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# **JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY**

ISSB: 20067461

Vol. 6. No. 1

September, 2013

**JOURNAL OF  
EDUCATION AND  
APPLIED  
PSYCHOLOGY**

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Vol 6. No. 1

September, 2013

# Journal of Education and Applied Psychology

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Department of Education and Counselling Psychology,  
Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University,  
P.M.B 11, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria  
e-Mail: [jouleapsy@yahoo.com](mailto:jouleapsy@yahoo.com)

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ISSN: 20067461

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## Editorial

The Journal of Education and Applied Psychology is devoted to advancing knowledge and understanding in education and applied psychology. The journal receives and publishes papers, reporting original research efforts contributing to the growth of knowledge, discussion of fundamental practical factors or problems, critical synthesis of research issues, current theoretical and psychology perspectives on various areas an Education and psychology. The Journal of Education and Applied Psychology is, therefore, a forum for exchange of current ideas, theories, philosophies and perspectives among scholars in education and psychology, all over the world.

The articles in the present volume, contributed by scholars from various sub-disciplines of education and psychology, are inspiring, challenging, and above all, relevant to current discussions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century research. The Journal of Education and Applied Psychology is therefore, recommended for all scholars, students, libraries, institutes, organizations, and all who care to learn new things,

Our appreciation goes to the contributors who have kept faith with the journal, Editorial Board and editorial advisory members for their efforts in keeping the flag flying. Special thanks to the management of IBB University, Lapai, especially the vice chancellor who has continued to demonstrate his love for quality research and sustained regular publication of this journal.

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# NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS ENUNCIATED IN NIGERIA'S POLICY DOCUMENT ON EDUCATION

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|By|

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## **Abstract**

*Series of national developmental plans have produced some goals which act as corner stones to operations in education, politics, economy and all other facets of Nigerian life. These goals are listed in 1999 Constitution and the last edition of the National Policy on Education. In these documents, it was stated that Nigeria wishes to become a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a great and dynamic economy; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; a united, strong and self-reliant nation. This paper examines these goals with the intent of discovering whether they are worthy of pursuit and whether they are in line with the adopted social ideology in Nigeria. It was shown that the enunciated goals are in consonance with the adopted ideology which is building a democracy and nurturing egalitarianism, and that these goals are lofty. Although this ideology is presently not put into practice in Nigeria, the researcher suggested that the combination of ideological designs with implementation from both leaders and followers will ensure that Nigeria truly becomes free and democratic, just and egalitarian, great and dynamic, full of bright opportunities, united, strong and self-reliant.*

**Key words:** National policy on education, National goals, Developmental plans, Democracy and Egalitarianism.

## Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2004), on its first page, listed some national goals which are expected to be the corner stone for the system of education in Nigeria. These goals were endorsed as the ultimate foundation for the policy. The goals are equally reflected in 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on page LL15, where it was stated that Nigeria's overall ideology is the building of:

- a free and democratic society
- a just and egalitarian society
- a great and dynamic economy
- a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens
- a united, strong and self-reliant nation

The above listed goals were set up to cover the economic, social, political and other facets of life. They emerged from series of attempts made to put the country on a good stead. History records some development plans which spanned between 1962-1968; the second was between 1970-1974; third was 1976-1980, and fourth, 1981-1985. These plans produced the same general goals meant to establish Nigeria firmly.

These goals, however, beg for some reflections. There is a great and urgent need for critical ruminations over these goals so as to discover whether they are worthy of our pursuit in the first instance, and whether they are *in tandem* with our peculiarities, idiosyncrasies and social ideology as a people.

### Building a free and democratic society

Building a free and democratic society, as a national goal, is a direct reflection of our social ideology which is to live in "unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice" (FRN in NPE 2004:1). Although some scholars have opined that democracy is alien to Nigerian societies, it is an opinion which cannot be concretely substantiated. Democracy has become the best form of governance especially in the recent days, and as Dewey would put it, "it is the best form of conjoined association" (Dewey, 1916:60). This is so because it is fundamentally rooted in freedom, equality, justice and fair play. It is closely related with freedom, as there can never be democracy without freedom (Amaele 2005:122). Democracy is a decentralized network of social organization

derived in communities, bound together by a common ideology but not uniform in practice. It has a structure that seeks to create more just societies based on the consent of the people, with respect to the fundamental and inalienable rights of human persons, and engaging in equitable distribution of collective wealth and social services. It is a system which practices accountability of leadership and transparency, honesty, freedom, equality and equal opportunity, participation, free and fair elections, *et cetera*. According to Jacques Maritain, democracy "implies a fundamental agreement between minds and will on the basis of life in common – this democracy is aware of itself and of its principles; it must bear within itself a common human greed: the greed of freedom" (Maritain in Nkoku 2002:182).

So, to construct Nigeria as a free and democratic society is lofty. However, the policy makers might need to specify the kind of democracy we want, and the principles backing up such choice of ideology, so as to eliminate confusion or misunderstanding. Aside participative democracy, Akinpelu enunciated six other forms of democracy which are: ancestral athenian democracy, parliamentary democracy, peoples' democracy (or mobocracy in the words of Aristotle), guided democracy, scientific democracy and capitalist democracy (Akinpelu 2005:142). With participative democracy, the following principles are not debatable;

- Democracy preserves and enhances individual freedom
- Democracy implies faith in human intelligence
- Democracy grants the right to peaceful dissent
- Democracy requires a party system
- Democracy involves the separation of powers
- Democracy is widely representative
- Democracy is not an end itself but a means to the attainment of human end.
- Democracy guarantees certain inalienable rights
- All humans are to be regarded equal in some respects.

The principles in other forms of democracy might be different from the above. So, it becomes imperative for Nigeria to delineate the type of democracy she wishes to imbibe so as to make the achievements of the principles easy and workable.



### Building a Just and Egalitarian Society

This goal is also simply tautologous with our social ideology. To produce a democratic and egalitarian society, justice is highly needed as no unjust structure could be said to be democratic or egalitarian. In a just and egalitarian society, there exists equal opportunities; same treatment; just and fair considerations to all citizens; no favoured groups or "sacred cows". It should be noted, however, that equal opportunities does not mean equality in all spheres. It simply means equal access to social amenities which will help bring the different capacities of man, which when utilized, would eventually place everybody in different classes. If, for instance, you place ten men on the same coaching classes, same reading conditions and same motivations, and even bring them out from the same background, the men are going to excel differently after a period of examination, and their degrees of excellence would in turn place them on different pedestals. Eventually, inequality could emerge, but it would be conveniently said that they have been predisposed to equal opportunities and equal access to social amenities. Akinpelu understands this position perfectly when he pointed out that the quest for egalitarianism is not a quest for the removal of all forms of differentiation in society. Even in Solzhenitsyn's communist prison camp, there is a well-recognized social gap between Ivan Denisovich and his team leader, Tiurin. Rather, egalitarianism translated into concrete and political programmes, amounts to a proposal to abandon existing inequalities, not to increase them. Distributive equity, for him, must therefore be an important cornerstone of any social reform programme geared towards egalitarianism (Akinpelu 2005:142-143). Omotoso and Aladejana sum it up in the following words;

...to be regarded as equal does not mean total equality in all respect. But at the same time, one should be treated as if equal in certain respects such as educational opportunities, equality to participate in political endeavours, equality before the law, etc. It is realized that at some point or another, people have been deprived of their equal rights in certain of these respects. This should be resisted even though one realizes

that nature itself is not a democracy. However, nature has endowed each person with certain unique characteristics. We are not the same in character, neither are we the same in intelligence nor are we equally physically built (Omotoso & Aladejana 2003: 4-5).

It thus becomes apparent that the ideology which places one's destiny in one's hand, rather than that which makes the rich gets richer, while the poor becomes poorer, is what Nigeria aspires to imbibe. This again, is lofty, and as Akinpelu in reference to Mende noted, there is no other better alternative than the adoption of the egalitarian model of development if we really want to "quicken our present plodding rate of development to a canter and then a gallop" (Akinpelu 2005:114).

### A great and dynamic economy

A society aspiring to be democratic and egalitarian must be capable of evolving a buoyant and vibrant economy. It is when the economy is good that people's natural propensity towards negativities (like being unjust, self-centered, greedy, cheating and denying others of their rights) could be minimized. This connotes that when the economy is bad, the man becomes hungry, and a hungry man becomes angry, and an angry man is a mad man, and a mad man is prone to evils. It thus appears that all other sectors of development rest on the economic potentials and viability of a nation. This is why Uduigwomen and Ozumba state, without mincing words, that "any nation that wishes to catch up with the advanced industrial nations must make conscious and frantic efforts not only to have a strong economic base, but also to have a diversified economy" (Uduigwomen & Ozumba 2004:4). To say then that a vibrant economy is *sine qua non* for the survival of a democratic and egalitarian society is to hit the nail on the head. *What then becomes the role of education in fostering a dynamic economy needed for the survival of the society?* Amaele's description of good economy and its relationship with education of manpower is highly instructive and suitable as a response to our question. For him,

A great and dynamic economy to a nation refers to a country whose economic resources are diversified, a country whose economy is channeled and directed to meet the current demands – both local and international. It refers to a country that has developed man and material power to tap, as well as distribute and manage her natural resources. It calls for effective and efficient production and distribution of highly trained manpower in all areas of human endeavours. Such society relies more on local technology (Amaele 2005:127).

It takes well-educated persons to bring about an economy that is great and dynamic. Such persons are however not considered educated for the fact that they have been schooled. They are rather educated based on their predisposition to vocations. It is the combination of intellectual skills with vocational skills that, thus, help individuals to better their lots and that of the society in which they live. The point been made here is that to have a society that is democratic and egalitarian, the economy of that society must be buoyant and dynamic; and the persons in that society must be duly educated (in intellect and in vocations) to herald such an economy. In these interrelations, the policy on education must be in line.

#### **A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens**

Building a nation where there are ample opportunities for everybody is solely dependent on the last discussed objective – 'great and dynamic economy'. When the economy is bright, everybody becomes enfranchised, self-reliant, self-supportive, and it thus becomes easy to build a nation which is free, just, democratic and egalitarian. This is also a lofty developmental goal.

#### **A united, strong and self-reliant nation**

Shortly after independence, precisely 1967-1970, Nigeria faced a war of secession which almost divided the country into 'Biafra' and 'the rest'. But fortunately, this civil war was quenched by the federal military government with a common song: "no victor, no vanquished; we are all brothers and sisters". Efforts were thereafter made to unite all the warring factions into one entity. Different scholars came up with the proposal that the main ideology for Nigeria should be national unity. They suggested four major areas;

- a. economic programme for national unity
- b. political programme for national unity
- c. social programme for national unity
- d. educational programme for national unity (Fafunwa in Adaralegbe 1972).

Aside unity, there was the need to evolve the spirit of self-reliance in the Nigerian mindset. With the realization that even after independence, most Nigerian minds were more dependent rather than being free from the shackles of 'colonization', this objective was proposed as a rehabilitating panacea. Fafunwa says that even after five years of Nigeria's independence, the education system of the country was not colonial, but more British than British themselves; that is to say, the Nigerian school children were being educated to meet the needs of a foreign culture and were therefore better fit for export than for life in their own country. Briggs, in his opening address at the Curriculum Conference in 1969, raised a dissatisfaction with the situation when he said that;

So, there was thus the need to re-orientate the mind of the Nigerian citizen to re-align himself with his original identity and local setting. The task of re-inventing or re-making a new Nigeria, different from the colonized-nation, steered Nigerians in the face. To come out of the mess, something had to be done, hence, the need for the above objective. One can confidently say that the goal is equally lofty. However, our unity has been overstretched as if to mean there is no diversity. This overbearance has resulted in emergence of uniform/centralized policies in education, in economy, in politics, etc. The centralization of policy in education, for instance, has created situations where individual cultural peculiarities such

... have taken secondary positions. The point being made here is that we were diverse before we became united, and in the bid to foster deeper unity, we should not sacrifice our diversities if we really want to be united. Let there be unity in our diversity, and diversity in our unity.

### Conclusion

It is obvious, from the foregoing, that all the national developmental goals enunciated in the fourth edition of the NPE and the 1999 Constitution are in consonance with Nigeria's social ideology of building a democracy and nurturing egalitarianism, and that these goals are lofty. Although one is not oblivious of the fact that Nigeria is far away from this ideology in practice, as Amaele has noted that;

Rather than a free and democratic society, Nigeria has become a country where citizens are in chains. We have men and women who are enslaved by few privileged military men and their civilian collaborators. All efforts to restore democracy in the country have failed by the above category of Nigerians. Besides, there is neither justice nor egalitarianism in the country. Unity is far-fetched and self-reliance is yet a dream. We are still relying on foreign economic, political and scientific policies. Our economy is in shambles (Amaele 2005:127).

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