

Nigeria Educational Policy and Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT This paper discusses the need in Nigeria to link Education with enterprise and self-employment through an integrated national policy. This would serve as a panacea for solving the massive unemployment problem, diminish rural poverty and empower a larger percentage of the citizens economically. During the colonial era in Nigeria, the educational policy was geared towards meeting the needs of the colonial administration. In the post-independence period, the national policy on education changed and the emphasis was put as “education for paid employment” rather than education for self-employment. For a long time also, there was utter neglect of small Enterprises in the industrialization policy. The combination of the above two scenarios have no doubt contributed to the problems of massive unemployment and rural poverty now facing the nation. Since the 1970s attention has been shifted to small and medium scale industries by both the federal and state governments due to the realization of the potentials of this sector in terms of employment generation poverty reduction, rural development, and mobilization of domestic savings. A lot of government and institutional support has therefore been directed to this sector in terms of credit facility, entrepreneurship development etc. What remains to be done is to link educational policy with industrialization and employment policies through formal education intervention in entrepreneurship development. Such a planned integration of policies will foster skills, attitudes and values amongst the youth (while still in school) appropriate to starting owning or working in successful business enterprise.

INTRODUCTION/ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The compartmentalization of educational, industrial, employment and labour policies in Nigeria probably dates back to the colonial era.

The first colonial policy on education was in 1925. This policy was for Africa and it touched on primary, secondary and adult education. Further policies in 1935, 1940 and 1945 built upon the 1925 policy, modifying it with little addition here and there, emphasis being on adult education. The colonial educational policy centered on the production of literate nationals who were required to man positions, which would strengthen the colonial administration. Thus our educational institutions, few as they were remained factories for producing clerks, interpreters, forest guards and sanitary inspectors as no special professional nor entrepreneurial skill was envisaged in the educational system (Akinyemi, 1987). The complete absence of enterprise education in the educational policy had continued till now.

The industrial policy which came on board only after the Nigerian independence in 1960 initially concentrated on the establishment of big industries with utter neglect for small scale business. By so doing, entrepreneurship which

is the bedrock of small-scale business was unwittingly de-emphasized.

The combination of apathy to ‘education for self-employment’ in the educational system and the long term apathy to the development of entrepreneurial skill through small scale industries in the industrial policy has contributed in no small way to the serious unemployment problem now facing the nation.

NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT

At the eve of Independence in 1959, the Ashby commission was set up to review the earlier educational policy. At that time, the country wanted to produce manpower for independence and that led to the 1960 Ashby report titled ‘Investment in Education’. There was a great concern to produce manpower to take over the government jobs being vacated by the colonialists.

It is relevant to mention at this juncture that the Government summoned in 1973 a seminar of distinguished experts to deliberate on all aspects of a national policy on education. The seminar had as its Chairman Chief S.O. Adebayo who was then the Chairman of the National Universities Commission and a former permanent representative of Nigeria at the United Nations. The

recommendations of the seminar having being scrutinized and modified by various organs of Government culminated in the production of a document titled "The Nigeria National Policy on Education (1981)". This document probably marked the first linkage (though in a tangential manner) of the education policy with industrialization policy and the issue of self employment.

An examination of the policy document reveals that the issue of self-employment after School, College and University education was not given adequate attention. Let us examine some sections of the document to buttress this point. For example in Section 3 on Primary education item 14g listed one of the objectives of primary education as "providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality".

Section 4 on secondary education item 19[4] stated that the junior secondary schools would be both pre-vocational and academic. The pre-vocational subjects listed were Metal Work, Electronics, Mechanics, Local Crafts, Home Economics, Business Studies. It went further to say that the purpose was to enable pupils acquire further knowledge and develop skills.

Section 6 on Technical Education (i.e. pre-vocational and vocational school, the technical colleges, the Polytechnics and Colleges of Technical Teachers Education) item 49 stated that one of the aims of technical education should be to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who would be enterprising and self-reliant.

It is worth noting that section 5 of the policy on Higher Education (i.e. Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education) was conspicuous by its absolute silence on the self-employment issue or option. The Higher Educational Policy concerned itself mainly with the development of 'high level manpower' which was to be in the context of the 'needs of the economy' perceived mainly then in the field of science and technology. Thus the higher educational policy as stipulated in the 1981 National Education Policy expectedly had serious orientation for science and technology and absolutely none for self-employment. Universities and other levels of the education system were specifically required to pay greater attention to the development of scientific orientation.

It was also clear from the policy that the acquisition of knowledge and skill in the University was to be aimed to satisfy the perceived end of the line employers, that is government and industry. Undergraduates were to be prepared in leadership styles, managerial thinking and decision-making procedures suitable for large organizations. The methodologies of identifying opportunities and the spanning of entrepreneurial talent have hitherto been ignored (Visser, 1997). Even in the professional fields, the educational policy stipulates that course content should reflect the needs of the employer and in this regard consultation between the Universities, the employers and the government was to be encouraged (Paragraph 34). Even though the national policy on secondary and technical education shows some concern for self-employment, such concern can be said to be very negligible because by and large, the whole policy document put a lot of emphasis on acquisition of technical skill by students for the purpose of gaining employment. This position is buttressed by the following policy statements under technical education (Section 6):

- xii *"In the designing of courses, industry and government will be consulted with a view to giving such courses greater practical relevance. Increased use will be made of Advisory Board for each group of courses and trades. The memberships of these Boards will include representatives from industry, and other employers of labour and in this way courses will be made to satisfy the needs of industry and other employers"*.
- xiii *"To assist in directing technical graduate, to the fields and industries where they are most needed, colleges of technology, polytechnics and vocational schools will be required to have placement officers on their staff"*.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Industrial policy was almost non-existent during the colonial era. The economic plan which span the periods 1914 – 1945 and 1945 - 1956

were silent on industrial development. In particular, the 1945–1956 plan sought to provide for the acute shortage of export crops brought about by the second world war, and on the recommendation of the world bank mission which visited Nigeria, a 5-year development plan for 1955–1960 was adopted. This plan which lacked economic targets placed emphasis on improved communication and transport system and also agriculture for export. Again like the former plans, Nigeria was to remain a primary raw material producing area for Great Britain. Even, at the eve of our independence, there was virtually no effort to make industrialization a national priority, talk less of linking it to education. The 1962–1968 National Development plan is what can really be called the first national plan since it specified targets to be achieved. Government planned to invest 15% of the GDP annually on the productive sector of the economy which was to ensure an average growth rate of 4%. The commissioning of the Kainji Dam and the Ughelli Thermal plants marked the major achievement of this plan by paving the way for the vital infrastructure needed for setting up of industries. An oil refinery, a development Bank, a Mint and Security plant were established all of which constituted a boost to the industrial take-off in Nigeria. For the first time also trade and industry started receiving both Federal & Regional government attention. It should be noted however that the attention was concentrated on large scale, (multi-national) establishments to the utter neglect of small scale enterprises, where existed the concentration of the self-employed.

The 1970–1975 National Development plan which was launched shortly after the civil war aimed at promoting economic and social activities in order to achieve the highest growth rate possible aside the mission of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Even then up till this time, both the Federal and State Governments focused their attention on the large scale companies. The apathy to or perhaps almost total neglect of the micro and small scale industries (SSI) for a long time can best be described in the words of Professor Sam Aluko in his paper read to the National Conference of Nigeria Association of Small-Scale Industries in 1985. Describing a situation in the 1970s Prof. Aluko said, “*many of my economist colleagues argued that the place of small industries would be a diminishing one and that it was not an attractive proposal to be*

wandering around the country talking to and relating with semi-literate black-wood carpenters, black-smiths, tailors and saw-millers who kept little or no records and who supplied no data for econometric growth modeling”.

SHIFT IN ATTENTION FROM BIG TO SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (SSI)

However, by the second-half of the 1970s the government’s official attitude to SSI began to improve and in subsequent development plans, both the Federal and the State governments have been eloquent on the importance of the small-scale industrial sub-sector to the over-all economy. Small scale enterprises have since been given increasing policy attention partly because of the growing disappointment with the results of the development of large scale industrial plants on labour absorption but most importantly because of the realization of the potentials of SSI in terms of positive contributions to economic development.

Since the 1970s attention has shifted to the small and medium scale industries in a big way. This started with the setting up of the thirteen industrial centers (IDC) during the 1970–1975 National Development Plan which was aimed at providing extension services to small scale enterprises (SMEs) and was followed by the creation of financial institutions to provide sources of institutional credit for SMEs, e.g. Nigeria Industrial Bank (NIDB), Nigeria Bank For Commerce and Industry (NBCI), Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), People’s Bank, Community Banks and so on. The Federal government has since continued in its effort to support SMEs. Specialized credit schemes were also set up to enhance the spread and productive efficiency of SMEs. Among such schemes are:

- (a) The World Bank Assisted SME Schemes
- (b) National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND)
- (c) The Export Stimulation Loan Scheme (ESL)
- (d) The Rediscounting and Refinancing Facility (RRF)

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) established in 1986 is another channel through which government has promoted the development of SMEs whilst the Work For Yourself Programme (WFYP) introduced by the Federal Ministry of Industries and assisted by

the International Labour Organization (ILO) aim at developing entrepreneurial skill and putting innovative ideas to fruition.

EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

It cannot be denied that SMEs in Nigeria have benefited from different types of support policies since 1972. What is conspicuous is the lack of attention given by tertiary training institutions to small business related issues and course material in study courses relevant to business set-up for self-employment. This demonstrates the lack of coherence between educational and employment policies.

Unemployment as a national problem did not manifest until the end of the civil war. Even then it remained at a tolerable level before the present economic depression struck in 1981. Hence it could be said that there was no clearly identifiable and focused national policy on unemployment before the 1980s. Policy options towards reversing the trend of increasing unemployment in the 1980s focused on generating more employment opportunities in the country especially in the urban areas and the structural transformation of the rural areas to stop rural-urban migration. However the first innovative, comprehensive, composite and integrated package on the national crusade against unemployment was the introduction of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986.

The 1986 Chukwuma-led committee gave birth to the National Directorate of Employment in November of that year which was formally launched on January 30th, 1987. The Directorate is an autonomous body set up to work out and implement strategies aimed at solving the problem of mass unemployment in the country. The employment programme of the Directorate include the following:

- * National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme;
 - * The Special Public Works Programme;
 - * The Small-Scale Industries Development Programme;
 - * The Agricultural Sector Employment Programme;
 - * The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme.
- As brilliant as the NDE programme is, it was

clear that it was aimed at out-of-school unemployed youth. The educational curriculum for in-school youth remained largely silent on the implication of the knowledge and skill acquired while in school for self-employment after school. This lack of policy coherence is a matter of great concern.

ACHIEVING POLICY COHERENCE IN THE EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The term policy coherence here is being used to denote the importance of policy in one sphere being reinforced by policies elsewhere. In the context of this paper the concern is, "to what extent do policies concerned with employment and enterprise development on one hand do reinforce or are reinforced by policies concerned with human resources development through schools, higher education and training institutions on the other hand?" Is there any link between education and work in the education and training policy papers? To what extent do the education and training policies express concern about impact on post-school and post-training livelihoods? Do the education and training policies project a vision of preparation for both employment and self-employment? In other words, is there any consideration for enterprise development in the education and training policy papers. The need for integration of educational and labour policies is very crucial for effective manpower planning. This explains why in some developed countries, there is a single ministry of education and industry. The concern of this paper is the development of an inclusive and integrated policy for education, industry and enterprise and with policy coherence amongst government departments.

There is no doubt that the National Directorate of Employment has done a lot through its different products to target the out-of-school youth and the unemployed. More attention however should be paid to the need to integrate formal education and training policy with employment and self-employment development. The superiority of this approach is that it is preventive rather than curative. Part of the energies and resources of the supportive agencies for providing education and training for the unemployed out of school youth can be directed to train and equip them on self-

employment before they leave school.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

In Scotland, enterprise education has been extended to both secondary and primary schools. In fact, there is a Department of Enterprise Education in the Faculty of Education of the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, where teachers are being trained for this programme.

As at 1998, 80% of secondary schools in Scotland have enterprise education teachers. In the secondary schools where enterprise education is taught, the youths are encouraged to form small companies to run businesses, sometimes with international linkage. The groups are linked with similar groups in secondary schools in Europe and U.S.A. They are also encouraged to join a youth business club called 'Achievers International'. There is an annual competition and annual award of prizes to Young Entrepreneurs with best performance.

One of the most striking changes in Kenyan training during the 1990s has been the introduction of Enterprise Education (McGrath, 1998b). Officially, this is now offered in all vocational and Technical Institutions from Youth Polytechnic to National Polytechnic level. This programme is serviced by the M.Sc. programme in Entrepreneurship at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and a higher Diploma course at the Kenya Technical Teachers' College (KTTC). In addition to this formal education sector intervention, other efforts are being made in the informal sector to complement entrepreneurship with training services. The Kenya Youth Training and Enterprise Creation Programme (KYTEC), supported by ILO and UNDP, seeks to deliver key add-ons training such as credit and business services.

The link between education, training and enterprise has also been recognized recently by the micro credit summit. The vision of the summit is to launch a global movement to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families especially the women of those families with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005. This global summit has resolved to spend 50 cents on education for every one dollar it spends on credit. The emphasis now is credit plus education.

The Family Economic Advancement Pro-

gramme (FEAP) also gave adequate recognition to this important link between education and entrepreneurship. In the FEAP blueprint issued in January 1997, a whole chapter was devoted to training. Apart from proposing a training programme for the target groups to be articulated by the Ministries of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Industries, Women Affairs and Social Development, NDE etc, the paper on the blue print went on in page 16 item 32 to recommend as follows:

Entrepreneurship development will also be included in the curricula of primary, secondary, technical schools and universities to ensure that the entrepreneurship culture is inculcated in graduates who will ultimately be job creators and not job seekers.

All these are necessary intervention to better orient formal education and training to economic realities by bringing about a major shift in attitudes towards self-employment. I wish to submit that there is a need for major policy re-evaluation to achieve integration and coherence so as to impact all aspects of human resource development. Such an integrated policy will ensure that a whole series of vulnerable target groups, the youth in and out of school, the unemployed, the urban and rural poor are incorporated into the national framework of opportunities and supportive services.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Little attempts have been made to translate the broad terms of the university educational policy into consequences for the employment planning. There is, for example, no provision for enterprise orientation for undergraduates or whether graduates could expect to find themselves in various kinds of self-employment. The concern for acquisition of knowledge and skill in Nigeria's tertiary institutions is so enormous to the almost neglect of its implication for employment (or unemployment). What is intriguing is that the way Business Education, Accountancy, Business Administration are taught in some Universities and Polytechnics gives absolutely no acknowledgement that the skills and knowledge may prove more directly useful to students after schools as self-employed. It is nowhere suggested in the University curriculum course content that a very possible

outcome may be self-employment. One fact that has remained undisputable is that Nigeria historically has a very popular and powerful aspiration towards qualifications which are now being acquired either through Full-time or Part-time mode.

Both traditionally and recently, 'qualifications' economy have operated because of the close link between qualifications and improved wage and salary. What is surprising however is the increasing attractiveness of qualification in the face of massive retrenchments in the formal sector of the economy and massive unemployment of the 'qualified'. The need has therefore arisen to link 'Qualification economy' to self-employment and job creation.

Programmes to prepare people for entrepreneurship to support small business, have become subjects of Further Education and Training. Over the years, Further Education has been saddled with the responsibility of filling the literacy gaps of drop-outs or unschooled entrepreneurs, training them and equipping them with skill for success. In this regard it is necessary to recognize and commend the efforts of the following institutions apart from the NDE earlier mentioned

- * Center for Industrial Research Development of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- * Federal and State Ministries of Industry
- * The World Bank and the ILO
- * Non-Governmental Organizations devoted to assisting entrepreneurs.

Tertiary institutions and particularly Universities definitely have a role to play in preparing the youth for the world of self-employment. This is the cry of the present critical situation of massive graduate unemployment.

In restructuring the educational system, there should be concern for wider linkages to the economy, the labour market, and the categories of the self-employees, under-employed and the rural poor.

No one doubts the needs for our Universities, to look outward on global competitiveness and the challenge of continuous technological improvement as stated in the 1996 South Africa's Department of Education Policy (page 14) on quote:

Knowledge, information and culture increasingly inhabit a borderless world with new computer and communication technologies transforming the way people work, produce and

consume.

It is however equally important for Universities to also look inwards at the millions of unemployed youth and devise a way of equipping undergraduates to be self reliant before graduating particularly since the dream jobs are no longer there. This underscores the importance of the introduction of Enterprise Education in the curriculum of Universities and other tertiary institutions.

GAP BETWEEN THE NIGERIA ENTREPRENEUR AND THE UNIVERSITY

There is also the need to bridge the gap between the Nigeria Entrepreneur and the University. Very few entrepreneurs have been stimulated to have meaningful interaction with the Universities and Polytechnics. There is a lot to be learnt by the Universities from the experiences of entrepreneurs who have toiled, failed and succeeded, and failed again and succeeded (Olufokunbi, 1995). Similarly the entrepreneurs need to harness and utilize the expertise of people in tertiary institutions. Entrepreneurs can achieve this inter-relationship by:

- * Inviting some academics to spend some time in their establishment e.g. Sabbatical leave;
- * Sending some of their staff for in-service training in tertiary institution
- * Visiting tertiary institutions on invitation to share their experiences with students and staff;
- * Financing special research and consultancy especially those that are related to their businesses.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

The Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) has been recognized to play a pivotal role in the economic and social development and in poverty alleviation. African leaders at an education conference in Addis Ababa in May 1961 observed that:

... the African countries in a century characterized by technological progress, should embark on a very broad expansion of technical and vocational education and specialized training in the interest of their own development and especially for their industrialization (ECA/

UNESCO 1961:9.37).

In February 1995 an international meeting entitled 'Audience Africa' was convened in Paris, France and attended by some African Heads of States to re-examine the whole question of development and development priorities in the continent in the light of the new challenges facing the world (Audience Africa, 1995 : 6). One of the recommendations of the meeting was that secondary education should also give prominent place to technical and vocational education (TVE).

In Nigeria as early as the 1980s technical and vocational education had been made an integral aspect of general education. The 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 education system saw to the vocationalization of the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. Kenya and Cameroon have even gone further to include vocational subjects at the primary level.

The acquisition of relevant vocational technical and business skills is generally regarded as one of the critical factors in the success of small, micro, and medium sized enterprises (SMME) especially in lifting them from survivalist activities to larger and better-earning enterprises.

However, the challenges of technical and vocational education and training in Nigeria are many. The first is that there is need to reorient TVE more towards self-employment by the active teaching of enterprise education in every technical and vocational school/college. Simon McGrath (1998(a)) in his paper titled: 'From policy to practice: Education, training and self-employment in Kenya' however rightly observed that in preparing TVE graduates for sustainable self-employment, enterprise education should be collaborated with post training support factors, e.g. capital, equipment, contracts etc. This will foster the success of the new idea of 'Technopreneur' which is already gaining ground in East and South Africa.

Another challenge is the need to address the tendency to look down on TVE as being inferior to secondary education. The minimal attention accorded to technical and vocational education programmes by the University has contributed to the negative attitudes which TVE has earned due to the lack of opportunities for further education (Kerre 1998). A possible solution to this problem may be the introduction of vocational courses oriented towards self-employment to the curriculum of some

Universities. People in vocational institutions should be able to find their path through University if they so desire and specialize in their chosen career.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * One way of solving this problem is to re-orientate the educational programme to changing job requirements. There should be a closer cooperation and greater collaboration between education and employment particularly self-employment in order to help the youngsters acquire the necessary skills from the onset. Entrepreneurship development should become part and parcel of tertiary Institutions' curriculum
- * Education Tax Fund should contribute to this linkage in various ways by financing programmes on self-employment, endowment of chairs in disciplines relevant to industrial development and financing Business oriented research and consultancy services.
- * Entrepreneurship orientation should be made an element at all levels of learning from primary schools to secondary schools and tertiary institutions. All institutions should teach a course in ENTREPRENEURSHIP, the coverage and complexity of which will vary with the level of the institution.
- * The Federal Ministry of Education should pass this message down through the National Universities Commission, the Nigeria Board for Technical Education and the various State Ministries of Education.
- * There is definitely a need for a change in the mind-set of our youth to see self-employment as an option before leaving school and be prepared psychologically and emotionally for it. This will enable them to be more motivated in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities both within and outside their area of specialization while they are undergoing education and training in the tertiary institution.
- * For the purpose of servicing these programmes, I wish to recommend that the Centre for Industrial Research and Development of the Obafemi Awolowo University be declared a Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship Training so that through its Postgraduate programmes on Entrepreneurship Development and the proposed Masters

in Entrepreneurship programme, it can, with governmental support and assistance, perform roles similar to that which is currently being performed by the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya and the Centre for Enterprise Education in Strathclyde University, Glasgow. That is, training the trainers who will be required to man the entrepreneurship programmes in the various schools and colleges and Universities.

- * Finally, I wish to recommend a planned integration of policies on education, industrialization and enterprise in a way to foster skills, attitudes and values amongst the youth, appropriate to starting, owning or working in successful business enterprises. This is like buying the idea of Visser (1997) who listed such policies as including:
Education for enterprise (i.e. developing business related skills)
Education about enterprise (i.e. knowledge and understanding) and
Education through Enterprise (i.e. learning to be enterprising).

CONCLUSION

Today, unemployment has reached an embarrassing level and the loss of employment opportunity for young graduates has led to frustration, insecurity and uncertainty about the future. Graduate unemployment constitutes a double loss to the society in view of the tremendous amount of resources that have been invested in their formal education and the consumption demands which the unemployed graduates make on the economy. At present most industries which could have absorbed this pool of unemployed graduates have shut down while those still in existence operate well below their capacity. The lack of coherence between National Policies on education, industrialization and employment has made matters worse. The educational institutions have continued to produce graduates while there is no effective national policy in place on industrialization or self-employment to create jobs for the graduates or to motivate them to create jobs for themselves. There is no doubt in the fact that the danger of having a pool of educated unemployed but vocal youth is now posing a serious threat to social security and stability. A number of recommendations have been given in the course of this paper.

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