The Anatomy of a Circle: Reaction and Counter Reaction in Educational Policy Formulation and National Development in Nigeria, 1925-2005

Abdalla Uba Adamu
Department of Education
Bayero University, Kano

Keynote Address Delivered at the Review of the National Policy on Education at the North-West Zonal Consultative Forum, held at the Murtala Muhammad Library Complex, Kano, Nigeria, on 27th July 2006.

Introduction

On 18th September 2005, the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, Prof. Godswill Obioma informed the nation that the Federal Government will scrap the existing structure of education and replace it with a modified one in 2006. The announcement of another shift in the structure of Nigerian education does not come as a surprise to those who have been watching the history of education in Nigeria since the turn of the last century. In at least 46 years since independence from Britain, and despite the massive cultural, political and economic transformations of the country, structural reforms have been the least concern of Nigerian educational policy makers.

Yet changing economic, social and political situations in both developed and developing countries have combined to create needs for constant innovations and reforms in education. As Durkheim (1938) argued,

> "Educational transformations are always the result and the symptom of social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for people to feel at any particular moment in time the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate." (Durkheim, 1938 p.167)

This is more so in developing countries where from the late 1950s to mid 1970s independence from colonial administrators, and in some cases new found wealth based on natural resources have contributed to a redefinition of social priorities and objectives. As Fagerlind and Saha (1982) contended, although it is difficult to pinpoint when strong links between education and social and economic development began, nevertheless,

> "...it is certain that by late 1950s and early 1960s there was general agreement among politicians, educational and social planners, and schools that education was a key change agent for moving societies along the development continuum." (Fagerlind and Saha, 1982 p.39)

And within this context, expanded and improved educational provision became a focus of development efforts, especially in developing countries as a means of acquiring new skills and increasing productivity. A further strong rationale behind

massive investment in education is argued by Adams (1977) who also contended

> "educational systems were said to produce the skilled manpower and the new knowledge requisite for technological advancement and economic growth." (Adams, 1977 p.299)

The rationale behind this argument is reflected, for instance, in a review of several documents issued in the 1950s and 1960s in several African, Asian and Latin American countries. These documents, in the form of National Plans, expressed a desire to use educational provision for economic development (Lewin, 1984). A common theme has been that education is not seen to be pursuing relevant goals, and its various outcomes subsequently unsatisfactory (Hurst 1983). This search for relevance had a long history in Nigerian education.

Restless Natives and High Aspirations

In 1905 the British colonial government in Nigeria established the Education Code, a Board of Education that included Nigerians, and an Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa. In response to the growing pressure for government involvement in a more literary form of education, the government requested the Board to present a scheme for a model school to be established by the government in Lagos. In 1906 the Board came up with a detailed scheme for such school which was envisaged to have a broad curriculum "catering for a sound literary foundation, but equally providing opportunities for those with scientific and vocational orientation" (Ogunlade 1974 p. 332). Students to the model school, to be called King's College, were to be admitted after passing the Standard VI examination to be conducted by the proposed college. The students would also be taught up to the level of the London University Intermediate Examinations which were the preliminary and first year examinations. The reference in the scheme to the

> London Matriculation an the Intermediate Examinations, the size of its academic staff, the marked distinction between categories of staff, the size of the student population, and the range of subjects in the curriculum of the proposed institution — all are comprehensible within the University system of contemporary Britain (Ogunlade 1974 p. 333).

The proposed curriculum of the school was certainly the standard British fare in the education of a gentleman, comprising of: English composition, Literature, History, Geography, Mathematics and Latin which were all compulsory. Students would have electives chosen from French, German or Arabic, Chemistry, Physics, Botany; and there were plans to include, at a later stage, Electricity, Geometrical Drawing and Survey, Pure and Applied Mathematics.

The Colonial Office in London balked at the university pretensions of the proposed college as well as its literary slant when the proposals were presented for approval in 1907. A long dialogue ensured between the Colonial Office and officers of the Lagos Board, with each presenting and defending contrasting views. The Lagos Board naturally insisted on the literary predisposition of the college, while the Colonial office wanted a less pretentious institutions which bias towards agriculture and vocational education. In the end some sort of compromise was reached and in 1908

the picture of the approved college that emerged was that it would consist of "a model primary department, a well-equipped secondary department and a post-secondary department" (Ogunlade 1974 p. 342). With this approval, the King's College Lagos was opened on September 20, 1909.

Racism and the Colonial Curriculum

The years after the establishment of the King's College were followed with significant issue of adapting curricula to the needs of the country. But by 1916 it was getting clear to the colonial administration that the products of the King's College, and similar institutions maintained through government, were not going to be the docile clerics it had hoped. T R Batten, a colonial teacher, noted in his unpublished *Lectures on Education in Colonial Society* that 'the present picture is one of ferment and conflict in which the individual much more than in the past, sees himself and his private interests more clearly, an society and his duties to it as something outside himself, demanding and frustrating...The ranks of criminals, delinquents and other social misfits appear to be most largely recruited, not from illiterate persons, or from the best educated, but from products of the schools.' (in Omolewa 1976 p. 94). Lord Lugard, the first governor of Nigeria was more trenchant in his observations when he noted that the products of these early schools in Nigeria were "unreliable, lacking in integrity, self-control, and discipline and without respect for authority of any kind...Education has brought to such men only discontent, suspicion of others and bitterness, which masquerades as racial patriotism...As citizens they are unfitted to hold posts of trust and responsibility where integrity and loyalty are essential" (Lugard 1923 p. 428).

Observations such as these led to the search for a more accommodating curriculum, even though it was not clear whether these behaviors exhibited by the products of the schools were the result of mere exposure to a more radical schooling climate which facilitated the acquisition of sense of purpose and consequently created a desire for uncharacteristically non-traditional mode of self-expression; or due to the contents of the curriculum which in any event was regulated by the colonial administration.

The preference of the Colonial Office for a more manually-focused curriculum had its antecedent roots in the racist theology of what constitutes the best education of the Black people. This was because the calls for adaptation of the schooling program in the colonies — from both colonial and Nigerian officers — came from far afield. In 1919 the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society channeled a request through the Committee of Reference and Consul of the Foreign Mission Conference of North America for an African education survey, and suggested that the Phelps-Stokes Fund of the United States sponsor a study of the educational needs and resources of Africa shortly after World War I (Berman 1971). The Fund was believed best suited for this due to its concerns and interests in the education of African Americans in early parts of the century (Dillard 1932). This led to a first visit to Nigeria, among other nations, by a team of six led by Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones of the Fund between August 1920 to March 1921. The report of the Commission, *Education in Africa: A study of West, South and Equatorial Africa, by the African Education Commission* was published in 1922. As Berman (1971) noted,

> The report was written exclusively by Jones, the chairman of the Commission,

> and reads like the report on Negro education with a different locale. His general recommendations deal with the adaptations of education to meet local conditions, the incorporation of his four "essentials" [sic] of education (health, appreciation and use of the environment, effective development of the home, and recreation) into the curricula at all levels....the overriding importance of agricultural and simple industrial training (Berman 1971 p. 135).

The views in the report echoed not only the conviction of the Commission about the education of the African, but also reflected the then current philosophy behind the education of African Americans in the United States. After the American civil war, one of the pressing issues was the re-settlement of African Americans and their integration into the mainstream American social affairs. One of the most common educational strategies advocated for achieving this was the industrial education approach. Further, according to Berman (1971 p. 134),

> This committee believes that everywhere the best experience warrants the assertion that for the Negro race all education ought to have an industrial basis…it is noteworthy that all the most successful experiments in Negro education, e.g., in South Africa and in the Southern States of America…have been based upon the gospel work and its application, as part of the school curriculum, in agriculture and handicrafts…Industrial education seems to have special application to the education of the Child Race, whose "mental digestion" is weak, and who are more successful in getting knowledge than in using it….

Thus with regards to the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, Spivey (1986), for instance argued that

> Jones believed that industrial schooling could strengthen America's foreign alliances by helping the colonial powers stabilize the African situation (Spivey 1986 p. 5; see also Spivey 1978).

Jones himself made it clear that colonization was the best thing that could have happened to African nations. As he stated,

> Civilization is the result of contacts and as the people of Africa have contact with other peoples of the world so will they share in the benefits of civilization. We left West Africa with a very sincere gratitude for the great accomplishments of the British Empire in Africa. (Jones 1924 in Spivey 1978 pp. 4-5).

The Fund's report, being the most comprehensive and specific document on African education at that time, and echoing the convictions of the British colonial administration of the directions of the education for Africans — simple agricultural and artisan or 'industrial' training — acted as a catalyst for the policies of the Advisory Committee on Native Education set up in 1923 by the British colonial administration. The Fund's Report also prompted the government to request for another, second, commission to be undertaken, this time incorporating the members of its own Advisory Committee, to survey educational developments in East and Central

Africa. The report of this second mission, *Education in East Africa: A study of East, Central and Southern Africa by the Second African Education Commission* was published in 1925. Its findings echoed the first report, and as Berman (1971 p. 141) quoted,

> The most essential requisite of all is a genuine belief in agriculture, a recognition of its vital contribution to the life of the community, a realization of its value in the physical, mental, and even the moral welfare of the Native people.

These views had a further catalytic influence on British colonial education policy and culminated in the government's publication of *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa* in 1925, whose central theme was that,

> Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples covering as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her conditions of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of the ideals of citizenship and service (*in* Scanlon 1964 p. 94).

The ideas outlined in all these documents about the education of the African turned out to be more anthropological than educational, professing as they did, welfare of the natives, but lacking in real strategies of how such goals can be attained. The ideas and strategies for emphasizing agricultural/artisan education also would seem to echo a belief that the African was incapable of acquiring education beyond a basic sustenance level knowledge. It was also interesting that agricultural education was being promoted as the best form of education for a people who had been subsistence agriculturists for the whole of their evolutionary history.

Perhaps not surprisingly, attempts at adapting education to local needs, already ambiguous as they stood at that time, were not entirely seen as favorable development by Nigerian officials. This could be because of the artisan-agriculture tones of the adaptation movement. As Brown (1964 p. 373) pointed out,

> In West Africa under British rule what most articulate Africans wanted was a European-type secondary education designed to equip them for white-collar jobs. Although attempts were made to promote agricultural education...they were not very successful for the simple reason that West Africans did not appreciate them.

Racism and Higher Education – The Yaba Higher College

With the King's College in place, it became clear that a higher institution was needed to absorb the products of the College. The colonial administration, fueled by the various reports of Christian mission fact-finding tours, were understandably eager to

explore a form of education thought to favor the mentality of the African – simple industrial education and agriculture. This was underscored in the racist motives behind the establishment of the Yaba Higher College in 1930 when the colonial Director of Education, Hussey outlining his views on general government involvement in education in Nigeria provided a blueprint for its establishment. This blueprint was published in *Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria.* The document proposed comprehensive government involvement in education by establishing a series of elementary and middle schools whose products would feed an envisaged Higher College to be established at Yaba, Lagos, a site close to the seat of government. Another Higher College was also proposed in Zaria, Northern Nigeria. The motive behind the founding of the Higher College was manpower development, for according to Hussey in the *Memorandum,*

> I have dwelt upon the vital necessity of providing an institution in Nigeria which can train men in the country to play an honourable part in its development...A comparable study of staff lists for Nigeria and such countries as the Sudan, where higher training of the type contemplated at Yaba and Zaria has been in operation for many years, will show that a considerable reduction in European personnel is possible by this means, with a consequent savings of large sums of money on European salaries (*in* Okafor 1971 p. 70)

Despite these expectations, it was interesting to note that the Higher College was not intended to be a degree awarding situation in the same way the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone awarded University of Durham degrees. The Higher College was expected to provide vocational courses, teacher, medical and agricultural training at an intermediate stage. In effect, the Yaba Higher College was to provide the vehicle for the realization of the Phelps-Stokes agenda on Black education in Nigeria.

These proposals were accepted by the colonial government on May 29, 1930 and provided the first official basis for higher education planning in Nigeria. It was agreed by the government that the products of the college could provide well trained assistants for various department of government and companies, and the standard of the college would gradually rise, although it was not expected to attain a British university status for sometime. The College would award its own certification and was not to be affiliated to any British university (Okafor 1971).

The Yaba Higher College was officially opened in January 1934. The main emphasis of the college was on its medical program which was to last for five years, leading to the appointment of a graduate of the program in government service as an Assistant Medical Officer for five years, after which he would be eligible to return to Yaba for another year to get a College diploma and could upon successful graduation, become a medical practitioner. The teacher training course was to last three years, while agricultural training would last for a total of four years. The medical program was started at King's College on a temporary basis in 1930, followed by the other courses in 1932.

There were protests from Nigerians at the college at the manner of its establishment, but mainly at its programs. According to Okafor (1971 p. 72) "the heat generated by public discussion [about the College] was momentous that it prompted events which

have profoundly affected not only the educational but also the Nigerian political situation for a long time." There were three main reasons for the protests against the Yaba Higher College. First was the apparently noninvolvement of Nigerian opinion in its design. By the time it was created Nigerians emboldened with liberal conceptions of democracy had started agitation for participation in all affairs of their lives. Second was the lack of affiliation of the college to any *standard guard* which will ensure that the programs offered would be acceptable as a basis for further education, especially in England. Third, its vocational orientation would seem to be a rehash of the industrial-agricultural educational strategy suggested by the Phelps Stokes Fund Commission and favored by the colonial government. Nigerians were chafed at the suggestion that industrial form of education would be best for them because it was considered appropriate for African Americans in Southern United States at the turn of the century.

These protests reached to head on Saturday March 17, 1934 when a group "representing the intelligentsia of Lagos" held a meeting and issued a press release which stated, in part,

> While it may be expedient and desirable that opportunity should be provided locally whereby a certain number of youths may be trained to acquire some measure of skill in the different professions to meet the immediate needs of certain services, it is considered inimical to the highest interest of Nigeria to flood the country with a class of mass-produced men whose standard of qualifications must necessarily be deficient owing to the limited facilities available locally both as regards material and staff (*Daily Times*, March 18, 1934).

The protest meeting was organized by what later became the Nigerian Youth Movement, one of the pioneer nationalist political parties in Nigeria. Significantly, according to the *Lagos Daily News* of April 21, 1934, most of those who attended the meeting and became incorporated in the Movement were products of the King's College, Lagos. Thus in this way education and politics became entwined.

These protests did little to change the government's stand regarding the Yaba Higher College, and it was left to function as originally intended, mainly as a training ground for middle level manpower for government service, until December 1947 when, overtaken by more pressing events, the College was closed down.

Thus the early schools in Nigeria which set the pattern for the rest of the country therefore established precedents of being *training* institutions, rather than *learning* institutions. The absence of university or other tertiary training in the colonies forced the small but growing number of Nigerians who aspired to such education to seek it in England and the United States. For this reason, qualifications acceptable to British institutions were required. And because of the prestige attached to such form of achievement in the British examinations, many Nigerians scorned indigenous, i.e. artisan-agricultural type of education and vigorously embraced the English universities' examinations. Nigerian youths began to consider the successful acquisition of the certificate of such examinations as the ultimate process of their education, especially since

> the dictates of the colonial situation in Nigeria demanded a thorough grounding in English education and internationally recognized certificates to enable the holders proceed to further studies. It seems very doubtful if an adapted education, suitable as it could perhaps been to local conditions, could have provided adequate international recognition in the period, and lead to the making of new elite who became advocates of the country's independence and piloted the ship of the country's destiny during the early phases of the country's independence (Omolewa 1976 p. 116).

New Directions, Same Map – Search for National Policy on Education

The emphasis of the Nigerian education on purely academic lines of educational pursuit was a source of concern for Nigerian educational planners. For instance, in a sponsored survey of the system in 1967, it was observed that

> Criticism, other than that of a purely political or social nature, of Nigeria's educational and training system, may be placed under two major headings. *First*, the system is not geared effectively enough to the realities and needs of the labor market; it is not adequately *employment-oriented*. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the system's educational and training institutions have operational inadequacies impairing equitable access to opportunities and the quality of instruction. *Second*, there is insufficient application of the system's facilities and manpower toward solution of the country's most pressing development problems: it is not adequately *service-oriented* (USAID, 1967 p. 49, including *emphasis*).

The mid 1960s therefore saw the beginnings of low-level reforms and experiments in education in Nigeria aimed at making the system more accountable to a rapidly changing society where there were very limited opportunities for the white collar job market. These were intensified when it was realized that an appreciable proportion of the school population terminate their education progressively at primary and secondary schools, with very few actually making the transition to the university. For instance, of the 56,155 secondary school leavers in Nigeria in 1965, only 5,199 actually passed the School Certificate Examinations at the *minimum* level (i.e. Division I and II of the School Certificate Examination) that would enable them to proceed to the university. The sixth form — first introduced in the King's College Lagos in 1951 — the main bridge between the secondary schools and the universities, did not fare too well either. Only 56.6% of the 1,874 HSC students in 1965 achieved examination passes in two or more subjects necessary for university admission (WAEC, 1966). Thus as the USAID report further noted in 1967,

> At the present time the Nigerian educational system continues to suffer from the evils of too heavy an academic orientation, when the need is for a greater employment orientation. The person who terminates his education prior to graduation from the university often views himself as a failure who has been forced to settle for something that is second best, even though he is among the majority of the students (USAID 1967 p. 53).

The first move away from this educational stalemate was attempted in the Western

Region of Nigeria by the recommendations of an obscure, yet most potential educational committee established by the Western Nigerian Regional Government. Although the proposals of the Committee were not fully implemented (partly due to the radical departure from the accepted norms suggested in the report, as well as the funding implications of the suggestions), the findings of this committee were to resurface later and form the central engine of the future Nigerian educational structure. The Committee was chaired by Archdeacon S. A. Banjo, with Chief J. O. Ojo, Reverend I. Edeki, Femi Oyewole, S. O. Leshi, Mrs. F. A. Ogunsheve and Professor C. H. Dobinson as members.

The Banjo Commission (as it was known) stressed the importance of technical and commercial courses in secondary schools. However, the Commission did not merely recommend that new courses or new programs be introduced in the schools. Rather, it presented a proposal for a new system of secondary education which was to be developed from the existing one and in which the programs of study represented a departure from traditional patterns. This itself was a brave gesture from a regional stronghold with fierce alliance to British values in every respect. The plan proposed by the Banjo Commission called

> for the conversion of the existing dual structure into a single-track, but two-level, system of secondary education. The first level was to be the junior secondary school which would offer a three-year course of study and be open to all children who passed the primary school leaving examinations [the second was to be senior secondary school of four years duration]...While a wide range of prevocational courses was to be provided in the junior secondary schools, it was proposed that these kinds of studies should vary from school to school be related to the employment opportunities in the vicinity...After completion of the junior secondary school course, it was anticipated that approximately 30 percent of the graduates would proceed to *Senior Secondary Schools* while the remainder of the youth would enter trade centers, teacher training colleges, technical colleges, or take jobs (Muckenhirn 1968 p. 216).

The Senior Secondary School was to be a four year course of study with extreme academic bias providing, in the final stages, preparation for sixth form work, although the curriculum was sprinkled with the notions of enabling the learner to acquire some vocational skills. These proposals, especially the attempted vocationaliziation of the grammar oriented Senior Secondary School was rejected by many educators in the Western region, for as Muckenhirn further observed,

> While not expressed explicitly, it was this writer's impression from conversations with grammar school teachers that there was a feeling that the introduction of vocational and technical education into the curriculum of senior secondary schools would not only weaken the academic standards but also would create an institution which could not be accorded the prestige of traditional grammar school (Muckenhirn, 1968 p. 222).

Thus the recommendations of the Banjo Commission report were not really fully accepted and implemented in the Western Region at the time. However, the central

philosophy of the report itself (published in 1961) — echoing the puritanical belief of its members on utilitarianism in education — was taken up by the recommendations contained in the Ashby Commission Report which suggested that

> the content of secondary school education is of particular interest to the government. ***Obligatory manual subjects must be introduced. Vocational training must be increased***. Agricultural education must be expanded in all secondary schools (Nigeria 1960 p. 3, emphasis added).

Thus again we see here the resurfacing of the thinking of Rev. Jesse Jones of the Phelps Stokes on the nature of education of the Nigerian – from *official* Nigerian sources. And while this idea was not wholly implemented immediately at the national level, early experiments with comprehensive schooling in the Western Region of Nigeria led to the establishment of *junior* secondary schools with a common academic core curriculum, and a set of introductory pre-technical, pre-vocational courses for all students. Upon completion of the junior secondary school, and on the basis of a thorough selection and guidance procedure, students would either terminate their education or complete their secondary education in the grammar school wing or another specialized wing of the institution (for further details, see *The Development of Technical Education and its Relation to the Educational System in Western Nigeria*, 1962-1970. Ibadan: Government Printer). But

> the stubborn adherence to the traditional grammar school type of education made it difficult for the junior high school to spread and eventually accounted for its eclipse (Adesina 1984 p. 13).

Indeed, the first explicit attempt at the comprehensive school planning in Nigeria was with the establishment of Aiyetoro school in Abeokuta, near Ibadan, initiated as part of the Ashby Report recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the Banjo Committee. The Aiyetoro school opened in February 1963, with a gathering of teachers from Nigeria, U.S., Britain, and Scandinavian countries. Harvard University Graduate School of Education provided the overall guidance to the school's philosophy (Hinkle 1969 p. 81). The political overtones of this American aid gesture is not lost on some observers. For instance, Karl Bigelow (1965) observed that

> The United States government can support a Harvard-sponsored comprehensive secondary school in Western Nigeria; it could not invest American public funds in a school modeled on Eton — to say nothing of whatever the Russian equivalent may be! (p.47).

The Aiyetoro school was considered innovatory in many ways.[1] First it departed from the then British tradition of the eleven plus terminal elementary school examination as prerequisite for admission. Students were admitted directly from primary schools in

[1] Two schools sharing the same American inspired general education philosophy were actually initiated. The first was at Aiyetoro in Ibadan in Western Nigeria. The other was located at Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria. Like the Aiyetoro school, the comprehensive school in Port Harcourt was also set up with funding from USAID. The Port Harcourt school, however, was affected by the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) and was not apparently continued after the war. See Newbry and Ejiogu (1964).

the catchment area of the school. Secondly, the school offered a core curriculum in all subjects which students must take within their first two years — thus simulating an American educational philosophy of providing broad general education in the junior years. Success at the end of these two years determined the subsequent tracking of the student. The first track was for the academically more able but who took electives in technical courses. The second track was for the less able and was vocationally oriented (Skapski and Somode 1962). And yet despite these strategies at providing liberal education in a less confining manner,

> ...the drop out and survival rates at Aiyetoro in its early years were unparalleled in the history of government sponsored secondary level education in Nigeria. On a cumulative level, only 33 of the original 143 who entered in 1963 survived up to Form V, representing a cumulative drop out rate of 76.6%. For the second cohort the cumulative drop out rate was 43.40% while the annual drop out rate ranged from 8% between Form I and Form II and 23.97% between Form III and Form IV (Adesina 1984 p. 8).

Adesina attributed this failure to a possibility that the Aiyetoro school was attempting to operate an American system of education in a British-oriented examination system, for

> whereas the education at Aiyetoro was essentially American in its form, content and methods, the examinations that finally judged the students requirements were essentially Britain [sic] in form, content and requirements while the background of those executing the project was diverse...The picture might have been different if Aiyetoro based its final assessment of its students on its own aims and practices. To have spent five years in a system that appears revolutionary in its aims and practices, and be subsequently exposed to an examination system that does not reflect that revolution was one of the several misfortunes of Aiyetoro students (Adesina 1984 p. 9).

Still in search for a more effective solution to the issue of relevance of the Nigerian education in a post-independence era, in 1964 Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa (New York University, Graduate Class of 1955) who was later to become a central icon in Nigerian educational planning and subsequently a Federal Minister of Education (1990) conducted a survey in

> an attempt to "sound out" the opinions of 2000 parents randomly sampled over a wide geographical and representative area of the country on the primary and secondary education systems...Ninety-eight percent of all the parents were dissatisfied with the "present system of primary education", while opinion was equally divided on the same question relating to secondary education (Fafunwa 1989 p. 43).

It is quite interesting that "…eighty percent of the parents sampled were from East, West and Lagos, while twenty percent were from the North." (ibid). With a clear lack of uniformity in what constitutes education values in the "North", it was clear right from the beginning of the creating a new Nigerian policy on Education that the "North" is already marginalized. Thus out of the 2,000 respondents who informed the

direction of Nigerian educational policy, about only 300 were from the region with the largest number of people.

As a result of this survey, in that a same year a proposal was made during one of the meetings of the national advisory committee on education, the Joint Consultative Committee for a *National Curriculum Conference* principally to look at the issue of relevance and future directions of Nigerian education. It took a whole year (to 1965) for the proposal to be accepted. The Nigerian civil crisis which began in 1966 halted any further planning for the conference, and it was not until September 1969 that the conference was finally held in Lagos. The Conference lasted from 8-12 September and was sponsored by a government agency, the Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC), now Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERD), with additional funding from The Ford Foundation. The main aim of the conference was to "review the old and identify new *national* goals for education in Nigeria at all levels and provide guidelines on what the system should be doing." (Balogun 1970 p. 5).

These views were also echoed by the then Federal Commissioner of Education during his opening address at the 1969 National Curriculum Conference at which he underscored government's views about education in Nigeria which was:

> No doubt that the educational system we inherited was a good one. Good, that is, for the country and society for which it was planned; good for England and English society. But it was not good for us, because it neglected to take into consideration our cultural and social background; because it has tended to produce an educated class of pen-pushers and because ***it failed to lay the foundations of economic freedom by providing the manual skills and expertise necessary for successful industrial and agricultural development*** (*in* Adaralegbe 1969 *Opening Address*, emphasis added).

It is of course, a paradox that these recommendations were made — and accepted — to the Nigerian government in 1960s at the height of independence, when, earlier on in the 1920s, the Phelps-Stokes Fund commission had recommended ***precisely the same strategies*** (emphasis on agricultural and manual type of education for immediate absorption into the labor market); which were found unacceptable by Nigerian nationalists. Similarly, the Banjo Commission Report to the Western Nigerian Government in 1961 had the same anthem, and ended up with the same time-tested opposition.

What emerged out of the conference was a new framework for Nigerian education. And although its direct inspiration was not made clear, nevertheless there was a lot of similarity between the new structure suggested and the recommendations of the earlier Banjo Commission Report on the re-organization of the education in the schools of Western Nigeria.

The new framework recommended that Nigerian education should be composed of six years for primary schools, followed by three years of junior secondary schools, and three years of senior secondary schools. The university education was recommended at four years for a standard university degree. This educational pattern came to be

known as 6-3-3-4 system of education.

This was a radical departure from the then existing structure, and the third in the development of education in Nigeria. Before the Nigerian political independence in 1960, the educational pattern was 8-6-2-3, in which a student spent eight years in the primary school, followed by a six year secondary schooling, a two year "A" level education, terminated by a standard three year university education. In 1955 this pattern was changed to 6-5-2-3, a structure which Nigeria retained until the National Curriculum Conference in 1969 which recommended a 6-3-3-4 formation, breaking the monolithic structure secondary education for the first time at a national level.

At the same time, the idea of multilateral, or comprehensive schools was also finally recommended to be an official educational policy for the nation. The comprehensive schools would not only have a greater number of students, but also greater number of courses than the hitherto standard curricula fare which prepared students only for examinations. The examination itself was not abolished entirely, however, but a series of continuous assessment procedures were recommended, particularly for the junior school which would cumulatively be used as a basis for transition the senior secondary school. The School Certificate examination, used as a basis for terminal evaluation of secondary schooling, would be replaced by Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), which would also be conducted by WAEC.

Based on these recommendations of the national conference on curriculum, the Federal Ministry of Education created a draft national policy on education and the nation was introduced to it by the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon during a speech at Barewa College on April 26, 1972.

In 1981, and based on the various recommendations of the education committees established and amendments made to their reports, a revised *National Policy on Education* was published by the government, and stands as the definitive framework for Nigerian education. As the National Policy on Education document stated in summarizing the new educational structure:

> The school system will be on the 6-3-3-4 plan. The system will be flexible enough to accommodate both formal and non-formal education and will allow leaving and re-entry at certain points in the system...The first six years will be for general basic education followed by three years of general education with pre-vocational subjects like woodwork, metal work, shorthand and typewriting, book-keeping and technical drawing so that the students who wish to leave the system at this stage will be employable. The next three years will be for general education leading to some marketable skills apart from training in the science and humanities so that the students graduating at this stage will be employable. Every student will be made to learn a skill (Nigeria 1981 p. 47).

Prior to this, the implementation of the primary school stage had already been started nation wide on September 6, 1976 in the first nation-wide educational reform in Nigeria through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme (Bray 1981). The three year Junior Secondary School (or Junior *High* School as it was referred in the

National Policy on Education) portion of the national policy started in September 1982, while the students of this same system entered their three year Senior Secondary Schools in October 1985. In September 1988 the first products of the system entered Nigerian universities.

The National Policy on Education in Action

I will not attempt to recount the multifarious problems that afflicted the National Policy on Education since its take-off with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in 1976. This has been well-documented in other sources. I will, instead focus on the racist theology about the superiority of vocational-technical education for Africans, in this case, Nigerians and show that it did not work. As noted earlier, the main logic given for the a National Policy was to promote the industrial education philosophy so advocated by the colonial administration and the Nigerian government after independence – despite the disdain shown towards this form of education by the Nigerian elite class. Nevertheless, the junior secondary school portion of the National Policy was to have been the main gateway of ensuring the independence of the Nigerian child – a ticket to freedom from the shackles of white-collar yearning characteristic of secondary education. However, this has not been achieved since the implementation of the policy. According to Oni (2006), the picture was less than perfect, as indicated in Table 1 (from Oni 2006) which shows the trends in the enrolment of pupils in secondary and technical institutions from 1991 to 2001.

Table 1: Enrolment in Nigerian secondary and vocational-technical institutions 1991 - 2001

Year	Secondary		Technical	
	No	Enrolment	No	Enrolment
1991	3,854	1,653,891	208	46,083
1992	5,840	1,814,000	202	40,878
1993	5,948	1,865,189	190	72,136
1994	6,092	2,794,498	300	72,136
1995	5,991	2,934,349	240	76,434
1996	5,859	2,941,781	252	89,536
1997	6,001	2,923,791	261	1,179
1998	5,860	2,901,993	261	1,426
1999	6,008	3,123,277	261	1,425
2000	6,009	3,600,204	261	1,835
2001	5,959	4,032,083	261	1,835

Source: Compiled from Social Statistics in Nigeria 1995; Annual Abstracts of Statistics 2001; Federal Office of Statistics; Nigeria (Oni 2006).

The dramatic decrease in the number of student enrolment in the vocational colleges, as contrasted with the equally dramatic increase in the number of secondary school's enrolments in the same period clearly attests to the failure of the vocational-technical education philosophy.

Further problems of the National Policy on Education identified in the literature include:

- emphasis on formal education at the expense of technical, pre-vocational and vocational skills at all levels;
- emphasis on formal education at the expense of the non-formal targeting of children and adults in difficult circumstances;
- tendency for society to relegate technical education to the background in preference to university education;
- neglect of early child-care education, which is left to private initiatives;
- narrow goals of primary and secondary education (with the exclusion of life-skills such as health/HIV/AIDS education, population and family life, etc.);
- attendant social problems of unemployment resulting from graduates with excessive ambitions but no skills looking for white-collar jobs;
- under-utilization and non-committal attitude of communities/societies to ownership of primary education.

It is a further irony that years after Phelps Stokes report, the artisan vocational education is still being advocated in Nigeria, despite the fact that successive Nigerian governments had placed a high priority on the vocational education section of the National Policy on Education. And despite the failure of such approach. Further, the facilities were not available, as studies of the implementation of both the junior (Nwakoby 1987), and the senior (Osokoya 1986) secondary schooling shows. Moreover, it is interesting that Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa, one of the main architects of the Nigerian National Policy on Education in 1964, and who was to become a Federal Minister of Education in 1990 was quoted to have stated that

> The policy had not met expected objectives because of poor implementation. Although some progress had been made, the 6-3-3-4 education policy is not working as planned. ("Progress To Nowhere", *Newswatch* Magazine (Nigeria), May 13, 1991 p. 48).

Further, it would be instructive to ask, were these problems caused by faulty implementation of the policy, or by structural weaknesses in the policy? It is important to ask this question because it seems the policy perspective is a perfect game of running around in circles. If we can recall, the Missionaries wanted artisan vocational education – as did the colonial administration. The Nigerian nationalists do not want that form of education. Eventually, however, it found its way into the junior secondary school curriculum of the National Policy, and almost 30 years later, is described as having failed. So where exactly do we stand – a reinforcement of another vocational artisan education matrix and another report sheet of failure in another 30 years? The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council does not think so. This was because on 20th September, 2005, the *Daily Trust* (Nigeria) reports that the NERDC, through its Executive Secretary, Prof. Godswill Obioma announced that:

> there is the urgent need to restructure both the primary and JSS curriculum into one harmonious nine-year and the re-alignment of the SSS for a strategic broad based vocalisation. "The present curriculum has a system error because

> we have placed too much emphasis on certificates instead of skills. In other parts of the world the reverse is the case; skills before certificates.
>
> "The existing primary and secondary school curricula are structurally defective, There is a disconnect. There is a gap. The connection between primary and JSS curricula is weak. Primary pupils had weak support base to learn JSS contents".

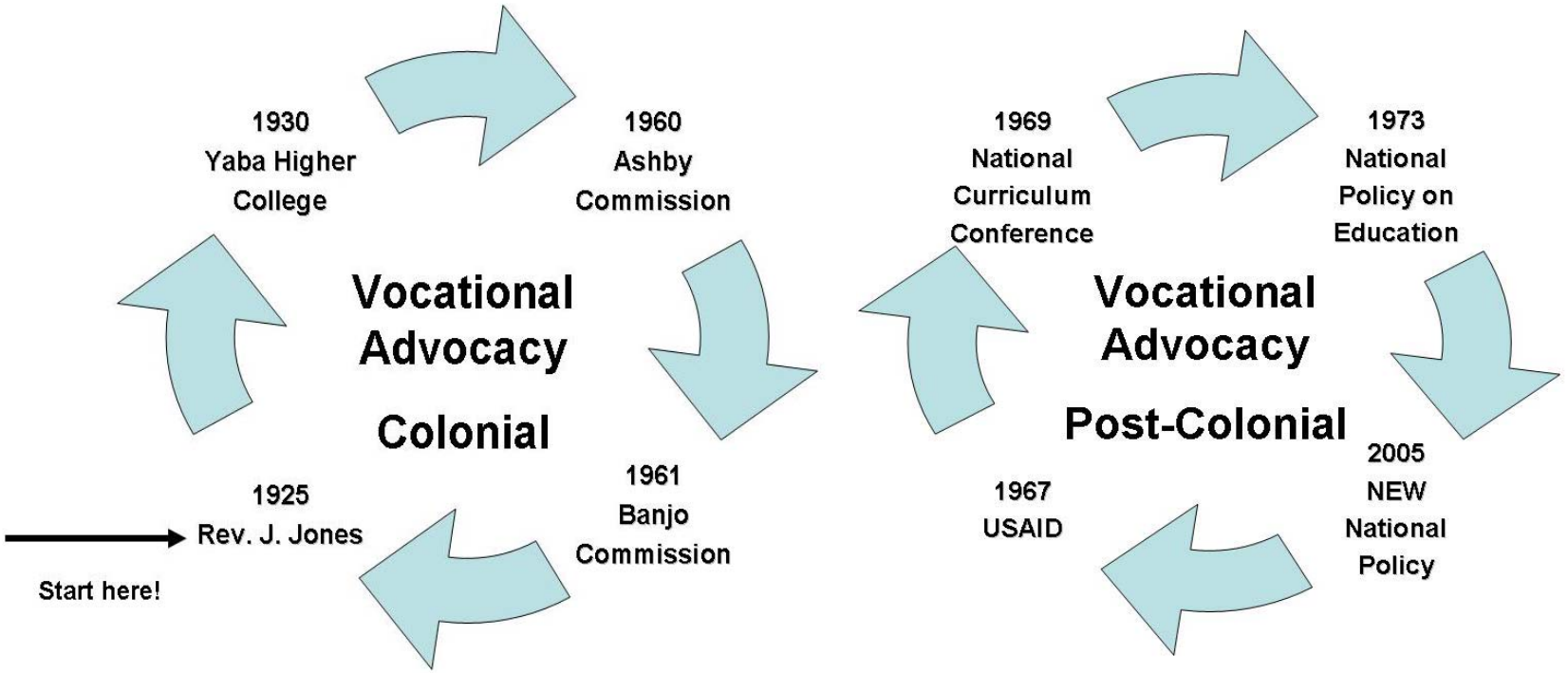
Furthermore, he stated that JSS curriculum could not achieve functional and acquisition of productive skills for those who could not access senior secondary school, just as "majority of JSS graduands lack strategic skills, as well as functional literacy and numeracy."

No windows of opportunities, he added exists for JSS graduands who could not access SSS for continuing with acquisition of life-long skills and that the present primary and JSS curricula are over-loaded, therefore" the existing JSS curriculum cannot guarantee the support for reducing poverty, creating jobs and wealth for JSS graduates who are not bound for the SSS. Further,

> "The SSS curriculum tends to favour the few that are university bound. The vocalisation of the SSS curriculum can hardly be achieved in the present context. There is no emphasis on productive work skills at the JSS and SSS. "The curriculum in its present structure lays undue emphasis on paper and pencil test for certification. The six-year primary and three year JSS curricula in their present structure truncate the continuous nine-year education curricula and the selection examination into the JSS is no longer necessary",

This heralded the introduction of another structural change in Nigerian educational system and sees the introduction of 9-3-2-3 system, which sees a nine year primary-cum-junior secondary school, followed by a three year secondary school, a two year higher school, and a three year university. The new system was to start in September 2006 – about 30 years after the previous one started in 1976. With its emphasis on vocational education for the nine year primary school system, and after 46 years of self-independence, it truly heralded a progress to nowhere. This is because the original purpose of education for a developing nation is yet to be defined, since the new policy is still ghost of the brainchild of Rev. Thomas Jesse Jones of Phelps Stokes Fund. This is captured in Fig. 1 which summarizes how the circle started, and how it is still spinning.

Anatomy of a Circle



References

Adams, D. K. Development Education. *Comparative Education Review*. Vol 21 Nos 2 and 3 June/October 1977 pp 296-310.

Adaralegbe, A. *A Philosophy of Nigerian Education*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1969.

Adesina, A. "Landmarks in Secondary Education in Nigeria," in Adesina, S. and Ogunsaju, S. (eds) *Secondary Education in Nigeria*. Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984.

Balogun, T. A. "The National Curriculum Conference in Nigeria 8-12 September 1969." *West African Journal of Education*, Volume XIV, Number 1, February 1970, pp 5-8.

Berman, E. H. "American Influence on African Education: The Role of Phelps-Stokes Fund's Education Commissions." *Comparative Education Review*, Volume XV, Number 2, June 1971, pp 132-145.

Berman, E. H. "American philanthropy and African Education: Towards an analysis." *African Studies Review*, Volume XX, Number 1, April 1977, pp 71-85.

Berman, E. H. "Foundations, United States Foreign policy, and African Education, 1945-1975." *Harvard Educational Review*, Volume 49, Number 2, May 1979, pp 145-179.

Bigelow, K. W. *Education and foreign aid: Problem and prospects of Education in Africa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.

Bray, M. *Universal Primary Education in Nigeria: A Study of Kano State*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

Brown, G. "British Educational Policy in West and Central Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 2, Number 3, November 1964, pp 365-378.

Dillard, J. H. et al *Twenty Year Report of the Phelps Stokes Fund, 1911-1931*. New York: Phelps Stoke Fund, 1932.

Durkheim, E. *The evolution of educational thought Lectures on the formation and development of secondary education in France*, translated by Collins, P (1977). London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fafunwa, A.B. "National Policy on Education: A planner's viewpoint." in Tamuno, T and Atanda, J A (eds) *Nigeria Since Independence - The First 25 Years, Volume III: Education*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Ltd, 1989.

Fagerlind, I. and Saha, L. J. *Education and National Development: A Comparative Perspective*. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1983.

Hinkle, J. "The Aiyetoro Model - The First Five Years," *West African Journal of Education*, Volume XIII, Number 2, June 1969, pp 81-85.

Hurst, P. *Implementing Educational Change - A critical review of the literature*. E D C Occasional Papers No 5, 1983. London, Department of Education in Developing Countries, University of London Institute of Education.

Jones, T.J, "You will solve your problems All right," East African Standard, Nairobi, Kenya, 3 March 1924, p. 1.

Lewin, K. Goals, Educational: Developing Countries, an entry in I*nternational Encyclopaedia of Education*. London, Pergamon, 1984.

Lugard, F. D. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: Blackwoods, 1923 .

Muckenhirn, E. "Nigeria: New Departures in Secondary Schools" in Thomas R. M et al (eds) *Strategies for Curriculum Change: Cases from 13 Nations*. Scranton, Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company, 1968.

Newbry, B. C. and Ejiogu, N. O. "The Port Harcourt Comprehensive Secondary School: A new approach to secondary Education in Eastern Nigeria." *West African Journal of Education*, Volume VIII, Number 1, February 1964, pp 36-39.

Nigeria. *Investment in Education: The Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria* [The Ashby Report]. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education, 1960.

Nigeria., *National Policy on Education*. Revised Lagos: NERC, 1977/1981.

Nwakoby, F. *The Educational Change Process in Nigeria: an Evaluation of the Junior Secondary School Innovation in Anambra State*. Unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Sussex, 1987.

Ogunlade, F. O. "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The case of King's College, Lagos 1906-1911 ," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Volume VII, Number 2, June 1974, pp 325-345.

Okafor, N. *The Development of Universities in Nigeria: A Study of the influence of political and other*

factors on university development in Nigeria, 18681967. London: Longman Group Ltd, 1971.
Omolewa, M. "The Adaptation Question in Nigerian Education, 1916-1936: A study of an Educational experiment in secondary school examination in colonial Nigeria." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria,* Volume VIII, Number 3, December 1976, pp 93-119.
Oni, C.S., Vocationalism in Nigerian Education, *J. Soc. Sci*., 12(2): 147-150 (2006)
Osokoya, O. *6-3-3-4 Education in Nigeria: History, Strategies, Issues and Problems*. Lagos: Bisinaike Educational Publishers, 1987.
Scanlon, D. G. (ed) *Traditions of African Education*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University Classics in Education Number 16. New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1964.
Skapski, A. and Somode, B. "A demonstration comprehensive school for Western Nigeria." *West African Journal of Education*, Volume VI, Number 2, June 1962, pp 69-79.
Spivey, D. "The African Crusade for Black Industrial Schooling," *Journal of Negro History*, Volume 63, 1978, pp 1-17.
Spivey, D. *The Politics of Miseducation: The Booker Washington Institute of Liberia, 1929-1984*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986.
USAID. *Nigerian Human Resource Development and Utilization*. A Final Report Prepared for The United States Agency for International Development, by Education and World Affairs Committee on Education and Human Resource Development Nigeria Project Task Force. New York: Education and World Affairs, 1967.
WAEC. *Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 1966*. Lagos: West African Examinations Council, 1966 .