

MAMSER AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Introduction

One of the recommendations of the Political Bureau set up in 1986 by the Federal Military Government (FMG) to do a preparatory work towards a smooth return to civil rule, is the creation of a new political culture through social, political and economic mobilization of the people for development. The Federal Military Government has long accepted the recommendation and in pursuance of its goal attainment, the Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) was launched at the national level by General I.B. Babangida on 25th July, 1987. The National Directorate of MAMSER has its headquarters at Abuja while the State Directorates are located in the State capitals. Following a successful take-off of MAMSER at the national and State levels, virtually all the Local governments have launched same at their own levels.

Before MAMSER's inauguration, several economic and political programmes were instituted e.g. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Jaji Declaration (JD) and Ethical Orientation (EO). The failure to attain the mission of the above programmes coupled with the collapse of the Second Republic and the frequent change of Military regimes serve to underline the fact that a gap existed between previous promises and actual fulfillment. Further efforts made between 1978 and 1991 to facilitate the promotion of economic, political and social development and maintain national stability included the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), the National Orientation Movement (NOM), Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Electoral Commission (NEC). These programmes would achieve their laudable goals if the masses both in rural and urban areas are properly informed and educated.

MAMSER according to Uku (1987) is a War Cry for action, a call to battlements and for a change of attitude, values and perception as well as a change of approach to pragmatic solutions to mundane problems. The commitment of MAMSER is all-embracing and its main thrust is the education of our citizens (Babangida: 1987). According to Sills (1980), citizenship education is a form of social education which deals with understanding and improving human relations. Citizenship education according to Bayo Lawal (1987) helps participants to acquire life long values of courage, self-determination, self-reliance, self-discipline and selfless services and concern for other people.

Through citizenship education the individual does not only know his right and perform his duties but he is also enlightened, educated and motivated towards promoting the goals and aspirations of the state.

This paper discusses the various strategies used to promote MAMSER as a tool of citizenship education. It also seeks to examine the problems facing the implementation of MAMSER and suggest some strategies for the meaningful prosecution of MAMSER.

Issues at Stake in MAMSER Concept

The issues at stake in the MAMSER Concept shall be discussed under the subheadings 'Objectives' and 'Strategies'. Objectives of MAMSER is geared towards evolving a well developed and integrated citizens of Nigeria. MAMSER (Babangida, 1987) aims principally at:

(a) eradication of all those features of our behaviour in the past which have made our society a byword for disharmony, dishonesty, distrust and disservice and a haven for those who prefer to

- embrace and to promote in their conduct, the least attractive traits in human nature;
- (b) raising our individual and collective national consciousness and enable us dream great dreams and attain lofty goals;
 - (c) inculcating in all our citizens the values, the habits and the orientation which will lead without coercion to the emergence out of our disarray, of a great self-reliance civic society in which justice, duty responsibility, tolerance and commitment to nation shall hold sway;
 - (d) enlightening, educating and motivating all citizens towards the goals and objectives of the Nigerian State;
 - (e) creating a responsible and responsive leadership through the dissemination of appropriate political rules;
 - (f) encouraging a functional dialogue between the government and the people through the establishment and inculcation of political norms; and
 - (g) developing and sustaining adequate political conventions which will guarantee a positive and stable political culture.

It is pertinent to note that the above objectives of MAMSER bear close relationship with the objectives of the "Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre" (Man O War) Nigeria (1974) which are indicated below:

- (a) To enhance and expand the individuals self awareness by recognising personal strength and limitations and assuming leadership responsibilities when the need arises.
- (b) To increase awareness and appreciation of other peoples qualities and rights by:
 - (i) participating in community development activities;
 - (ii) developing the spirit of tolerance, humility and honest endeavour;
 - (iii) inspiring others to great achievement; and
 - (iv) subjugating personal wishes to the interest of group harmony and well being.
- (c) To develop national consciousness and international understanding by living harmoniously together with people from other ethnic groups and countries.

In a nutshell the purpose of citizenship education is to build the man and the community to which he belongs (CLTC Blueprint 1974). MAMSER is a veritable vehicle through which the ideals of citizenship education can be communicated to the masses. How MAMSER will do this is indicated under 'Strategies' below.

Strategies of MAMSER

According to Babangida (1987), MAMSER shall focus on every Nigerian and every category and group of Nigerians. In particular, it shall re-educate and re-orientate the different key social groups in our society with the ultimate intention of reaching the individual at the grassroots. These include among others, the family, students, youth and women organizations, farmers/farmers co-operatives, labour unions, co-operative unions, village wards, policy makers, clan councils, policy makers and executors, professional and voluntary associations, armed forces and other security agents. In order to reach the targets envisaged the Directorate of MAMSER at the State levels shall ramify into several divisions each with its own functions replicated at the LGA, District and Village levels. These divisions which are responsible to the State Directorate have the following forms and terms of reference:

- (a) The Mass Education Division: Education is the key to development. The division will pursue aggressively dissemination of education at all levels: pre-school, formal, non-formal, adult literacy and functional literacy. It's staff will liaise with appropriate government agencies and ministries and augment and articulate the efforts of the latter. Mass literacy will be popularized and unemployed graduates will be mobilised for the literacy programme.
- (b) The Political Education Division: This division will during phase I of the Directorate's

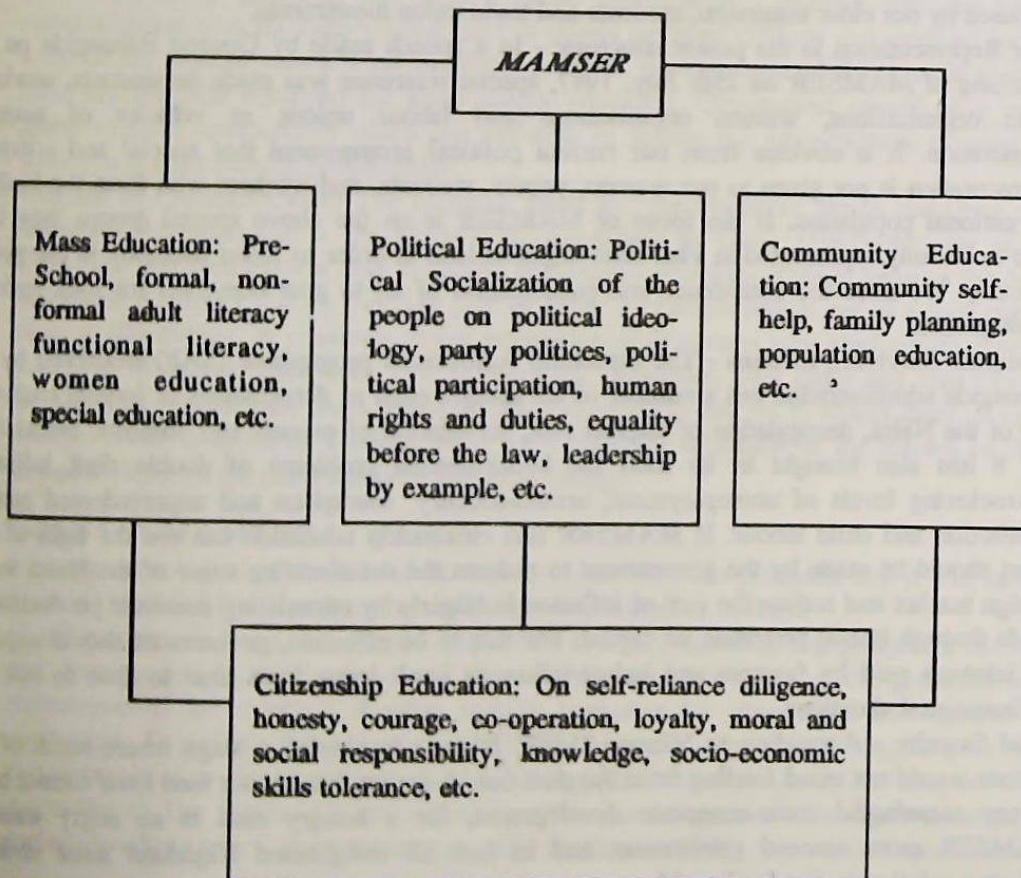
programme concentrate on political mass education for the Local Government election. This include registration of voters, qualification for election, candidates' qualification, implication of choice of candidates, human rights and citizenship. It will tutor the society to look out for persons of impeccable character and integrity to provide good leadership. It will strive to break the undesirable political culture of the past which has predicated hypocrisy, thuggery, corruption, tribalism, rigging of election and survival of the economically rich.

The second phase of the political Education Scheme shall concentrate on educating the masses on equality of all citizens before the law, citizenship rights and privileges, duties and responsibility of citizens, the rule of law and other constitutional issue.

- (c) Mass Mobilization Division for Community Education: This division will mobilize the various Communities towards the realization of individual self-reliance, social and economic emancipation. It will focus on total community education on self-help, family planning, population education to mention a few.

All these strategies are geared towards building the individual citizen to be able to attain self-fulfillment and contribute to social, economic and political development of the local community and the entire country. As shown in Fig. I MAMSER is deeply rooted in the vanguard for effective citizenship education in Nigeria.

Fig. I
A Model of MAMSER And Citizenship Education



(1) Problems Facing MAMSER And Citizenship Education in Nigeria. Laudable as the objectives of MAMSER are, a number of social, political, technological and economic constraints lie in the way of its total attainment. Prominent amongst them are the following:

- (a) **Lack of Predominant Political Culture:** Nigeria lacks a predominant political culture which will project the ideals of MAMSER. Political culture has been defined by Almond (1974) as the sum total of political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills possessed by the members of the political community. Political culture is reflected in a national philosophy, attitudes to political leaders, duties of citizens, conduct and style of political activity and in what is considered political and what is not. In countries having a dominant political culture with some deviant subcultures, it is possible for the government to design its political orientations in line with the dominant cultural group, e.g. Tanzania and Kenya. But in Nigeria the three major ethnic groups - Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo - all exhibit cohesive cultures of their own, cultures which are different from each other and therefore exist amalgamation into a Nigerian whole. With such political culture diversity, it may be difficult to define the Nigerian political culture on which good citizenship education can be based. (Nwabuzor et al: 1985).
- (2) **No National Ideology** - For a long time the various civilian and military administrations have resisted popular recommendations that a solid national political ideology of socialism but this was not accepted by the military government. According to Mokuwo Okoye (1987) the masses of Nigeria should have warmed up if socialism was accepted since the political system is implicit in our traditional culture of 'ESUSU', communal landholding and mutual aid espoused by our elder statesmen, students and trade union movements.
- (3) **Poor Representation in the power structure:** - In a speech made by General Babangida on the launching of MAMSER on 25th July, 1987, special reference was made on students, workers, youth organizations, women organisations and labour unions as vehicles of national regeneration. It is obvious from our current political arrangement that special and adequate representation is not given to our women, youths, students, and workers who form the bulk of our national population. If the focus of MAMSER is on the above special groups then they need to be fully represented in vital state organizations in order to foster harmony in the power structure. We need the confidence and participation of all to gear ourselves for total national development.
- (4) **Economic Survival Problems** - The Structural Adjustment programme (SAP) embarked by the Babangida administration has a number of advantages such as deregulation of foreign exchange rate of the Naira, deregulation of interest rate, stimulation of exports and domestic production. But it has also brought in its train the hydra-headed problems of double digit inflation, sky-rocketing levels of unemployment, armed-robbery, corruption and unprecedented rate of prostitution and child labour. If MAMSER and citizenship education can see the light of day effort should be made by the government to redeem the deteriorating value of the Naira in the foreign market and reduce the rate of inflation in Nigeria by stimulating domestic production of goods through liberal provision of capital. For this to be effective, government should regulate the interests paid by farmers and industrialists on bank loans from time to time to suit our environmental situations.
- (5) **Food Scarcity** - According to Nkanga (1987) Nigeria is nearing a stage where some of her citizens would not mind feeding from the dust bin. A nation that cannot feed itself cannot boast of any meaningful socio-economic development, for a hungry man is an angry man. If MAMSER must succeed government and in fact all enlightened Nigerians must seek an enduring solution to our food problems.

- (6) **Jaundiced Judiciary** - One of MAMSER's main targets is to bring about social justice. In every nation the judiciary is the last hope of the common man. It is a pity that the Nigerian judiciary is sick. The present situation of justice in Nigeria is an auction product in which he who has greater money-cum-power gets it. It is an open secret that many judges maintain that their hands are tied and give judgements on orders from above. It is equally true that some highly placed criminals who are supposed to be behind bars are not, while many poor and innocent people who have no means to buy justice are languishing in our jails. If MAMSER is to succeed, government should show courage in giving the judiciary an immediate shake-up.
- (7) **Lack of Qualitative Education:** Government has become the sole controller of education since the government take over of schools after the civil war. Irrespective of some advantages which public schools may have, a system where there is 'no' competition in the management and funding of schools does not augur well for our youths. If our youths are to be regenerated both morally and spiritually viable voluntary agencies (as Christian missions and individuals) with facilities for moral, social and science education should be allowed to thrive. It is only when such alternative educational systems exist that the standard in the public schools can be properly evaluated.
- (8) **Rural Illiteracy** - It is estimated that over 50% of the population of Nigerians live in the rural areas. A large chunk of the rural population especially the women and to some extent girls and elderly men are illiterate. There is need to intensify the education of rural people especially women who are most neglected. According to Olasebikan (1987) "the rural woman is still seen by her husband as a second fiddle whose decision must be influenced and dictated by his whims and caprices, due largely to her illiteracy. Illiteracy influences the rural woman's attitude to family planning. She sees it as an abomination". Besides illiteracy has made communication with the rural woman (and of course the men) difficult and rendered ineffective some of the modern values being extended to them. Besides most of the schools in the rural areas are not well equipped for good quality education. Government should offer matching grants to rural communities which use self-help to initiate the establishment of good quality schools and adult literacy programmes.
- (9) **Channel of Communication:** The Nigerian Press and the electronic media constitute a major channel of communication for MAMSER. According to Oloja (1987) the use of Radio, Television and Newspapers may not yield the desired objective. This is because the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) can take care of about 30 million people out of a total population of over 100 million. A relatively lower population of Nigerians now read newspapers due to high cost of papers. Less than 30% of the rural population own radio and television. Even among those who use the mass media, in Nigeria, majority are yet to accept them as agents of change. There is therefore a strong need for a thorough education of the masses on the uses and advantages of the mass media as agents of change.

Prospects of MAMSER

In spite of the goal attainment of MAMSER there are some prospects that it will succeed if proper steps are taken by all and sundry. The following are some of them:

- (a) The Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) has pledged to take growth and development to the grassroots of this country, as well as bring the grassroots into the mainstream of the country's decision making apparatus for growth and development of the rural areas. To achieve this objective the DFRRI has asked each rural community to form its Development Association which should be registered at the Local Government Council. According to The Sunday Observer (1987) each community should list five top most priority projects/needs to which government may offer assistance. If this promise is implemented fully,

- it will stimulate rural development.
- (b) The recent political ban unleashed on all past top military officers who have held political positions, first and second Republic politicians, top civil servants, ministers, commissioners, judges and all corrupt public officers by General Babangida may be veritable channel through which all corrupt military and civilian administrators will be eliminated from active political office holding. Perhaps through this, the first generation of Nigerian leaders will give room to the new hands who hopefully direct social mobilization efforts at orienting the people of this country to love Nigeria by severing selfish and negative sectional bonds and putting national interest and moral and social justice in its proper perspective.
 - (c) The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which recruits unemployed graduates and pays them modest allowance is a precursor of something good to come. While it is realised that the NDE is presently a stop-gap and cannot offer a permanent satisfaction to its subjects, it has gone to some extent to reduce the boredom and frustrations which go with graduate unemployment. Besides, the apprenticeship scheme of the NDE will open up new vistas for self employment of some of the school graduates.
 - (d) One of the aims of MAMSER is to promote pride in the consumption of home made commodities and to promote self reliance. With the banning of importation of certain commodities, some Nigerian manufacturers have looked inwards to find local raw material substitutes e.g. maize and sorghum is currently used by some breweries to substitute for imported barley. Many soap and textile manufacturing establishments are improving their products quality and in the absence of better foreign good Nigerians with taste are going for them. If other manufacturing industries should integrate backwards and locally procure their raw materials and produce at low cost then one of the purpose of MAMSER - self-reliance - should have been achieved.
 - (e) The New National Policy on Education which was published in 1977 is the most comprehensive educational package aimed at revolutionising the quality of education at all levels. As noted in the revised edition of the policy document (FGN: 1981) the philosophy of the New Policy on Education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. In the words of Adesina (1980) the new policy is 'the outcome of long-standing pressure from Universities, Students Union, Teachers, Parents, Professional Organization, Trade Unions and Media men'. Although late in coming, Federal and State educational authorities are currently gearing all efforts towards providing the necessary teachers, instructional equipment and laboratory facilities needed for smooth implementation of the educational system. With co-operation from all concerned this new policy may be the best single avenue for educating Nigerian citizens.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The concept of MAMSER in the current scheme of socio-economic development and the transition from military to civil rule smacks in every sense of strategic planning. MAMSER is an instrument of strategic planning which has not only defined its targets but has been allocated sufficient monetary resources to enhance the implementation and evaluation of its performance from time to time.

But if MAMSER is to succeed in its drive towards socio-economic transformation of the country and create conditions that will enhance individual and collective national consciousness, it must take cognizance of the following recommendations.

- (a) MAMSER should take appropriate steps to answer the following questions if the desired structural changes is to be effected e.g. What is happening to unemployment, poverty,

inequality of opportunity among the citizens and illiteracy? Unless enduring steps are taken to stamp out illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and reduce inequality that objective of MAMSER - raising a fully developed, self reliant and well integrated citizenry - will be difficult to achieve.

- (b) To effect economic recovery, MAMSER should look beyond the conventional national accounting terms resulting in the creation and distribution of goods and services such as agricultural and industrial goods and educational services. According to Idienumah (1987) it should concern itself with all productive activities including the work of housewives. For effective mass mobilization for results, the State Directorate of MAMSER, DFRRI, and NDE should constantly exchange notes in the pursuit of rural development, training through apprenticeship as well as rendering assistance to individuals who wish to set up small scale industrial concerns.
- (c) Today the poverty of the village environment and the sophistication of the urban area is an indication of socio-economic injustices. Water, electricity, postal and telecommunication services are unreliable or absent in most villages. Government ancillary efforts to attain socio-economic justice through the Land Use Decree and DFRRI has to be fully utilised by the Directorate of MAMSER. MAMSER should not only prepare us for a socio-political and economic changes in all aspects of our society.
- (d) Effort should be made by MAMSER and appropriate government authorities to advertise Rural Banks which are established primarily to attract rural deposits and grant loans to rural farmers and small scale industrialists. To make such bank loans accessible to rural dwellers, government should reduce the interests charged by banks on loans for rural agricultural and industrial purposes. Farmers should be advised to form production marketing co-operative societies which will not only enable them to produce and sell their products at reasonable prices to final consumers but also place them a viable scale to attract loans.
- (e) MAMSER should take a hard look at its use of the Radio, Television and the Press as predominant agents of change in the rural area. The bulk of the Nigerian population who live in the rural area have not accepted the mass media as fundamental agents of change. MAMSER should explore alternative local methods of communicating its message to the ruralities in the language they understand. Except this is done, MAMSER may not succeed because in the words of one communication expert (Oloja: 1987), "No fundamental change can succeed without the acquiescence and collaboration of the usually silent majority". In this case the ruralites form the majority.
- (f) If MAMSER is to succeed, government should endeavour to harness all the human, economic and social resources of the country and avoid waste. In particular the pressmen, labour unionists workers, students and women should be fully represented at planning and implementation levels of MAMSER's activities.
- (g) To inspire proper followership our national leaders and MAMSER officials should demonstrate honesty and integrity and prove that they understand the very concept of MAMSER and are fully committed to its achievement. It is only under such a condition that the desired socio-economic and political changes can be effected.

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