

A REVIEW OF CHARLES C. NWEKE AND CHUKWUGOZIE D. NWOYE'S "HIGHER EDUCATION AND GENERAL STUDIES IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION"

Anthony U. Nwokoye

Department of Philosophy

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Uanthony75@gmail.com

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The article, "Higher Education and General Studies in Nigeria: A Philosophical Investigation," was written by Charles C. Nweke, a Lecturer at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and Chukwugozie D. Nwoye, a Lecturer at Pope JohnPaul II Major Seminary, Okpuno. The central theme of the article dwells on the lacuna prevalent in Nigeria education system notwithstanding the efforts made through the introduction of General Studies as a medium to attain the goals of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The researchers started with the exposition of the existential predicament of education in Nigeria; a cross-examination of the Western and Traditional variants of education, and as well the objectives of general studies programme vis-a-vis the goals of National policy in proffering solutions to problems of higher education in Nigeria. The article is original and portrays a well seasoned research on the subject matter as it traces the origin of traditional education in Nigeria and its efficacy in the traditional societies as a form of acquisition of knowledge. The intent of the researchers is to buttress the need to understand the prevalent problems relating to higher education in Nigeria, and as well suggests certain measures to be adopted in order to ameliorate the problems.

Education is dynamic and peculiar to a society. It should aim at addressing the need of the society. This was vividly captured by the researchers citing M.N. Amadi *et al*, "...as way of life varies from one society to another; every society cardinally has its own method for nurturing and educating their youth."¹ To further buttress this, the researchers presented an example using prevalent practice among the Greek, the Romans, England and France. In Greece, education is centered on the ability of an individual to attain mental and physical balance; the Romans form of education dwells on training; in France, the benchmark of excellence is attaining the rank of a Scholar; in England it was attaining the rank of a Knight and for the Germans, attaining the height of a Patriot. In Africa, the warrior, the hunter, the noble man, the man of character or anyone who combined the latter trait with a known skill is acknowledged to be a well-educated, well-integrated and socialized member of his community.²

The researchers carried out an exposition of the traditional variant of education and argue that the traditional education is pragmatic and was geared towards the functionality and productivity of the community. Thus, in the ancient Africa, many individuals were involved in the art of farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, hunting, carving, knitting, building of houses, mat-marking and creating local farm implements. In contrast, the Western variant of education is more organized with a more organized classroom setting, teaching methods and curriculum. Sequel to the introduction of Western system of education in Nigeria, one of the offshoots is the higher education. Higher education is a post secondary education stage, where an individual is taught in an advance teaching style and method with an end in view of obtaining a degree, diploma or certificate. Higher education is seen as vital to the formulation of knowledge in a society. Thus, "every nation sees in higher education, via its traditional roles of teaching, research and community service to evolve manpower and transmit needed knowledge that are required in industry and other spheres of the nation's existence."³

The researchers highlighted that the intention to ensure that the tertiary education in Nigeria is up to standard, and as well to enable university students to be well grounded and rounded, led the National Universities Commission introduced General Studies in order to expose the student to interdisciplinary studies and broaden their horizon culturally, academically, and globally. These general courses were introduced to foster the goal of tertiary education in Nigeria, and the goals are as follows: (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 will 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.⁴

However, the researchers discovered that inasmuch as the introduction of general studies courses are pivotal to actualize the goals of tertiary education; the general studies have not been utilized to produce the desired result. These can be attributed to a number of factors including but not limited to; lack of adequate incentive to lecturers to boost their academic prowess, misappropriation of academic funds by the stakeholders; examination misconduct and unmerited awarding grade by some lecturers to students, *et cetera*.

Having reflected on the goals of tertiary institution, the introduction of General studies to attain the goal, and the obvious failure of general studies to attain the goal; the researchers posited that lack of patriotism is the root cause of the failure of general studies in Nigeria, and further argue that patriotism is the solution to the existential predicament in the tertiary education. Thus, the researchers asserted that, "it is the spirit of patriotism that will make our leaders, both policy makers and otherwise to see to the fact that Nigeria is the only country we have and therefore everything humanly possible must be done to make it as enviable as other nations they admire to the extent of sending their children and wards to them for education."⁵

Patriotism will promote the local content to be more attractive and feasible to attain sustainable national growth and development, upgrade the standard of education in Nigeria; encourage the disciplinary commissions in tertiary institutions to mete out adequate punishment to erring lecturers without fear or favour; make the leaders rise beyond the confines of ethnic affiliations in discharging national duties. The researchers noted that, "It is when this mindset is in place that the actualization of the goals on tertiary education will begin to make meaning and the vision of General Studies Programme as the foundation for a rounded tertiary education a reality"⁶

The article presented a logical exposition on the lapses in Nigeria education system especially with regards to the failure of the general studies to attain the goals of tertiary institution in Nigeria. The research critically assesses this existential predicament and came up with a novel postulation on the feasibility of restoring the goal of tertiary education through the general studies. The researchers were able to trace the root factor militating against the actualization of the goals of tertiary education, which as they asserted is the lack of patriotism among the leaders and stakeholders of tertiary education. However, the article indirectly raises further questions on the feasibility of attaining patriotism amidst the multicultural dispersion of Nigeria.

References

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2. *Ibid*, p.2
3. C.C. Nweke & C.D. Nwoye, "Higher Education and General Studies in Nigeria: A Philosophical Investigation", *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies*, 6(1), 2016, p.5

4. *Ibid*, p.9

5. *Ibid*, p.11

¹ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1984), 1.