
RESTRUCTURING POLYTECHNIC EDUCATIONAL CONTENT FOR NATION BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL ANOMIE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

A modern and vibrant education system entails wide-ranging activities that would ensure functional and qualitative education of the highest possible standards at basic, post-basic and tertiary levels. Thus if education will be used to achieve the acquisition of knowledge, then its contents and delivery processes should be reformed in the context of improving the quality of life and facilitating the peaceful co-existence of the people of Nigeria and the world at large. In this study, the descriptive research design and text analysis was adopted and merged with thematic analysis in the mode of discourse to enable the researchers provide answers to pertinent question. This study is therefore carried out to justify the restructuring of the Polytechnic educational content to match national needs and aspirations. The purpose of this work is not only to create awareness on the need to carry out a valid curriculum review, but more importantly, to derive a baseline data on the current state of education and identify problems on various themes presented, and the tentative suggested solutions that will form the base for the justification of the restructuring of education curriculum for nation building and management of social anomie in Nigeria at this critical period her existence.

Keywords: Restructuring, Education, Nation, Nation Building and Social Anomie

Introduction

Education occupies a very unique position in the national development of any nation. It is for this reason that Nigeria government put in place machinery to ensure that every Nigerian has access to education by spending heavily on education in the immediate periods after independence. However, budgetary allocations to education in recent times have been dwindling, suggesting that government is abdicating its responsibility. The objective of this paper is to interrogate the relationship between education, nation building and social anomie, which is not unconnected with the inadequacies in the countries' educational curriculum content, combined with poor implementation of government policies and attitude towards education. The inability of the curriculum to provide trained manpower in applied services, technological innovations and commerce is even more worrisome.

In this study, the descriptive research design and text analysis was adopted and merged with thematic analysis in the mode of discourse to enable the researchers to investigate if the educational curriculum especially at tertiary level matches national development and aspirations. This work is also carried out not only to emphasise the need to carry out a valid curriculum review, but more importantly to also derive a baseline data on the current state of tertiary education and identify problems on various themes presented, and but to also offer solutions that will form the base for the justification of the restructuring of education curriculum for nation building and management of social anomie in Nigeria at this critical period of her existence.

Concept of Nation, Nation-building

All through history, philosophers have grappled with the desire to define and recommend to their fellow men their ideas of what a nation should be. Yet it seems most of the attempts are generalizations of what obtained at particular moments in history of particular societies and their experiences, dressed with postulations of philosophers.

The concept of "Nation-building" derives from the concept of a "Nation". According to Alexandre (1968), a "Nation" is a community of people bound by a common language, a common origin and customs, living in a common territory." The application of this definition to Nigeria will seem inappropriate when we consider the population and level of diversity in their tradition of origins, language and customs.

Writing on obstacles to nation building in Nigeria since independence, Obi (2000), defined a nation "as composed of a group of people who feel they belong together. They may have a common culture, heritage, territory, language, destiny values, history or age, or common political institutions as laws which regulate the activities or action of members that make up a nation."

Thus in Nigeria, the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups are nations. But when national groups are brought together under one contiguous territory or political unit, the entity is then known as a "nation-state". However, for a modern and more concise definition, a nation could be defined as the largest community, which commands the loyalty of the various heterogeneous groups that make up the nation, and it must be a member of the United Nations Organisation. (UNO)

Therefore, Nation building simply connotes development; it is all about improving a nation's economic, political, infrastructural, educational, social and cultural resources development to attain overall national development. Nation building and National Development are related, it is all about growth of a country.

The ultimate test of the reality of a nation, to Thompson (1974) is the attitude of the citizens towards the entity that they refer to as nation or country; that is the attitude in word or deeds. Consequently, patriotism should be an important part of the national consensus. Idowu (1974) points out that Nation-building is a continuous process varying from one country and context to another. It also presupposes that either there has been no nation, or one is envisaged and is being planned; or that one that exists has to be reconstructed in order to be worthy of the appellation.

Idowu (1974) further explained that the basic material of nation building is its people and the identification and application of a "cementing factor". These are people created and endowed with inherent freedom, faculties of intelligence, will and purpose. This exercise of building the nation will come into some form of fruition when there are opportunities, education and development. A cementing factor refers to the basis of relationship of the component units that form the nation. The Cementing factor has been identified as important, because often in situations of necessary plurality, it has welded many people into a nation.

In Africa and Asia, peoples and societies of various levels of culture and development are brought or flung together by the hand of foreign imperialism which determines which people should come together to form a country and subsequently a nation. Nations, when viewed from the Nigerian and African context, have been described by Laski (1952) as "Products of necessary pluralism". At this level, the issue of Nation-building is complex and needs very careful handling, especially in a country like Nigeria where the heavy, compelling, restraining hand and presence of imperialism have been removed, the people of different backgrounds, interests and levels of culture are faced with the task of settling down together, accepting leadership, developing a community of interest and thinking of themselves, not exclusively and selfish as belonging to this or that ethnic group, but as belonging together as one people seeking a common goal. For this to happen, a national consciousness has to be developed alongside growth and development in other fields. This is the process for a nation to develop.

Within the nucleus of aforementioned definitions and postulations, the presence of bad governance in Nigeria is not only an aberration and repugnant to equal rights and peaceful living but also negates nation-building for the interest of the people. Is Nigeria a real nation or nation state?

Social Anomie

According to Onyeonoru in Isiugo-Abanihe et al (2002) anomie as an explanatory concept is basically the antithesis of normative social life that refers to a state of normlessness, the neglect of rules, de-emphasis of regulation and an atmosphere of moral anarchy.

Anomie is a sociological concept developed by Durkheim in 1893 as a state of derangement and insatiable will. It is a situation which arises more generally from a mismatch

between personal or group standards and wider social standards or from lack of social ethics which produces moral deregulation and an absence of legitimate aspirations.

Coser and Rosenberg (1976) described anomie as a condition of normlessness, a moral vacuum, the suspension of rules, a state sometimes referred to as deregulation. Anomie pre-supposes a prior condition in which behaviour is normatively determined. A painful social crisis upsets that equilibrium, disturbs large numbers of people, greatly attenuates the regulative force of tradition and produces widespread anomie.

The above description largely fits the moral climate of the Nigerian society in the 1980s and 1990s. Societal norms and values were distorted by a state of normlessness similar to the moral anarchy of the 19th century French Republic which motivated Emile Durkheim to develop the concept of anomie as an analytical tool. Values so dear to the national conscience were brought under assault. Durkheim observed that a sudden and unforeseen economic growth or recession, which increases or diminishes the individual's power and wealth, tends to produce anomie. In the case of Nigeria, both are applicable. The ill-gotten wealth of members of the ruling classes and their relative power position ironically grew tremendously under the economic crisis and adjustment in Nigeria.

On the other hand, the relative position of the majority especially public servants diminished considerably. With the contradiction, employees in organizations actively devised strategies to deal with the implicit threats to survival or status crisis as the case may be. The workplace increasingly became contact points for extended personal interests rather than the attainment of organizational goals. Job positions became basic instruments for plotting parochial objectives.

Durkheim's thesis was premised on the insatiability of human desires, and the need to control the boundless passions through a regulative force external to the individual, but in conformity with the invariable laws of social justice (Durkheim, 1951). Simply put, social justice embraces the notion of equitable access to basic social needs - the provision of basic conditions for the decent living of the citizens, including their inalienable rights. That was something the ruling classes in Nigeria neglected in their bid to advance their class aspirations at the expense of the labouring people. Such was the situation in Nigeria with the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that increased the wealth and power of the privileged few, and impoverished and disempowered the majority.

According to Miachi (2012) social anomie is a social condition wherein there is a disintegration or disappearance of norms and values that were previously common to the society. Drawing inspiration from the sociological theory of social anomie by Durkheim, he went further to explain that anomie occurs during or following the periods where there are drastic and rapid changes in the society as regards the social, political and economic structure of a nation or society. It is a transition phase in which the values and norms common during one period are no longer valid, but new ones have not yet evolved to take place. At such situation, Miachi further observed that there would be a feeling of disconnection, disordered division of labour in which one group no longer fit in, though they did in the past. It is a sad state where there is a breakdown in the ties that bind.

Ismaila (2011) further pointed out that social anomie is a societal condition defined by an uprooting or breakdown of any moral values, standards or guidance which individuals

followed in the past but which had become out dated and unacceptable as a result of the changing tides. To him, such values could have been used in the past to hold society together for one temporal reason or the other. But as events progressed and changes are introduced, the need to also evolve new values could arise thereby provoking a revolt against the old order.

Merton (1938) in his contribution further posits that the disparity between cultural goals (ends) and legitimate norms (means) may be followed by a more diverse set of responses than suicide. He identified five different responses to anomie which he labels “modes of adaptation”. These are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. He further reflects on the connection between cultural norms and the legitimate means of complying and conformity to those norms and goals. To Merton, anomie arises if there is societal imbalance between the cultural aspiration and legitimate means to achieve them.

Messer and Rosefeld (2001) in their contribution further expounded that anomie is a state of society which is an institutional based phenomenon, and in this state of heightened anomie, the institutions that maintain the balance in society have weakened. They also identified four major institutions including economy, education, family and polity and posit that anomie emerges when non-economic social institutions, as agent of control and balance in society, are becoming dominated by economic values which weaken their control capability.

In their theory, Messer and Rosefeld revised Merton’s socio-economic based argument of social structure and extended it by proposing an important role for institutional-based social structure. According to this institutional theory of anomie, anomie refers to the disintegration of social controls and moral norms due to the malfunctioning of social institutions.

The theories of anomie presented in the paper are all polarized between considering anomie as either a state of mind or a state of society, which had given a clarification and conceptualization of what relationships exist between social structure and deviance; social institution and deviance and morality. Judging the Nigerian social institutions, the theories from different perspectives explain the extent of degeneration and moral decadence which have plunged Nigeria into a serious chaos.

This is particularly the case if the latter are socially conscious. Although the contemporary Nigerian society emphasizes money nexus, legitimate access to it was blocked by social injustices exhibited by the ruling classes, and supported with the force of coercion. Peace and harmony may elude any social system in which weaker participants have little or no access to justice.

However, in a class-stratified society, there is unequal access to means. Some group and classes of society have better access to legitimized means and can reach desirable goals easily, while it is difficult for some members. Thus, the strain to deviant behaviours starts when this latter group has no choice but to utilize not illegitimate means (Merton, 1968). Therefore, a good example of these traits are the agitation of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in South East Nigeria that believed that they are being marginalized, (unequal representation) at Federal level, while the Niger Delta Militant group known as Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) is agitating due to the dissatisfaction of the people

of South-South oil producing region on the insufficient level of attention given to their region and the damages to their ecology by oil spillage as the main reason behind youth restiveness.

Terrorism, kidnapping and banditry is another enormous problematic fall-out of the Fulani herders/farmers clash in the North Central Zone of the country. In the same vein, robberies, internet fraudsters, stealing et cetera are the trending malady in the society, when the younger generation has also lost all sense of moral values. With all these maladjusted behaviours bedeviling the society, the country cannot witness a meaningful national development.

Consequently, effective use of education for socialization as the panacea to nation building and the management of social anomie which in turn engenders peace for national development in Nigeria is of utmost importance. This is the crux of this paper and the foregoing major theories of anomie are examined to provide a theoretical explanation on the causes and nature of anomie and how it can be used to analyse the present state of social flux in contemporary Nigeria.

Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Education according to Fafunwa (1974) is the aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society. In addition, Akinpelu (1981) defined education as the act or the process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the power of reasoning and judgement and preparing oneself or others intellectual for mature life system, while Pidlisnyuk (2010) from the perspective of economic productivity, viewed education as an instrument for training human resources to optimize productivity by encouraging technical progress and promoting cultural conditions conducive to social and economic change.”

From the foregoing definitions, the right skill, knowledge and attitude for nation building are best acquired as a child through the right channel, the right persons and in the right environment. Accordingly, all levels of education remain vital to the individual and societal transformation.

Indeed, it is important to note that the fundamental and overriding success factor in the implementation and actualization of Sustainable development is requisite human capital for no country can make any meaningful economic progress without developing the knowledge, skills and capabilities of its citizens to manage available resources, and that education is an instrument for developing human resources to optimize productivity by encouraging technical progress and promoting cultural conditions conducive to social and economic change.

The intellectual poverty of our higher education has given birth to vices like cultism, thuggery, violence which has become the bane of our institutions. The issues confronting Nigeria today is mostly in the educational system which suffers from an organizational and bureaucratic structure that are deformed, a nearly archaic curriculum that is ill-suited to the modern age and upwardly – moving super-industrial economic age; and an educational psychology and foundation trapped in the world views of the past rather than being future-focused. A system changing modern society, that is divorced from contemporary social problems and well established technologies and paradigms.

Closely linked to the above assertion and re-enforced by Ehindero (2017) is the belief that the development of any nation is directly related to her achievements in technological innovations. Polytechnics education, (the term here refer to technology and vocational institutions), is today regarded as a veritable key and powerful instrument for national development. This is because; it equips individuals to become self-reliant, useful and productive citizens of the nation. This made Gold (2005), to contend that every society should consider technical education as the most potent weapon for building the society.

Tertiary education in Nigeria comprises all institutions of higher learning, including: Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and others offering correspondence courses. Entry into these institutions is after a successful completion of the senior secondary school programme.

According to the National Policy on Education, (NPE, 1998) tertiary education is expected to:

- a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- b) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- c) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- e) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- f) Forge and cement national unity; and
- g) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The above goals as explicitly enunciated in the NPE policy document (revised edition) if achieved will engender unity, develop the economy of the country and create tremendous sustainable development. However, it is common knowledge in Nigeria that graduating from any of these tertiary institutions does not guarantee employment. This is because most courses in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria are based on theoretical teachings, rather than practical demonstrations. Failure to learn skills in school makes it nearly impossible to position themselves for employment after school, which in turn, slows down the rate of nation building and achieving sustainable development.

Today, educational authorities in Nigeria are aware of the pressing need to relate the curricula at all levels of education, to her national manpower needs. Conferences on curriculum development and utterances of renown professors of education and government officials are a proof of the people's awareness of this major flaw in the country's educational system and of the pressing need for reforms at all levels of education. (Ike, 2017)

To borrow a leaf from other climes, China to bridge such gap, was reported to have carried out a major reform in her tertiary education system by converting 600 universities to polytechnics in 2014 (Yohanna Sharma, 2014) This was to reduce too much academic theory

that doesn't guarantee jobs which the universities are known for, and also in recognition of the reality that in China, vocational college graduates also had a slightly higher average starting salary compared to graduates from China's top 100 universities. This is when Nigeria is still struggling with the dichotomy between Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor's Degree.

In a bid to reduce the huge number of university graduates with similar academic degrees competing with each other for the same jobs, China announced that it will turn at least half of its public universities into institutions of applied learning or polytechnics to produce more technically trained graduates. The policy is expected to also radically transform the country's higher education landscape in a "gradual transition" to the dual system. The new applied institutions would focus on training engineers, senior technicians and other highly skilled workers rather than pursuing over-academic, highly theoretical studies.

In Nigeria, it is obvious that there is an urgent need for the restructuring of the current education system, which has been struggling to provide high quality talents with skills and knowledge that meet demand at the production frontline move towards a 'binary' higher education system of academic and applied institutions, which is akin to the existing system in Germany with its research universities and high quality technical "fachhochschulen" or polytechnics.

This will be a major change from the system where all higher education institutions are measured against one set of criteria: The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). The switch to more technical and vocational higher education has a lot to do with the relevance of higher education. Rapid growth in Universities caused many programmes that were not very relevant to be offered, it is therefore expected that polytechnics would help reduce the unemployment rate among graduates.

Although the government has concentrated on boosting science and technology degrees in recent years, where there is more job market demand, research has shown that students have little inclination to study the sciences, even if they are useful. Science related jobs are less attractive for Nigerian youth compared with the more economically promising ones such as managerial positions.

But the preference of students and their families for humanities and management degrees has led to a glut that cannot be absorbed by the job market. The government fears that with such high level of unemployment, particularly experienced by graduates of tertiary institutions, there is potential for instability as currently witnessed in Nigeria.

Closing the Gap: What Manner of Curriculum Restructuring and Transformation Strategies

Education in the generic and global context has been identified as an instrument for social and economic transformation. It is recognised the world over that education should be used to empower the people. The difference between rich (developed) and poor (developing) countries is not found in abundance of natural resources for if it were, Japan will have been very poor and Nigeria very rich. But the reverse is the case. While Japan with virtually no natural resources is one of the leading economies of the world, countries such as Gabon, Nigeria and Venezuela with huge oil reserves are debt ridden. In addition, the age of the country is neither relative, for it is known that Egypt as the oldest civilisation of the world is poor while the

economies of emerging countries such as the Asian tigers are developing at a very fast rate. Furthermore, agricultural endowment does not also count for even though virtually nothing grows in Switzerland it is the “safe haven” of the world with a strong economy.

But the difference can be found in respect for the rule of law, strict protection of human rights, positive value orientation, strategic knowledge management and good governance. Rich countries strive to not only acquire and sustain these values and virtues but systematically use education to bring these about. Rich countries devote most of their resources to educational development vis-a-vis research and development (R&D) and continually restructure their school curriculum at all levels to facilitate citizens empowerment through education.

Then how will Nigeria achieve a quantum leap in the 21st century to join the league of the 20 industrial nations in the world with 19th century educational system and standards. Employers of labour are complaining about the quality of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions that are mostly unemployable due to poor training based on obsolete curricula. For example, even with the local content policy of the government, less than 30% of quota for Nigerians in the oil and gas sector is filled by Nigerians due to incompetence and employability.

Developed economies are industrially based and technologically driven. Japan, India and the Asian tigers are examples of what science and technology can do to transform a nation. Nigeria needs to invest in science and technology through sound technical education, collaboration and knowledge transfer. The country needs to develop technology appropriate to their status, conditions and cultural realities. India for example has solved her problem by developing what is appropriate to its environment and demographic reality and culture.

Nigeria’s National Policy on Education describes education in Nigeria as an instrument “per excellence” for effecting sustainable national development, which suggests that anyone who has acquired education is expected to be self-sufficient or skilled to a degree. This then poses a question that begs for answer, which is; why then, do we have an annual increase in the number of graduates who are unskilled despite being certified in their different areas of study?

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) with a mandate in curriculum development has put together many policy documents overtime towards restructuring of the educational sector with emphasis on creative thinking, entrepreneurial skills, positive social and cultural values. However, these efforts had fell short of attaining the desired goals for many obvious reasons.

But the obvious reason is that many Nigerian graduates are unemployable because they failed to learn any skill throughout their stay in school. The few who get employed are underemployed (Oghiagbephan, 2015) Therefore, it has become imperative that a periodic review, as well as a careful analysis of the structure of Polytechnic education and other educational subsectors in Nigeria and their relevance to the current global as well as the country’s economic and social situation is carried out and articulated towards the realization of national development.

The problem with the curriculum according to Oghiagbephan stems from selecting and organizing the content of the curriculum, overseeing its implementation, teaching aids and its overall relevance to solving the plethora of problems the Nigerian society is faced with amongst other things. If the content of the curriculum does not directly address issues of poverty, job

creation, insecurity, banditry, skill acquisition, etc. that are responsible for the social, political and economic ills bedevilling the country presently, then there is a need for a complete overhauling of the tertiary educational sector.

Providentially, the internet has begun another era in civilization. For since 2020, active worldwide fixed and mobile broadband subscription is estimated to be around 5.83 billion while there are 104.4 million internet users in Nigeria as at January, 2021, and internet penetration stood at 50% at the same period (Kemp, 2021). In view of the above, it is clear that the future is in (ICT Hereafter), when some Nigerian government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are still non-ICT compliant and many Nigerian adults are still computer illiterates.

Apart from all the plethora of problems besetting the Polytechnic sector is the current discriminatory practice of appointing university administrator of the Doctoral and Professor Cadre as chief executives of tertiary institutions while chief Lecturers from the Polytechnic Colleges of Education system are seen as inferior to hold such position as Vice Chancellors of Universities and provosts of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In this paper, effort has been made to give a brief survey of the theoretical and conceptual basis of a nation and why they exist, and it went on to make some suggestions, that if put into practice could promote greater institution-building and national integration that will lead to a more stable economic and political development in Nigeria. The Nigerian experience demonstrates clearly that the possession of resources does not automatically lead to development.

Revamping the education system is the key to nation building and management of social anomie in Nigeria. For it is impossible to separate education from national development. This is because education is the vehicle with which values, ethics and goals towards national development are conveyed.

This will ultimately require a reform of the educational system especially at the tertiary level because the polytechnics and monotronics remain the major and apex 'feedstock' for the supply of the country's human capital needs that absorbs the products of the other lower levels of the educational system (primary and secondary) and the non-educational sectors. As such, it is then necessary for these institutions to fill the gaps by updating strategies and procedures to accommodate the resilience required to progressively adapt to changing physical, historical and social conditions in order to play a more active role in shaping a more sustainable future.

Recommendations

In order to resolve the challenges stated above, there is a need to restructure the curricula at tertiary level of education to meet development needs of the nation. The paper therefore recommends that:

- There should be massive and sustained injection of funds into the education sector, as most developed countries budgets up to 7% of their GDP for education and research, compared to Nigeria's less than 2%

- Vocational institutions are to set their own entrance examinations with lower academic requirements than the universities but with aptitude tests related to the courses offered. This is to attract students who are interested in courses offered by the institutions and talented in the field, not those who simply score low in the national entrance examination (UTME);
- Seeking technical assistance for training and retraining of lectures and instructors in the sector to build requisite capacity management of sustainability development programmes and projects;
- Establishment of partnership and collaboration arrangement with local and foreign institutions who are already implementing sustainability training;
- Improvement of working conditions of lecturers and instructors at all levels to curb brain drain in the education sector;
- Adequate funding for research on entrepreneurship and human capital development, while, entrepreneurial courses should be made prerequisites in tertiary institutions;
- The government must find ways to implement reviews/reforms to ensure that they have effect on the nation's economy.
- Eradicate the dichotomy in the entry point, remuneration and career progression of university and polytechnic graduates and headship of polytechnic and related institutions in Nigeria.

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