

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN AMOS COMENIUS'S IDEAS ON CHILD EDUCATION IN AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AGE

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Abstract

The work examined the perennial problems facing our education as a whole and the way forward by which every Nigerian child would be educated. This made the researcher examine the concept of education as the bedrock to learning acquisition and to the growth and development of all kinds globally. The vital role of education in nation building cannot be underestimated. No nation aspiring for greatness and development will be toyed with her education sector. This is the more reason that knowledge acquired through education can be either positive or negative, that means right and correct education should be taught to every child so that, it will give room for national growth and promote peace, harmony, self-reliance, honest, self-discipline, justice and free society devoid of evil. This study would be of great help and benefit to all manners of educational research institutes as a way of their knowledge. The study could assist the school managers and government to give more attention to the funding of education and to formulate a good policy that is needed to salvage the educational system that would help the child and parents to value learning at the tender age.

Keywords: Education, Amos Comenius, Philosophy, Development

Introduction

Efforts have been made to develop education in Nigeria since its independence in 1960. Various policies in the interest of education have been formulated, but these have not produced the desired effects. The state of education in Nigeria is still deplorable. It is so bad that some highly placed people prefer to send their children oversea for studies because of inadequate learning facilities. For meaningful development to take place in the education sector Government needs to re-address the issues of Child education and its funding.

Education for the Development and Inculcation of National Ideology

It is perhaps a mute question as to whether or not Nigeria has a national ideology. In my opinion, if we do have one, then one wonders why we have been drifting rather aimlessly since the achievement of political independence in 1960. The fact is that culturally and ideologically we have been dangling between two worlds. We have become like a proverbial bat. Culturally, the foundation for the old has been shaken very seriously and the new has not yet taken deep root. Thus, we are in a state of cultural confusion. Ideologically, we are equally dangling between the East and the West, trying to hang on to an unrationalized and confused mixture between the two. Hence no existing economic theory has thus far been efficacious in the solution of the Nigerian problems. To us the battle for

national survival should start with the battle for the mind, with a clear idea of what we are, what we want and where we are going. The battle for the mind, of course, cuts across cultural, ideological and educational frontiers. Education is, of course, the greatest weapon for the battle regardless of the frontier.

Our greatest problem in Nigeria is the absence of an acceptable national ideology; that is, a motivating force, a frame of reference, a conceptualizing design and a basis for choice. It seems that Nigeria is a nation in which nothing works largely because of the attitude of most Nigerians which is a reflection of the absence of an acceptable ideology.

Every human society has its system of values, ethics and ideals; a system of Dos and Don'ts which has been borne out of experience and which has largely been motivated by the need to survive. Our problem in Nigeria today is that our indigenous value systems have been eroded and destroyed through years of colonization and perhaps buried through the 30 months of agonizing civil strife (1967 - 1970). The alien value systems which have emerged are mostly irrelevant to our culture, needs environment and circumstances. Thus we have found ourselves dangling between the cultures. The old has been discarded and the new is ill-understood, irrelevant and incongruous. The need here is to rediscover our ideological roots and value systems and have them systematized, modernized and codified through the process of education.

The starting point is, of course, to decide on what future we want. This seems to have been achieved already in the five National Objectives of Nigeria which have been quoted earlier. From the objectives, it would appear that Nigeria has opted, at least on paper, for a free, democratic, egalitarian, self-reliant and productive nation. The next

step is to develop an ideology to foster the achievement of these ends. It would then be the role of education to inculcate and internalize the cardinal virtues of the ideology. Education should then be a process for behaviour modification in keeping with the national ideology.

With the present state of affairs in Nigeria today we need an ideology that will gear us towards integrated, selfless, massive and coordinated efforts toward a progressive state of developed nation. Thus, we need a developmentalist ideology, call it "developmentalism," if you wish. By developmentalism we mean an organized expression of beliefs about nature and man, which stipulates that man has the power of development through the understanding and harnessing of nature; and that life is a process of development and decay. Developmentalism is therefore a positive and natural life process. It is positive and remedial and thus expressive of man's confidence in his own natural power to create, to generate, to face continuously and to overcome satisfactorily the fears, constraints superstitions and bewilderments of an ever-threatening environment. It encourages individual self-expression and individual as well as group action. It encourages experience, experimentation and creativity. It implies change with progress; it is a shift towards new ways of thinking and living, a shift from the present stagnating and increasingly dependent cultural and economic patterns that have outlived their desirability and practicality. It is a concept that incorporates education with the future, with hope, with progress and with modernization. It enjoins us to reject all doctrines that hold that we are helpless and that we must look elsewhere for salvation or that we can only submit to some

mysterious forces. It is individual, social group and national. It should remove us from the state of replacement economy to development or productive economy; from the state of import substitution to indigenous production; from a state of knocked down parts and raw materials importation syndrome to an indigenous fabrication syndrome; from traumatic, disorganizing and depressing economic schemes to true economic recovery, and from superstition and dreaming to reality. Developmentalism enthrones merit and hard work and deprecates laziness and mediocrity; it condemns youthful waste and inertia but it extols initiative, industry, self-reliance and inventiveness. And it leads ultimately to liberation from the constraints of attitudes, values and beliefs.

Developmentalism as an ideology is a philosophical lodestar; it should provide a guide for action and the basis for the development of an internally self-consistent framework for socio-economic, socio-political and educational programmes geared towards systematic and rapid self-reliant national development. It will illuminate the minds of the people with regard to national goals and aspirations; shape and orientate their thinking and action; and galvanize such actions towards well-reasoned, well-defined, positive and patriotic education for self-reliance.

Quantity and Quality in Nigerian Education

Educational expansion in Nigeria since Nigerian Independence of 1960 and particularly since the introduction of a scheme for Universal Primary Education in

September, 1976, has been astronomical and largely unprecedented⁵². The various parts of the country, owing to historical

reasons, are at various and diverse levels of educational development.

The consequent inequity in competition for places in Federal Educational Institutions and Federal Public Service has necessitated the introduction of a quota system policy. But this has been one of the greatest dilemmas in the Nigerian quest for the development of a united, free and self-reliant nation; a just and egalitarian society, and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Clearly, educational expression in Nigeria within the past two decades has been phenomenal, unfortunately, however, the development in the quality of education provided has left much to be desired. And as Silberman (1970) has aptly stated, schooling is not the same thing as education. What we need for survival of the Nigerian nation is not just mass schooling but mass education.

Since the introduction of U. P. E in September 1976, Nigeria has set in motion a devastating crisis of supply and demand in the educational system. Since then everything connected with proper education, apart from the pupils themselves, has been in short supply. Classrooms have been in short supply, teaching materials and equipment have been in short supply; qualified teachers have been in short supply. Vacancies for teaching positions exist in most of the states; qualified teachers are being turned out of training institutions in their thousands, but they are not being employed because the states cannot pay their salaries. Thus, schools exist without the necessary human and material resources, and qualified teachers remain unemployed. With the present state of affairs what we are having is, at best, mass schooling. But as we have said schooling is not synonymous with education; and mass schooling is not mass education. Hence, education for all is fast becoming

education for none. Quantitatively, we have clearly achieved tremendous success in our educational endeavour.

What we need now and in the near future for the survival of the nation is quality education. In our educational development, it is to be noted that mass formal education followed rather than preceded the transition from agricultural to industrially based economy. Thus much of the expansion has been misdirected and this has led to what McNamara (1970) termed "One of the most disturbing paradoxes of our times."⁵⁴ That is the situation whereby millions of people from among the educated class are unemployed, while millions of jobs are waiting to be done because people with the right education, training and skills cannot be found. In a developing country like Nigeria, educational expansion should not be carried out for its own sake. The expansion must be carefully planned and geared to meet the relevant needs of the society.

Examination for developmental plans of nations of the world reveals that there are five main categories of rationale for educational financing.

These are:

- (i) Manpower development
- (ii) Social equity
- (iii) Nation building
- (iv) Improving quality of schooling; and
- (v) Improving efficiency of schooling.

These five categories of rationale are pertinent for Nigeria and our purpose.

The manpower development rationale includes the vital need for the development and production of an educated labour force, with the possession of increased skills relevant to national development; skills; increasing the prospects for self-employment or functional education,

the provision of specific vocational training; and extension of literacy in order to increase productivity and innovation. The social equity rationale includes equalization of educational opportunities by reducing regional disparities in terms of access to education and access to employment; reduction of income inequalities by providing basic education to all; reduction of occupational differences between groups arising from educational imbalances; and the provision of human rights.

The nation-building rationale includes the development and consolidation of a national identity through the proper form of education; the promulgation of a national language or languages, for a peoples' world is limited by its language; the promulgation of a national ideology, which we have already documented; the promulgation of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, the reduction of cultural and psychological dependency, the strengthening of local and indigenous institutions; the full development of individual potentialities; and the assurance of the health and physical well-being of the citizens.

The improvement of the quality of schooling rationale incorporates the concept of improving the quality of education through curriculum development; the improvement of the quality of education through localizing examinations; and de-emphasizing certificates; the improvement of teacher education and training; the improvement of in-service professional development of teachers; the improvement of the resources available to the teachers; improvement of planning and research capabilities; and increasing the standard and the potential of private education. The improvement of the efficiency of schooling rationale includes the

reduction of the rate of drop-out in school; the reduction in the repetition rate, the improvement of the cost-effectiveness of teacher education and training; improvement in the effective utilization of professionally qualified teachers; and improvement in the efficiency of plant utilization. Nigeria needs to carefully consider these rationales.

In addition to all these categories of rationale, it is necessary to indicate that more and better education cannot be achieved simply by expanding the existing educational establishments in their old image. It is like attempting to solve today's problems with yesterday's tools and hoping to be in business tomorrow! There is need for revolutionary changes in the existing needs of the individual and the nation. Thus a pre-condition for the provision of quality education with the available resources is the modernization of the educational management, including a much stronger capability to:

- (i) "Evaluate the performance of educational Institutions against well-defined and up-to-date objectives
- (ii) Discover ways of improving their effectiveness and efficiency, through reduction of waste; and
- (iii) Plan their future with these changes in view"⁵⁵. It is hoped that the introduction of the new 6-3-3-4 educational system will be the beginning of a realistic attempt to improve the quality of education in Nigeria, if well implemented. In this regard, it is necessary here to emphasize that the central objective of knowledge which will lead to the identification of their talents, interests, abilities and aptitudes. Through guidance and counseling the individual talents are correctly identified, properly

channeled and effectively developed. Thus the 6-3-3-4 system is more than a structure. It is a new process a new orientation, and a new activity which, hopefully, would lead to a new product and a new and brighter future.

As we have seen, a serious strand in the issue of linear expansion in education is the problem of quality. Perhaps it is necessary to mention that the measure of quality need not be in terms of traditional standards but in terms of relevance, fitness, functionality and appropriateness. The concept of relevance, for instance, requires giving every student in every part of the country and every school the kind of education suited to his needs and national survival. In this regard, it should be observed that the educational structures, curriculum, methods and logistics which worked in the past for an elite class may be hopelessly inappropriate for the mass system of today. Change and renewal are therefore imperative.

Education for Self-Reliance

One of the five main national objectives of Nigeria, already quoted is to build a united, strong and self-reliant nation. In his 1985 Christmas/New year message, the then Head of State, President Ibrahim Babangida stated, interalia, that "The Objective of rejecting the IMF Loan was to build an independent, self-reliant and buoyant economy." Again in his address to launch the Political Bureau that is to recommend a suitable political culture for Nigeria when she was to return to civilian administration in 1990, the then Head of State is quoted to have said (Daily Star, Monday, January 20, 1986, P.9) that, "the new arrangement must promote and enhance a self-reliant society"⁵⁶. So from all this, is it clear that Nigeria has accepted self-

reliance as a national objective. Our aim here is therefore to state how education can help achieve this national objective.

With developmentalism, education becomes an instrument with which we can become masters, not slaves of our environment and culture. To succeed in the present technological world, Nigeria, as a nation, must be self-reliant; the various Nigerian States, Political or geographical units must be self-reliant; the government parastatals, institutions and agencies must be self-reliant, the Nigerian communities must be self-reliant; and the individual Nigerians must be self-reliant.

By self-reliance we mean the right, necessity, freedom, capacity and resolve of a people to define, articulate the struggle to achieve their own goals of individual, community and national development through their indigenous efforts, indigenous institutions, and programmes designed and operated by the people themselves. Thus, self-reliance is a process, not a state. It is, in fact, an ideology. It is committed to the transformation of economic, social political, cultural and particularly intellectual structures, and growth with development. Self-reliance is not necessarily self-efficiency; it calls for the absence of dependence and not absence of inter-dependence. It implies revolutionary transformation, or revolutionary modernization which also implies technological revolution. In terms of technology, self-reliance implies that we produce what we use and use what we produce; and in terms of food it means we produce what we eat and eat what we produce. It is, in short, a search for real independence. For we can be spoilt with gifts from outside. To be self-reliant, what we need is chance, not handouts. Education is the prime instrument for the achievement of self-reliance through child education.

Education for self-reliance should imply that the concept of self-reliance which we have outline must form the foundation for the National Policy on Education. In this regard, it is to be noted that the National Policy for Education (1981) states that "For the Philosophy (of education) to be in harmony with Nigerian national objectives, it had to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political scientific and technological progress"

Education for self-reliance should be a massive mobilization of all political, economic and socio-cultural organs of the society, as well as deliberate, well-planned and conscious formal educational programmes in the schools. In the mass mobilization, the playwright' textbook writers and novelists should be commissioned and or encouraged to write texts and plays with self-reliant themes;

The electronic mass media should develop appropriate jingles and episodes depicting self-reliance in the positive sense; and the print media should periodically have feature articles epitomizing and eulogizing the qualities of self-reliance. Through self-reliance the masses should be masters of their own basic need satisfaction rather than always depending on the government for relief.

Education for self-reliance must develop positive self-concept in every child. As a result of positive socialization in the school, the child should develop a self-reliance of himself which should consist of a set of attitudes towards, or beliefs about, one's own needs, goals, abilities, feelings and values. Self-concept or self-structure is developed through teaching appropriate school

experiences and interjection. This self-concept could also be referred to as self-actualization. And self-actualized persons.

- (i) Have more than usually efficient perception of reality and Comfortable relation with it;
- (ii) Continually derive joy, inspiration and strength from the basic and ordinary experience of life;
- (iii) Are able to differentiate between means and ends;
- (iv) Are creative and disciplined;
- (v) Have openness to experience; and
- (vi) Are able to live creatively and achieve maximum creativity.

Through the process of education, an individual can be helped to transcend the existing self-concept when it is harmonized with his experience. In school, the spirit and freedom to explore, to experiment and to create must be cultivated quite early. Students should learn early that development requires a choice between present and future satisfaction. And this is crucial in the Nigerian quest for national survival.

The concept of education for self-reliance demands, for instance, that the schools must as much as possible do away with hiring of labourers. In higher educational institutions, students should be encouraged to work and learn as a positive training in self-reliance. University and College students instead of engaging army of idle workers should employ students on part-time basis both during sessions and during the holidays. For instance, students of accountancy could be engaged to work in the Bursary; Pharmacy students could work in the dispensary, and education students in the University Primary and Secondary Schools. Apart from invaluable practical experience, such exposure should instill in the

students a sense of productivity and self-reliance. We in Nigeria have to learn to work our way out of overdependence and poverty. Self-reliance should be a value to be attained by every student at every level of the educational ladder and by every school in the country.

The real starting point in education for self-reliance is the provision of free basic education to every Nigerian child in the remotest village of the remotest part of the country. Basic or primary education is the inalienable right of every child and should be provided to every child within school age without any form of tuition fees. Education is a form of social conditioning, thus the principle of education for self-reliance is to condition the people to a way of life.

Education for Technological Self-reliance

In the present age of technology, meaningful survival is not possible without technological self-reliance. Technological self-reliance implies that by and large we must manufacture what we use and use what we manufacture; self-reliance in this regard implies relying on one's own forces and capabilities to achieve genuine development individually and collectively. From the point of view of a nation, technological self-reliance implies a nation that depends on its own human and material resources and know-how in the solution of its basic production problems.

We have already witnessed the tragic and devastating effects of lack of self-reliance in technology starting from the dwindling of the oil revenue. We were thrown into the economic confusion of spare parts, raw materials and import substitution syndrome. And we have gone from I. M. F. loan debate to Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM) and yet we are still in

the doldrums. Simplistic as it may seem, the solution lies in child education.

Self-reliance in technology can be and has been achieved in some countries through a variety of policy options. China achieved it through shutting out the rest of the world and mobilizing its material and human resources. Japan achieved it through the efficacies of education system following the Meiji Restoration and by its application in the development of her indigenous technology through counter-penetration and a spirit of self-reliance. Nigeria can do the same, if we take childhood education seriously

In Nigeria, there has been much talk about technological transfer. But to the researcher, technological transfer is a myth. This is so because no nation can feel obliged or genuinely want to create competitors. The Metropolitan developed Western nations want customer, not competitors. Thus, by hoping and relying on the transfer of Western technology, we shall forever remain dependent. Because where it is possible to transfer technology, we will still continue to be plagued by its intractable problems. Even if knowledge, skills and techniques are transferred, we will still be dependent on parts, raw materials and the obsolescence of technology.

What is going on today in Nigeria under the name of technology transfer, is the transfer of the products of technology. Real technological transfer must imply not just machinery but must include practical knowledge of how to design, fabricate and produce modern tools of production and finance their equitable distribution. This is the vital know-how. Today, we are just borrowers of ideas, skills, machinery and personnel. We need to develop our own ideas, skills; produce our machinery and develop our personnel.

According to Adewole, we cannot do what Japan did under Meiji Restoration (stealing technology)⁵⁹ because the industrialized nations are now wiser. We have noted that technology can only be created, stolen not transferred.⁵⁹

Therefore our only salvation lies in the reorganization of our education delivery system to make it more oriented towards skill development; creativity and productivity; that is towards the creation of our indigenous technology. What Nigeria needs today is her own industrial revolution based on an independent indigenous. Technology must be guided by the judicious application of the concept of self-reliance and nurtured by an educational delivery system based on the philosophy of developmentalism through child education right from the tender age technology does not only involve the systematic application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks, but also it demands a framework of an essentially indigenous socio-economic, and socio-political atmosphere conducive for its nurture. This, of course, requires a high sense of discipline, a new attitude, new values, a new orientation, and, indeed, a new way of life. These are, of course, the functions of education. In addition, proper education makes knowledgeable, purposeful, circumspective, dedicated, committed, incorruptible, non-sectional and non-sectarian leadership imperative. This is so because education makes people easy to lead but difficult to drive, easy to rule but impossible to enslave.

Education for a Disciplined Society

We have stated that it seems that Nigeria is a country in which nothing works. Nothing works in Nigeria largely because it appears that most Nigerians are indisciplined. But education is

positive change in behaviour; the proper conduct is discipline behaviour; and education is the means to proper conduct. To document the proposition that most Nigerians are undisciplined or that Nigeria is an undisciplined society, let me cite a few examples, on a national scale. Nigerians seem to abhor order. The first thing that strikes a visitor to Nigeria is the apparent chaos or lack of order in our airports. And this is the first thing that reminds a Nigerian returning home from outside Nigeria that he has, indeed, reached Nigeria. We scramble and stampede for any and everything. We even scramble to enter empty planes. We scramble for undue advantage on the highways and consequently cause the worst traffic jams in the whole world. We are not prepared for fair competition. We always want to have unfair advantage over the other person. Hence, we cheat in examinations, we rig elections; we engage in bribery and corruption, We bribe our way through anything; we jump or shunt queues; we shunt for food and scramble for papers, and for anything that is ever to be shared even in institutions of higher learning, we hoard essential commodities in orders to inflate prices; we turn and close pages of files in offices only to watch at the clock; we cheat the government and the society by not paying our taxes if and when due and by being recalcitrant and irresponsible with our jobs and civil responsibilities. Our telephones do not work and our power supply are generally out of service because of undisciplined operators. Our electricity supply is one of the most erratic in the world largely because of indiscipline. Our pipes are always dry and our cities still stink, despite a lot of effort made by the government to rebrand Nigeria e.g. New Nigeria and to way war on the following; Hate speech, war against corruption and WAI (War Against Indiscipline)⁶⁰.

Nigeria seems to be the only country in the world where people can be wrong and strong. Nigeria is a country where one of the easiest ways to avoid being vilified in Executive position in public office is to embezzle enough money or to allow others to have a field day, and one of the surest ways to get vilified is to seek for probity and accountability. Nigeria is a country where justice can easily be teleguided, purchased or perverted. Nigeria is a country where people cheat and dupe the government out of millions of Naira, then take chieftaincy titles and later turn around to donate some millions to the same government and then receive encomiums and accolades from the same government and people. Nigerians are about the world's greatest experts at devising means to circumvent any government measure for the greater good of the greater number. Indeed indiscipline is about the greatest problem facing Nigeria today as a developing nation. Nigerians have become so undisciplined that the Buhari/Idiagbon regime found it necessary to declare a War Against Indiscipline. To be sure, the scheme has (or had) achieved a measure of success, at least with sure, regard to queuing culture, but it has thus far been an outward conformity to rules and regulations without the development of the necessary inner control of behaviour without which there will be no continuity once the external forces have been removed. We have already noticed it with some of the tenets of WAI at the demise of that regime and we also noticed it, to our greatest peril, at the demise of the Murtala Muhammed regime.

But child education is the only potent force capable of perpetually internalizing any attitudes, values and behaviour patterns, necessary for adequate character moulding. Most people can and will act in a fairly decent

and cooperative fashion when actually under the eyes of authority. Likewise, most people respond fairly adequately to responsibilities unmistakably obvious. They may act responsibility less acceptably, however, when no one is watching or when the responsibility can easily be disregarded with little obvious notice. These are the people lacking in inner controls necessary for adequate character moulding. Education is the only force capable of developing the inner controls of character. A disciplined citizen is one with the necessary inner controls to behave appropriately under all circumstances.

Good education develops good and disciplined citizens. That is:

1. Somebody who understands and appreciates his rights, performs his duties and responsibilities as a member of the society and community;
2. Somebody who behaves in accordance with the acceptable and positive norms and standards of behaviour in his society;
3. Somebody who upholds the laws of the land and abides by sound moral principles including honesty, integrity, probity, loyalty, and dependability;
4. Somebody who has acquired some useful and functional knowledge skills;
5. Somebody who is self-reliant and productive; that is, somebody who is not a parasite either to his family or to society and who has respect for the dignity of labour and
6. Somebody who is disciplined – that is who manifests the proper conduct and behaviour.

Education for good citizenship or for a disciplined society is therefore, a process through which one understands and appreciates his rights, duties and responsibilities as a member

of the society; through which one learns to behave in accordance with acceptable positive norms and standards of the society; through which one learns to uphold the laws of the land; through which one develops to be morally upright, honest, incorruptible, dependable, faithful and loyal; through which one acquires functional skills and abilities; through which one develops to be self-reliant and productive; and through which one is well disciplined.

Education and the National Problem

The researcher's view the next basic problem, after indiscipline, militating against Nigeria's development and even survival, is the Nigerian National problem. John Gunter wrote years ago that the "curse of Nigeria is sectionalism". And in 1966, it had observed that "sectionalism and the problems of how to achieve and maintain national unity amidst diversity, without having to pay the price of a civil war, constitute the national problem⁶². The other side of the coin, of course, is the problem of how to avoid another "Pakistan" that is war. We have subsequently and unfortunately gone through a traumatic civil war but the national problem is yet to be solved. To avoid the other side of the coin, we need the assistance of education.

The national problem is the problem of diversity, inequality and inequity. There are things which you can legislate about in order to achieve equity but there are things, such as attitudes, that you cannot legislate about. No law is stronger than the willingness of the people to obey it. Education is the only force that can change attitude. In a diverse society such as ours, it is impossible to deny any substantial section of the country,

for too long, equal access to any social amenities and hope to maintain peace, unity and stability. Therefore there is need for equality and equity under diversity.

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