EDITORIAL

This academic publication of the defunct Department of Educational Foundations has come a long way. It was almost going moribund but for the deliberately steps taken by the current Editorial Board with the cooperation of all academic staff of the former Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education. Innovative article generation and peer review programmes were initiated and doggedly implemented to enable the return of Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations to the envious academic status it had always enjoyed. Improving the quality of the journal and bringing an international angle and status to it has engaged the attention of the Editorial Board. Phased in stages of achieving national and international focus has produced special edition based on selected themes. These themes pay attention to issues and needs currently engaging the attention of specialists in educational foundation in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

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A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE OF NIGERIA'S EDUCATION POLICY

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Abstract
This paper is a critique of the national policy on education in Nigeria (2004). It argued that lack of adequate implementation of the policy by the government and other stakeholders may have been due to inherent problems in the policy. The researcher used some methods of philosophy, which are critical inquiry and conceptual analysis, to analyze the components of the policy. Via these methods, inadequacy of coherence and consistency in the policy was established. Certain inconsistencies in the policy which make it difficult to act as a workable guide for the system of education in Nigeria were exposed. The paper concludes that attempts should be made to work on the inconsistencies in the policy for good implementation.

Key words: Education, Education policy, Coherence, Consistence and Implementation.

Introduction
Considering Nigerian education policy from a philosophical point of view, there appears to be inconsistencies in the content of the policy that could lead to inconsistent implementation. A philosophical analysis of the policy would reveal some of these inconsistencies. The philosophical basis of the policy and the various ways of attaining the philosophical desires are largely incoherent and inconsistent. These would be considered into great detail in the body of this paper. The issues include: the choice of philosophy; achieving democracy through the policy; equality of educational opportunity; and achieving self-sufficiency through the policy.

The Choice of Philosophy
The philosophy adopted as the basis of the policy on education in Nigeria is eclecticism. Eclecticism is not a bad philosophy, as it is very difficult, if not impracticable, to locate any standard system of education which corresponds one-to-one with just one philosophical school. Nations that have purportedly adopted one school of thought or the other as the basis for their policies, have resorted at one time or the other, to picking certain elements which are from other philosophies (Akinsanya 2012b: 269 – 274). Akinpelu stated that "a genuine system of education is essentially eclectic, embracing the doctrines of two or more ... schools of thought" (Akinpelu 2005a: 125). The problem with Nigeria, however, is the adopted brand of eclecticism which leaves little or no room for an integrative coordination. This particular brand has a feature where different schools of thought maintain imposing influences on the policy without being in harmony with one another. For instance the policy professes to be pragmatic; to be progressive; to be realistic; to be idealistic; to be existentialistic, etc., without accomplishing the dictates of any of the schools on the long run.

To be sure, in section I, the policy stated that in Nigeria's philosophy of education, it is believed that: "there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education" (FRN, 2004: 1-2). This, indeed, suggests a pragmatic education policy. Unfortunately, however, and as noted by Amaele, the fundamental principles of pragmatism are hardly practiced and implemented in the system. Amaele reminds us of the philosophy of pragmatism which is basically anchored on workability, comprehensive nature of education and the capacity of man to explore his environment; moreover school is a continuation of the home and what is taught at school should be relevant to the child and the society. (Amaele 2005:149).

A careful reflection on the policy-document shows that the content runs contrary to some of the principles enunciated above. This equally goes for other chosen schools of thought. The inability to choose carefully and to harmonize the philosophies, thus, result in some confusion, incoherence and inconsistency. Perhaps this is why there are some contradictions in Nigeria's educational objectives and curricular designs, evaluation and supervision, methods of teaching and implementation strategies.

Achieving Democracy Through the Policy
The decision of the policy to adopt democracy and egalitarianism as Nigeria's social ideology on which its educational system would be patterned is a laudable idea. This is because democracy, has become the best form of governance that promotes active participation of people in governing themselves. But, if Nigeria is indeed serious with achieving a democratic society, then it needs to take her education seriously, and such education must
be democratized. This means that education and democracy have to be infused into each other. Kneller, quoted in Omoteso and Aladejana, has pointed out that the conduct of education in a democracy is guided by a number of generally accepted principles. These principles are regarded as the cornerstones of education and democracy. They are;

i. since the people elect their government, they should be educated to do so responsibly
ii. through education, every individual is expected to develop his own talents to the full
iii. men must be educated to be free
iv. education should train the open mind
v. education should develop the habit of productive cooperation as well as healthy competition
vi. wherever possible, we should adopt democratic practices in school behaviour; and
vii. political control over education must be kept to the minimum” (Omoteso & Aladejana 2003:6).

A critical reflection on Nigeria's policy-document on education shows that it is far-away from adopting the above general principles. The system of education suggested by the policy is a total disconnection from democratic principles. This disconnect falls in right description in Counts' observation as follows:

We say that our children should be trained for life in a democracy and then we place them in schools which are autocratically managed from the board of education to the pupil in the classroom; we say that our children should learn the lessons of cooperation and then we subject them to an educational regimen of marks, certificates and degrees which place a premium upon individual competition and self-aggrandizement; ...and then place them under the tutelage of teachers who are scarcely aware that a radically new civilization is rapidly spreading throughout the world (Counts in Lucas 1969:93).

The emphasis on democracy in Nigeria could have been much more easier but for the undemocratization of education. If people are to elect their government freely, then they should be educated to do so responsibly. In the same vein, an egalitarian society could have been easier to realise, if there were no structures that favour capitalism or elitism in the policy. The system for instance, makes rooms for special schools populated by 'special citizens'; and 'special treatment' for some favoured regions in the name of equalizing educational opportunities. These special schools, as noted by Ndika, are designed to serve the elites, and are placed above the general run of institutions of the same educational level which serve the great masses of citizens. The special schools, in Ndika's opinion, serve the role of reinforcing the educational advantages, which the children from the favoured homes have over those from the less favoured ones, especially as regards initiation into various aspects of western culture. On the long run, the schools play the "role of widening the educational and cultural gap together with the concomitant economic advantages between the children of the western educated elite and their less fortunate fellow citizens" (Nduka 2006: 126-127). Of course, neither the practice of autocracy nor the creation of 'sacred cows' can produce a democratic and egalitarian society. The result is tendency towards capitalistic or elitist society.

**Cultural Variations in Nigeria and the Policy**

Culture is the expression of a specific historical situation and of a distinctive view of the world, of life and death, of man's significance, of the tasks he has to discharge, his prerogatives and limitations, and of what he has to do and what he may hope for. These functions are passed down to man from one generation to the other through the instrumentality of education. This means that without education, culture becomes unknowable, and without culture, education makes no sense. Perhaps, this is why Obanya considers culture and education as inseparable, as they are two sides of the same coin. The two concepts are, in his opinion, indistinguishable as the primary definition of education is acculturation (Obanya 2007:37). The relationship however connotes that the two concepts have some responsibilities to each other. While culture determines what education should transmit (i.e. what is to be learnt, why it is to be learnt, when and where it is to be learnt) and provides the vehicle, education helps culture with two functions: conservation and transformation.

Education assists the society in conserving and transforming its values, norms and etiquettes. In the interactions, however, culture occupies a more important role for there cannot be anything called education if there is no culture in the first instance. Education as pointed out by Ottaway, is an activity which goes on in a culture, and its aims and methods are dependent on the culture of the society in which it takes place (Ottaway 1962:1&38). This means that the culture of a people informs the type of education predisposed to her young ones. Now, if every type of society has its own underlying cultural dimension, and it is true that education depends on the total way of life of a society, then, the kind of education provided will be different in different kinds of culture/society (Ottaway 1962:11). This is what comparative education has made us to know.

One is aware that the system of education in Ghana is quite different
from French; different from British. Even in the same country like U.S.A where there are heterogeneous societies making up a country, they are said to have various educational policies. This is simply so because of the presence of diversity in culture. In the case of Nigeria on the contrary, diversity is sacrificed on the altar of unity. The way of life of the Yoruba man is, unarguably different from that of the Hausa man. A policy which does not take this into cognizance is naturally bound to be deficient. No wonder Nkom had considered Nigeria as a “classic example of a country where systematic planning of the culture components of the development process has been absent” (Nkom 1997:242). The failure to appreciate that culture is the reason for education, and that wherever there are diversities of culture, there ought to be diversities of educational policies and systems, is one of the key reasons for educational inefficiency in this country. For education to achieve its optimum in Nigeria, a decentralization of the national policy is inevitable (Akinsanya 2012a:116-124). The point made so far is that the inability of our national policy to respect the relationship between culture and education constitutes another inconsistency in the system.

Another related deficiency which demands attention in the policy is the position given to indigenous languages (mother tongues). Language occupies an important aspect of any culture. Thus, a culture-oriented education policy would include culture-related directives such as “languages of instruction, and particularly commitment to the development of indigenous languages for use in education” (Obanya 2007:45). Incidentally, the centrality of language to the teaching-learning process; the importance of Nigerian languages to the protection, preservation and promotion of Nigerian cultures and the enhancement of human dignity; and the necessity of learning a major language for purposes of promoting national unity and integration, all have constitutional backing in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Co-incidentally, the government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion and preserving cultures, and thus, recommend that every child should learn the language of the immediate environment (FRN 2004:5).

However it is baffling to note that the place given to languages in the policy is optional, coming behind mathematics, English and even French nowadays. If learning a major national language is a national and natural responsibility, then, its learning cannot be optional but compulsory at all levels. Again, if the language of the immediate environment is considered so important in achieving literacy and numeracy, why should it be taken as one of the ‘other’ subjects which could be dropped later? If government is serious about implementing the policy, why do we have language provisions couched in cautious phraseology – ‘subject to the availability of teachers’? Perhaps, the government needs to appreciate the results of the research conducted by Fafunwa and other experts on effect of mother tongue on learning. The research confirmed that those who have their total primary education in mother tongue, who had turned to technical pursuit, have proved more resourceful than their counterparts from other schools when they met on the technical plane.

The mother-tongue language educated children demonstrated greater manipulative ability, manual dexterity and mechanical comprehension. In their relationship with their colleagues, the children demonstrated great sense of maturity, tolerance and other affective qualities needed for integration with those they came in contact with (Fafunwa 1989:141). Similar results have been obtained in similar researches carried out in Philippines, Niger Republic, etc. Without going far, countries like England, France, Germany, China, Korea and Japan use English, French, German, Chinese, Korean and Japanese respectively as their mother tongues to educate their children. The same results have been produced. Why should Nigeria be different? With the disposition of the policy to overcentralise education and relegate indigenous languages, it has made little allowance for the actualization or implementation of what is contained on page two of the policy - that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the full integration of the individual into the community.

Equality of Educational Opportunity in the Policy
An idea which is in opposition to Nigerian social ideology of building a just and democratic society (which is the pedestal on which our educational policy is laid) is the emphasis on achieving equality of educational opportunities, stated repeatedly in the policy-document. It is stated under section one, subsection 4c, that “every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability”; in the same section, subsection 5(i), it reflects that “Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system” (FRN 2004:1-2)

However equality of educational opportunities in Nigeria has been manifesting the following features:
(a) Differential and preferential funding of education with extra budgetary allocations to some periodically designated educationally backward or educationally disadvantaged states to correct some so-called 'national educational imbalance' e.g. the Federal Basic Education Commission fund set aside for some 'educationally disadvantaged states'.
The citing of schools of Basic Studies in some states to prepare more candidates for entry into the universities from those states.

The quota system of admission in favour of the so-called disadvantaged states and the criterion of catchment area to favour areas contiguous to the seats of federal universities.

Special education for the riverine areas, nomadic, almajiri, etc.

Reduced fees and special attention as motivational strategies to those in the disadvantaged states, especially certain section of the country.

All these are inimical to what justice and democracy stand for. If Mr. A feels cheated by Mr. B, and the system encourages Mr. A to cheat Mr. B to balance the equilibrium, would Mr. B not come back with his own allegation? At what stage can it be said that Mr. A has balanced up? Could Mr. A not turn out to be the worse cheat on the long run? In the case of Nigeria, it is true that some states are educationally disadvantaged; but was the situation 'all' caused by those to refer to as 'advantaged states'? If they were not responsible for the anomaly, why must they suffer for it? Inadvertently, such action which some feel is capable of socially balancing the country, inevitably generates a discrimination – a 'reverse discrimination'. In Akinpelu's opinion, it 'seems to be logically, though paradoxically the case, that any attempt to equalize opportunities, in a state of previous disequilibrium, must inevitably create some fresh inequalities' (Akinpelu 2005:161). Reflecting about reverse discrimination, Barrow has this to say:

The essential idea is that people who have hitherto been discomfited and disadvantaged in some way should now, in justice, be correspondingly advantaged...The phrase used may vary – 'reverse discrimination'; affirmative action'; 'positive discrimination'; - but the idea remains the same. It is an idea that seems directly to challenge to classic view on the distribution of goods (Barrow 1983:77).

Barrow concludes that reverse discrimination, or whatever euphemism is used, is itself a discrimination, and like any other form of discrimination, it is bad. It only changes the position of the 'considered advantaged' to another position of 'disadvantaged'. Equality of educational opportunity as a formula for sharing educational resources is, therefore rejected because;

(a) every attempt to make opportunities equal invariably and almost inevitably results in new inequalities such as reverse discrimination, thus, perpetuating a state of crisis and tension in the polity rather than enhancing social harmony, peace and unity;

(b) equality as an institutional virtue seems to conflict with individual and personal freedom and the reverse discrimination which it entails violates basic democratic principles and rights.

It seems right therefore to conclude that if we desire to relate our educational practice (in terms of equal educational opportunities) to the social ideology of democracy, the criteria of justice and fairness which became consummated as “justice-as-fairness” in John Rawls (1971), “sympathetic impartiality” in Kwasi Wiredu (1995) and “rational and adequate consideration of other's interest” in Jones Akinpelu (2005) would be preferable to equality of opportunities which tends towards reverse discrimination.

Achieving Self Sufficiency Through the Policy

Achieving self-sufficiency is a goal which runs through the policy-document. For instance, beginning with page two, one comes across clauses/sentences such as: “for the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals, education has to be geared towards self realization”; “the quality of instruction at all levels shall be oriented towards acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance”; “educational activities shall be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and self fulfillment”; “secondary education shall inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence” and “raise a generation of people who can think for themselves…” (FRN 2004: 3 – 13), etc. All these are indications that Nigeria is ready to move away from the tradition of educating her citizens towards dependence on government or white-collar jobs.

Thus self-sufficiency was introduced into the policy to promote that paradigm shift needed to make Nigeria and her citizenry less dependent on 'others'. But unfortunately, the education designed to achieve this goal is inconsistent with the intention. It should emphasize cognitive, affective and psychomotor education on the one hand; and formal, informal and non-formal education on the other. It is such emphases that could encourage self-sufficiency in Nigerian education.

The Policy and Educational Foundation

The policy states emphatically that it wishes to lay a sound education foundation for the Nigerian child, but it does not appear to pay much attention to early childhood education. This sector of education has tactically been surrendered to the private sector which is primarily interested in the business side of education. The government cannot lay a sound education foundation
with the neglect of 'the very beginning'. The importance of good foundation in early childhood education had been given good treatment by philosophers like J. H. Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori. Thus until adequate attention is given to this aspect of education in Nigeria the policy and the practice may simply be inconsistent.

One could go on and on, with a long list of inconsistencies in the policy and practice of education in Nigeria. But what is important is suggestions as to ways of improving the policy and the practice. Some suggestions as to ways of improving the policy and the practice have been made in the process of this philosophical discussion based on sound philosophical reasoning: for instance in terms of democracy, equality of educational opportunities, and educational foundation. If the suggestions are considered the inconsistencies are likely to reduce.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has considered some issues in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria. Some of the issues are the philosophical basis of the policy, the issue of democracy, equality of educational opportunities, cultural variation and educational foundation. The issues are considered in philosophical perspective such that certain philosophical inconsistencies are highlighted and discussed. Then, philosophical recommendations are made to reduce the inconsistencies. It was noted that when the inconsistencies are reduced the policy would function better.

References


