



✘ The educational system in Nigeria has been seriously battered by the failure of the socio-political system. Politics is an important factor in the development of nations and where the political class and political policies have failed, one of the most severely affected segments is the education sector. There are obvious indications that the educational system in Nigeria is crumbling and lacking the positive momentum to keep up with local and international demands of both technological advancements and compliance with consumer related issues.

There is urgent need to re-structure and re-align the educational system in Nigeria to meet the demands of a fast developing global world. This need will go beyond paperwork, committees, seminars or symposia. This era now requires direct and sincere implementations of the policies and strategies that would not only create economic growth but also sustain the development of the economy.

In Nigeria we have to understand that the service industry is an integral part of both the society and the economy and is no less important or less valuable than a job in the finance industry, political offices or academic institutions among several others. When the 6-3-3-4 system was established in Nigeria in the 1980s not many people were wary of the relevance of technical education at the secondary education level. Not many fancy the idea that their children should end up in technical schools even when they could not cope with theoretical academic stuffs. But it is a very impactful sub-segment of a viable education system.

Technical education and service-oriented institutions are essential parts of any productive education system. These two interwoven aspects of the education sector are supposed to be producing competent electricians, drivers, painters, builders, receptionists, carpenters, plumbers, gardeners and so on. The issue of motorcycles for example as a means of public transport is actually a revelation of the absolute failure of the transport ministries across Nigeria.

Any state that thrives on okada (motorcycles) as the major or complementary means of transportation is actually a failed state. If Okada riders really want to eke out their living or get fully involved in the transport business, they should be sent to driving schools or government training (or driving) centres to acquire normal driving licenses and knowledge of public relations. After a successful completion of their training, they can then be put behind the wheels of regular transport buses. Training for all public transport drivers is imperative but it has been



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neglected in Nigeria.

At the end of acquiring competency at the technical institutions, the possibility or option of furthering one's education at the University or tertiary level should still be opened. If we have points' scoring or other kinds of grading systems that we follow sincerely, there should be a minimum level of requirements that will make competent individuals to choose between seeking direct employment and studying further after acquiring competence in technical education.

There is a very big gap in the Nigerian society because of our failure to make plans. In addition people usually wrongfully assume that persons who are in the service industry are social misfits or unintelligent school drop-outs. That should not be the case. Nigeria must begin to adopt the global educational policy that states that: "no child is left behind".

Having stated these few points, one cannot but wonder how a society that has gone wrong in many aspects of our lives can begin to set things on the right path. Where do we start from? It will be impossible to close the widened and stretched gap in a short time. Therefore a fire brigade approach should not be adopted in order to solve the problems that have arisen as a result of the neglects that have been perpetrated in at least three decades.

The Federal Ministry of Education must return to the drawing board and establish or dig out the policy that pertain to this aspect of the Nigerian educational system and how it should be fulfilling its role in creating competent hands in the service industries. First the ideal of basic education for all is a good starting point because we must reduce the illiteracy level further.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) has as parts of its targets the compulsory education of all children up to the age of eleven by 2015. Is Nigeria pursuing this goal wholeheartedly? Do we have a mechanism that is controlling the progresses, failures or deterrent factors? By reducing the illiteracy level on a national level, we will be one step nearer bridging the gap in the service industry. Such a progress will be one of the several prerequisites that will draw deserved dignity to the service oriented jobs

One of the goals will be to eradicate road side apprenticeship and absorbs all training bodies or individuals under a national education and training system that is aligned with the standard



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education curriculum. There should be schools or institutions (private and government owned) to carry out the trainings using modern gadgets and equipment instead of the road side approaches that create half-baked experts. It should be made clear that electricians and painters for examples have rights to standard wages irrespective of whether they are working independently or for some big service establishments. One of the benefits in the end will be the inclusion of more working members of the society under the regularized tax, insurance and pension schemes.

The mechanism and standard of operations of many road side service providers and office/home-based craftsmen and women is such that many of them are excluded from the tax system. This exclusion is a severe blow to economic progress that no one is taking note of. These categories of people are also invariably excluded from any form of pension scheme. It is possible that some of them have taken the initiatives to save under private pension schemes after discussing with their bankers. There is also a likelihood that most of our electricians and road side mechanics are working without any kind of insurance cover. There are obviously many other disadvantages of allowing the service industry to remain in the hands of unskilled or untrained personnel and thriving on a trial and error approach. The repercussions cannot be treated in a single essay like this one.

Experiences from some parts of the world especially the developed countries show that jobs requiring theoretical or practical skills or a combination of both do command the same level of respect and human dignity in the society. This means that no one is discriminated or diminished by the type of work he/she is doing. Such an experience must be imbibed in Nigeria at the same time that we try to bridge the gaps between the various professions by rebuilding our entire educational system.

If we succeed in this pursuit, it will be a major step that will influence the other United Nation's MDG for Nigeria as a developing country. With the proper education and reward for labour, Nigeria can by 2015 or 2020 reduce poverty by more than 50% and reduce drastically the number of people living on less than \$2 a day. Reducing poverty will have an effect on reducing hunger most likely by the same proportion or even more.

It is very possible that the securities achieved through job creation, poverty and hunger



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reduction could have a magical effect on reducing child deaths. The measure of success in all of these targets interlocked within the MDGs still depends on a stable and conducive democratic system devoid of corruption and ineptitude. Herein lies the greatest challenge for any progress in Nigeria, not only in the education sector but in all aspects that affect the standard and quality of our lives.

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