

CREATIVE AND FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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Abstract

Creativity is a key driver in the global economy. In today's world of global competition and complex problems, creative intelligence and innovative capacity are fast becoming requirements for personal and professional success. There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and United Nations. For the success of many nations in tackling major development problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality among others can be traced to their educational system. One of the developmental problems in Nigeria is the increasing rate of poverty in the country. Despite various policies and strategies of government, and other stakeholders in alleviating the malaise, very little has been achieved, as the poverty rate continue to increase. This paper examined the linkages between creative, functional education and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The paper posited that there is a significant relationship between the level of educational system and the high rate of poverty in Nigeria and that creative, functional education in Nigeria remains the most fundamental vehicle for the reduction of poverty in the country. The paper therefore recommended among others, a serious overhaul of the educational system and sector in the country to produce a total person with the requisite skill, knowledge and value relevant to the 21st century.

Keywords: Creative education, functional education, poverty, panacea.

The role of education as the foundation of social, economic, political, and cultural development is undisputed. All over the world education is expected to be highly rated in national development plans. School programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive while interest and ability should determine the individuals' direction in education for the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical, social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the society (Udoh & Akpan, 2014). Teaching and learning for a new age require a new educational model of education. It means an interactive and creative education based on individual needs and abilities. Education throughout the world faces challenges, and they may be economic, technological, social, and personal. This requires a high degree of flexibility and adaptability of the educational system to these challenges. New approaches are needed to find a way to promote students' motivation, self-esteem and the skills. A good educational system gives students the freedom to recognize their capabilities and individual potentials. Education should foster students to act creatively about ideas and issues across a range of disciplines. As creative thinkers, they should explore alternatives. Such an approach is required for a solid academic foundation hence enhance their intelligence. All these centers on the Nation's commitment to creative and functional education. The perennial problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality among other have bedeviled every developmental effort in Nigeria. For instance, despite several efforts by successive governments in Nigeria through programmes and policy measures as well as the various intervention programmes and projects by Nongovernmental organisations, and other foreign government agencies, it seem much has not been achieved in reducing the menace of poverty in the country as the rate of poverty is still on the high side. Although several reasons have been adduced for the persistent high rate of poverty incidence in Nigeria, the fact remains that the hallmark for overcoming these challenges is effective and functional education. There are vital enterprise that touches the lives of both the present and future generations. Their importance in translating the futures of great nations cannot be over emphasized (Asaju, Thomps & Silas, 2013).

Creative education is based on individual needs and abilities. It requires freedom of learning and teaching. An active mode of learning influences innovative personality development which creates something unique. Functional education should be capable of producing Nigerians who can manufacture raw materials, machines, and tools needed for local and international markets, invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing diseases hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to a manufacturing status (Udoh & Akpan, 2014). However, it seems functional education has not been realised as an effective tool for overcoming some of the developmental challenges like poverty and corruption.

Asaju, Thomps & Silas (2013) in their study conclude that the declining standard of education in Nigeria has affected its efforts at human resource development with great consequences for government efforts at reducing the high rate of poverty, unemployment, inequality which are attributed for other social ills experienced in the country today. So, how can education in Nigeria be made functional to reduce the rate of poverty in the country? This paper therefore examined the present trend in the educational system with the view to identify its creativity and functionality as tool for poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Creative Education

Some writers like Ekpenyong as cited in Aghowuro, Saidu & Jimwan (2017) have followed the method of delineating the ingredient that make for creativity instead of defining it. Thus, he defined creativity as the capacity to originate, invent, reflect, analyse and synthesize. Fasko (2000) considered creativity as thinking skill that can be developed through training after the identification of the characteristic traits possessed by the individual. To him, creative pattern is manifest in creative behaviour which include such activities as inventing, designing, contriving, composing and planning.

Creativity is the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into values. It comprises what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship. It is associated with the achievements. In recent years, researchers and educational writers have extended the general meaning of creativity so that it incorporates ideas about inventiveness and imagination. This reflects a growing acceptance that creativity is not simply about coming up with big ideas but coming up with practical solutions to everyday problems and then applying them to real life situations. Creative education is based on individual needs and abilities. It requires freedom of learning and teaching.

Functional Education

Functional education is a holistic and educational experience that is focused on the identification of situational problems, gathering of information to make decisions in a world of challenges and realities of life, enhancing users and end users to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to showcase new concepts as a vehicle of globalizing such countries or state for meaningful co-existence, sustainability and developments (Adewale, 2014). Its purpose is to develop the life of the mind that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future.

In Nigeria, the philosophy of education states that, there is need for functional education for the promotion of progressive united Nigeria. To this end, schools programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in Education, (FRN, 2014). Sequel to this, functional education is referred to as educational system that works, bring about

behaviour changes, possess core values, skills acquisition and produces knowledgeable citizens, self reliance individuals, manpower development and national development.

Theoretical Framework

The operation of a system is that it exists to accomplish specific purposes. All of these purposes are determined from time to time on the basis of demands into the system or the existence of a problem that needs attention. It is implicit that the notion that each part of the larger system does not stand alone but is related to other parts. These interrelated activities derive their relatedness or systematizes from the fact that they all, more or less influence the way in which authoritative decisions are formulated and executed for a society.

According to Connor as cited in Asaju & Adagbo (2014) if we hold the system as a unit before our minds eyes, as it were, we can see that what keeps the system going are inputs of various kinds. These inputs are converted by the processes of the system into outputs and these, in turn, have consequences both for the system and the environment in which the system exists.

Within the system, other sub – systems exist, which depend on the larger system to survive. According to them, the system receives inputs (demand and supply) from its environment. Demands are request made by citizens, on government to provide, supply, deliver or make available services, goods, amenities, facilities, opportunities, etc. All these demands from the environment, are processed and decisions are taken on them at the conversion centre (transformation box) while output (results) are produced.

Unsatisfied demands (fresh inputs) are generated and feedback into the transformation box for processing and conversion through the feedback mechanism and the process continues. Support is made up of financial material, moral and human contributions to the process of transforming inputs into outputs. Outputs are composed of policies, plans and budgets aimed at meeting people's demands or requests. It can also be physical goods, services, physical structures; positive or negative response to people's demands. Transformation box is made up of the legislature, executive and judicial arms of government. It is the decision making box.

The transformation box must have adequate feedback process through which a portion of it's output, which is feedback to the input, affects the success of the outputs, the absence of which the survival of the system is at stake.

Relating the above theory to the subject matter, education as a social institution in a systematic way interact with other subsystems and it affects and is affected by and as well feeding back on these subsystems i.e. economic, political, cultural and other subsystems of the stated subsystems among which is poverty. The interactions, relationships, among these systems and subsystems (i.e. education and poverty) and their effects on one another is the nucleus of this study.

Alleviating Poverty through Creative and Functional Education

Education is an inevitable tool for human survival and vital enterprises that touches the lives of both the present and future generations. Connor as cited in Asaju & Adagbo (2014) sees educational system of any society as an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it, certain skills and attitude that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. Education generate new knowledge in various fields of learning, accelerate economic growth, equalize income distribution, forge national unity and integration and enhance cultural and social advancement (Umo,1978) as cited in Agbowuro, Saidu & Jimwan (2017).

Equally, through creative and functional education, qualitative manpower is produced. The educational system of any nation determines its type, nature and caliber of manpower to be supplied. The educational system and the commitment to human resource development have been attributed to their level of achievement and other breakthroughs experienced in these countries. The economic success of the so called 'Asian tiger' has been attributed to the educational system which are creative and functional and the priorities given to human resource development. Refereeing to the successes of these developed nations, Ekpenyong as cited in Asaju & Adagbo (2014) opined that when there are fairly well developed human resources, lack of abundant supply of other factors such as physical capital and technology does not posed any insurmountable barrier to sustained growth.

Human resources not capital or income, nor material resources constitute the ultimate basic wealth of a nation. It is the human resource that accumulates capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry over national development (Harbison, as cited in Oziengbe & Omonkalo (2012). All these are achieved through a functional education. No wonder, countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland were adjudged to be the best countries to live due to their commitment to education (UNDP, 2009). While the developed countries have continued to achieve breakthroughs in every facet of their economy, the underdeveloped nations are still struggling to cope with the numerous developmental challenges inhibiting their progress. The development of these nations are still be-devilled by challenges of high rate of unemployment, poverty, inequality, diseases, ethno-religious crisis, and war political crisis among others that brought about untold hardship and pain to their populace (Asaju, 2012). The above situation is not far -fetched in Nigeria where about 70% of the populace still wallow in poverty; income inequality gap is still widening, unemployment rate is still high (Onuba, 2012).

Nigeria is adjudged to be one of the richly blessed countries in terms of human and material resources. Using this wealth to better the life of her populace has continued to be a mirage. The question is, is the educational system effective in solving the problem of poverty in Nigeria? Scholars have tried to prove that there is a relationship between underdevelopment in Nigeria and its educational system. Onyechi (2014) asserted that the underdevelopment and its challenges witnessed in Nigeria and as a

result of low quality or standard of education in the country. To him, the resultant effect of the low quality of education has been witnessed in the lack of modernization across all sectors of the country. Lack of the functional education has placed Nigeria far behind in the modernization process and the defect has been the mother and father of all evil that follows; poverty, debt burden, conflict, corruption, abuses of human right, abuses of power, killer diseases, epileptic democratic government and so on.

The quality of the products of the educational system, the level of learner's achievement, the desperation of pupils to succeed as evidenced by unabated incidences and sophistication of examination malpractices, and falsification of credentials, frequency of teachers strike, and their poor quality, all point to inefficient performance of the system (Abubakar 2009). The gross underfunding of the educational sector, coupled with other related problems of infrastructural decay, inadequate teaching and learning materials, incompetent teaching and learning materials, incompetent teaching staff, inconsistency and lack of clear cut education policy, all these point to low quality of education.

A creative and functional educational system in Nigeria will bring about high-quality manpower that will turn around the available resources into wealth for the nation. The country will also experience a turn-around in science and technology, which will in-turn affect all other sectors of the economy. Thus, the wealth of the nation will be redistributed to favour the poor populace. There would be many employment opportunities which will lead to income generation and invariably the decline in the high rate of poverty and inequality.

Creative and functional education is a leveller of opportunities. The case in Nigeria where majority of the graduates of the educational institutions search for white-collar jobs that are very scarce and difficult to secure will be a thing of the past. Creative and functional education will bring about graduate who are entrepreneurs and self-dependent and ready to practice what they had learnt in school. These entrepreneurs will also become employers of labour. With this chain, more jobs will be created and income generated. The end result is that many will be uplifted from the dudgeon of unemployment and poverty. Thus, it can be adduced that there is a symbiotic relationship between functional education and poverty alleviation. Abubakar (2008) attributed the poor quality of education in the country on the increasing level of poverty and unemployment. He opined that if the problem of unemployment and poverty can be addressed in the country, the standard of education will definitely improve. Both poverty and functional education affect each other either ways. Solving the problem of poverty will also reduce or lead to the elimination of other developmental challenges and social ills presently experienced in the country. Thus, vices like corruption, insecurity, bad governance, ethno religious crisis and even illiteracy among others could be attributed to high rate of poverty in the country. For instance, the Boko Haram insurgence has majorly been attributed to the high level of

poverty and unemployment in the country, especially in the north eastern zone of the country. All these vices could be corrected through creative and functional education.

Conclusion

Creative and functional education is a panacea for reducing the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. Although, the educational system in Nigeria is still inefficient due to many factors, its functionality will bring about accelerated growth in the economy. When graduates of the country's educational institutions can independently practice what they learnt in school without waiting for office or government jobs, more jobs will be created and income enhanced. The technological revivals that will follow will also positively lead to industrial revolution which will lead to more job opportunities.

Recommendations

In order to reduce the rate of poverty in Nigeria through creative and functional education, government should effect the following recommendations:

1. The government at all level should show its commitment and political-will to ensuring functional education through its funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational projects and programmes.
2. There is also the need for government's commitment to the resurgence of science and technology as well as technical education in Nigeria. This should start from the primary level.
3. A law should be enacted that will mandate the federal and state governments to adhere strictly to the UNESCO's recommendation that 26 percent of their annual budget be allocated to education.
4. There should be an ethical reorientation that aims at raising the consciousness of the citizenry and politicians in particular to see the sacred nature of education rather than making isolated attempts at turning around a particular institute or university because the forces that prevail against good education in the country are still very pervasive and behemoth.
5. Government should ensure that the objective of our educational system is geared towards producing a total person with the requisite skills, knowledge and values relevant to the 21st century and beyond.
6. The various supervisory agencies of the educational institutions and the Ministry of education should be more committed to playing their role as a watch-dog in ensuring that all educational institutions from primary to tertiary operate within and abide by laid down standard.
7. Universities should launch programmes that will enable aspiring teachers to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

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