections and identification of issues and aspects required to be addressed following over three decades of its production. The edition therefore emerged to address noticeable gaps in contents and provisions that manifested in the course of implementing previous versions. In order to attempt a success at this, it will be pertinent to be guided by the question; how relevant and adequate is the National Policy on Education document in addressing the education needs of the present day Nigeria? This is hoped to guide in the consideration of items contained in the policy and assist in the probable detection of the adequacy or otherwise of the document on the issue of discourse.

A perusal of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013) reveals different sections of the document. Section 1 contains the Philosophy and Goals of Education where the overall philosophy of the nation is stated and the basis of beliefs on which her education rests. The country's beliefs are that education is an instrument for national development and social change, it is to promote a progressive Nigeria and maximise creative potentials and skills of learners. Education, according to the document, must be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society. The second section of the document focussed on Basic Education, with the goals of various levels stated. The levels in this education include; Early Child Care Development and Education, Pre-Primary Education, Primary Education and the Junior Secondary Education. Section 3 contains the Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) which are the Senior Secondary Education as well as the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) centres. The objectives of the Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) are to help graduates of the Basic Education to proceed to higher level of education, and inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence among others. The document outlined the Mass and Nomadic Education in Section 4. The Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education in this section is explained as the education given to adults, children and youths of formal school age, outside the formal school system. Its goals shall be to provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. It is also to provide remedial and life-long education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; provides in-

service vocational as well as professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills. Nomadic Education is the first six years of basic Education provided to the children of the disadvantaged nomadic population that includes the nomadic pastoralists, the migrant fisher folks and the immigrant farmers. Its goals are to provide relevant and functional basic education for the nomads and improve their survival skills in the nation's socio-economic and political affairs. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) is to formulate laws and policies to ensure adequate provision of funds and grants for the education in the country.

Section 5 of the policy document focussed on Tertiary Education. This is the level of education saddled with the responsibility of providing education for learners after Post Basic Education in institutions like the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and the Colleges of Education. The goals of tertiary education shall be to contribute to national development through high level manpower training and promote national and international understanding and interaction, among others. These goals are to be pursued through quality student intake, quality teaching and learning, research and development, staff welfare and development programmes, provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labour market, to state just few. Thus, the tertiary level of education is to provide University Education, Teacher Education, Technology Education and Innovation Enterprise education for the development of the Nigerian society.

The Open and Distance Education occupies the 6th section of the policy document. This is a mode of education delivery where learners and teachers need not be in physical contact but possess high range of flexible learning environment. The goals include providing access to quality education, equity in educational programmes and encourage life-long learning opportunities. The government is therefore to ensure that programmes for open/distance education are equivalent in status to those offered by conventional face to face mode of delivery in the appropriate tertiary educational institutions. In Section 7, Special Needs Education is given prominence. It is a customised educational programme designed to meet the unique needs of persons with special needs like the visually and hearing impaired, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, the gifted and talented, as well as the albinos, that the general education cannot cater for. The major aims of this education is to provide access to education for all persons in an inclusive setting, equalise educational opportunities for all persons, irrespective of their genetic composition, social, physical, sensory mental, psychological or emotional disabilities. It is to also provide adequate education for all persons with special needs and provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented persons to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace for society's development. Government is therefore expected to provide funds and other logistics for its successful implementation among which shall be the training and retraining for all categories of teachers in the regular schools for the effective implementation of the inclusive education for special needs persons. Thus, provisions shall be made for braille reading and writing, mobility training, activities or skills to assist persons with certain disabilities to cope with daily living and so on.

In Section 8 of the document, the essence and importance of Educational Support Services (ESS) were emphasised. This services (ESS) is to facilitate implementation of policies made in order to ensure their attainment so as to promote effective educational system. The goals of the ESS according to the policy document shall therefore include developing, assessing and improving educational programmes, enhancing teaching and teachers' competence, provide conducive environment for learning, and encourage partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International Development Partners (IDPs) to access resources. Therefore, services like school libraries, school meals, incentives, gardens, health, other nutritional services, etc that were stated in the policy shall be made available. Other services to be provided shall include sporting and recreational facilities, guidance and counselling, educational resource centres, laboratories, workshops, Information Technology (IT) hardware and software laboratories. The document also stated that a National Book Policy, which shall devise strategies for book development in the country to enable government promote the development, production

and distribution of books for all levels of education and encourage indigenous authorship shall be provided for.

The National Policy on Education (2013) clearly stated that the success of education is hinged on proper planning framework, efficient administration and adequate financing therefore, it stated the administrative machinery for national education system in the country to be based on certain cardinal principles which include; shared responsibility for the funding and management of basic education as provided for in the constitution, integration of educational development and policy with national objectives and programmes, with an evidence based policy. In essence, the Federal, State/Federal Capital Territory (FCT, Abuja) and the Local Authorities shall provide adequate number of qualified educational personnel as appropriate. The Educational Support Services shall also make provisions for Quality Assurance agencies at all levels of governance to monitor and maintain set standards especially, at all levels of education below the tertiary level. The goals of these agencies shall be to set, maintain and improve standards in all aspects of the school system, it is also to set minimum standards and quality assurance of instructional activities in schools. It is worthy of note that the document specified the teacher-students ratio as a component of the standards expected in the nation's educational practice.

Funding and Partnerships in education sector is given dedication in Section 10 of the policy document. The policy stated that the financing of education shall be a joint responsibility of the Federal, State/FCT, Local Governments and private sector. Efforts shall be made to increase government investment in education, strengthen governance frameworks, create modalities to effectively track expenditure and monitoring, as well as evaluation of service delivery on education. In addition, funds shall be provided at the government levels to provide camps for victims of natural disasters instead of converting schools as make-shift camps.

A further consideration of the document reveals the curriculum contents expected to be implemented especially, at the Basic and Post-Basic educational levels. Language of the immediate environment, English language, Mathematics, with Basic Science and Technology of which Physical and Health Education is among are compulsory subjects at these levels, while subjects under Religion and National Values which include Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education and Security Education, French language, Home Economics, Agriculture, Cultural and Creative Arts are elective subjects. The curriculum of the Technical College are structured in foundation and trade modules consisting five components; General education, Theory and related courses, Workshop practice, Industrial training/production work and Entrepreneurial training.

Appraisal of the National Policy on Education

The content analysis of the policy document carried out above revealed a credible manuscript for a realistic practice of education in the country. A glimpse at, and scrutiny of practices in schools across the various levels of education particularly, at the Basic and Post Basic educational institutions in the country, to confirm the reality and implementation of the policy however, showed a contrary report and deviation from the norm. Starting with the curriculum implementation, several subjects mandated and designated even as core/compulsory subjects are not offered or taught in the schools thereby denying learners the opportunity to take subjects or study courses of their interests, which is contrary to statements contained in the document. Lack of appropriate teaching personnel have been adduced for this. Science subjects without adequately equipped laboratories in schools are mere waste of human (teachers' and students') efforts and energy; this cannot ensure attainment of stated goals and objectives of the level of education concerned.

The earlier editions of the National Policy on Education (3rd in 1998 and 4th in 2004) contained emphatic statements on funding which are implied in the current 6th edition of 2013 that education shall be highly rated in national development plans. Development plans are hinged on finance thus, funds are expected to be made available to the education sector since it is the pivot of development in any society. This is confirmed in Section 10 of the current document. However, the opposite has been the case as all the educational institutions in the land are starved of adequate funds to operate optimally. This is markedly corroborated in the annual federal and various state

governments' budgets preparations as well as fiscal policies. The plan of expanding education and training facilities in response to societal needs has never seen the light of the day; educational facilities did not commensurate with the school demands and needs, this has hindered the use of modern educational techniques at all levels of education in the country. Therefore, the Educational Services saddled with the responsibility of attaining policy goals and the promotion of educational system failed in satisfactorily executing its duties thus, the roles of developing, improving educational programmes, enhancing teaching, as well as promoting competence of teachers in order to make learning experiences more meaningful for learners have not been adequately executed in the real sense of implementation. Adedija supported this assertion by stating the relevance and importance of teacher competences in pedagogical use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for the unprecedented opportunities it provided for the process of education to ensure meaningful teaching-learning, but which are still being sought after in the education industry in Nigeria.

The policy of adequate funding of education by the three tiers of government had suffered great neglect. This led to inadequate facilities, dilapidated structures, brain-drain on the part of academic personnel in schools, and poor inspectorate department in the various units saddled with the responsibility. The poor services rendered by the inspectorates division invariably affected the standard of education which is expected to be uniformed across the country. The roles of relevant bodies like the Nigerian Education Bank, Education Tax Fund and others have not been richly felt to ease the burden of financing education as stated in the policy document. Omodia corroborated the poor funding as a bane to the progress of educational system in the nation while Akinwumi confirmed the same challenge. All these attributed the failure to the inability of government to provide necessary and adequate fund allocations to education. Inadequate funding invariably affected remunerations, on the job training, research and conference/workshop sponsorship of education personnel. The struggle and agitation for recognition of education sector as an important sector in the economy by the schools personnel always resulted in loss of valuable time of students via closure of educational institutions. Brain-drain had always followed such agitation. In times of crises and (natural) disasters, premises or campuses of educational institutions have always become camps for the displaced members of the society. This has also not help matters in the education industry.

Over the years, budget estimates of governments have not been in the favour of education. The United Nations (UN) stipulated 26% of a country's budget estimates for education. In Nigeria, this has only been an information. Often, budget estimates at any level of governments in the country for education is under 10%. This can be considered as a major challenge confronting education and preventing it from living up to expectation in relation to global best practices.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the education sector has failed to live up to expectations therefore, the need for revamp is urgent if the nation is to enjoy its dividends. Failure of the country's leadership to address the grey areas particularly, in the execution of policy outlines in the nation's education policy will portend doom for the nation, and this will impact on other sectors of the economy and society. Therefore, the country cannot afford to continue to keep mum at a time like this when countries all over the world are using the instrument of education to develop and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is imperative that national policy dialogues be organised according to Obanya, to develop probable policy guidelines and better means of implementation for a coherent educational practice in the country even in the face of current global economic downturn.

Recommendations

It is suggested that a reform and an overhaul of the education sector be carried out. This is expected to address the lapses experienced in the practice of education in the country. The overhaul is to start from the appraisal of policy document and how its implementation can be better effected. Stakeholders are to be encouraged through welfare incentives especially, for teachers, students, administrators and even parents. The 2020 Nigeria's Independence Day

(October 1) celebration declaration by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of incentives for teachers, students and the sector is a step on track. Adequate funding is another issue which needs to be addressed to bring about reality of the intents of the country through the process of education. Furthermore, members of the society are to rise up to the realities of economic challenges facing the entire world and assist government in practical ways possible to promote viable education through direct provision of educational facilities. All these are likely to change the practice of education in the land positively and effect desired transformation in the sector.

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