

A Functional Perspective of Education as the Bedrock of National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: True education is that in which learners are equipped with the ability to perceive accurately, think clearly, and act effectively. This equipping is accomplished via the three domains of education: cognitive, affective and sensory. In other words, education is said to be effective when learners acquire knowledge, develop skills, and adopt values. Education that fails to address these three domains cannot bring about significant development either for the individual or the society at large. Reports of a continuous downward trend in the quality of education have been a major concern for stakeholders for more than three decades. The deficiencies of the Nigerian education system could possibly be attributed to a faulty understanding of the components, goals and essence of education because the overriding perspective of education held by each society and culture determines the approach, plan and policies put in place to facilitate the educational process. This study therefore considered the components and goals of education, the difference between schooling and education, and the relationship between course of study and education. Using a plethora of books, articles and internet publications, the study analyzed different perspectives on education, its components and goals, with the intent of bringing forth a clear understanding of a functional education system. This approach is hinged on the assumption that a better understanding will lead to a re-appraisal of the current system of education in Nigeria in relation to its genuine alignment to the much touted desire for national development. The paper concluded that education can only be described as excellent when individuals and their societies are positively impacted by the knowledge acquired. Absence of tangible national development in terms of productivity of various sectors and poor standard of living, porous methods of handling crime and anti-social behavior, corruption and bad governance are clear indicators of a dysfunctional system of education. A system of education that fails to have positive impact on society may have succeeded at making people literate but has woefully failed in getting them educated. This study therefore recommended that stakeholders in the education sector be given proper orientation on what functional education is and how such can be adopted and utilized for national development.

Key Words: Functional education, positive impact, system of education, domain of education, national development

I. INTRODUCTION

More often than not, different things are done without clear understanding of what is being done and why they are being done. Education appears to have fallen within the category of such things as it has become more of a cliché whose meaning no longer requires thought. It is often discussed and practiced without really taking time to know

what it is about and why it is needed. The notion of education and the idea of being ‘educated’ have become so pedestrian that the meaning and purpose are being persistently eroded. A system of education can be “successfully” but mindlessly run especially when stakeholders, educators and learners themselves approach education with the assumption that they are so deeply familiar with the process that they fail to carefully consider the outcome of what is being called education. Postman and Weingartner (1973) posit that mindlessness in education occurs in a society where the main concern of education is with the how rather than the why. Societal and individual needs should determine the type of education being given and received. Once in a while, according to Tucker (1998), it is necessary to stop and objectively reflect on what education really means, how it is being handled, and whether or not the goals are truly being achieved.

Effective education is not necessarily determined by the infrastructures of an institution, facilities, number of graduates, different programs of study, and even the final grade of students, which are important; but effective education is determined by the impact made on the development of people and society. Education that engenders development must be carefully conceived of in terms of content and purpose. Knight (2006) asserts that no one can arrive at their destination unless they know where they are going. In order to experience national development (destination), there is a need to first understand what true education, the bedrock, is. This paper looks into general understanding of education, types and goals of education.

II. WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Education is breeding, bringing up, rearing. It is to lead out to somewhere, in the context of this study that ‘somewhere’ is called educational goal. A specific goal(s) must be met; a destination must be reached before one can claim that education has truly served its purpose. Many people, according to Price-Mitchell (2014), have a superficial concept of education. Education has been equated with doing a particular course or obtaining a particular school qualification or degree. This wrong idea of education was observed over a century ago by White (1903) who claimed that education has been conceived of in an extremely narrow and parochial perspective. White then called for a broader scope and a higher aim. According to her, education is more than a perusal of a certain course of study. Course of study,

educational qualifications, and/or school degree cannot always be equated with effective education. People can go through school, undertake courses without any laudable destination in mind. It is also possible to acquire qualifications and degrees without adding value to society. If education were to be only courses of study, qualification and degree, most underdeveloped countries of the world would not be bedeviled with the ills being faced. According to Price-Mitchell (2014), an individual's ability to read and understand what is read, does not mean that the person is educated. For someone to be truly educated, he/she should be able to integrate what is read into his/her attitude and memory. Real or true education is not just having access to or being exposed to information about something. It is embedding things into one's brain and bringing about a positive and permanent change in the person. Ability to read or write does not necessarily imply that someone is educated.

In essence, schooling is not necessarily learning which education brings.

Schooling may be for a period of life. It is an attendance at an institution in which teachers and students operate in a prescribed manner (Knight, 2006). Schooling should be an aspect of education because learning is expected to occur in school. But it is possible to attend school yet no tangible learning takes place. White (1903) saw education as the "harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers." (p. 13). Education is broader than schooling because it takes place not only within the school system. It is not limited to schooling. Schooling, when properly organized and equipped becomes an avenue for formal education—education which takes place in school. Education is not just empowerment as seen by Olukaju (2014), rather, it facilitates the development of an internal compass that guides through life. Education is more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible for an individual (Knight, 2006; White, 1903). Education is a lifelong and dynamic process.

Looking beyond course of study, education is a process in which and by which knowledge, character, and behavior of human beings are shaped and molded (Boyi, 2013; Dike, nd; Farooq, 2012; Lawal, 2013; Orji & Job, 2013). A well-behaved society may imply an educated society and a non-well-behaved society, irrespective of the number of educational institutions also may imply an un-educated society. Presenting this concept from another perspective, Farooq (2012) compared human beings to a rough diamond that requires filling and polishing before all the faculties can function. Education, according to him, is polishing and filling of human personality so that it reaches its fullest development. The process enables a person to lead a better physical, intellectual and spiritual life. Farooq (2012) also added that education should lead to enlightenment of human beings. It should enable an individual to distinguish between the true and false, the good and bad, right conducts and that which is

wrong. Education takes someone beyond mere distinguishing of these conducts, to a level of acting appropriately and doing what is right to add value to society. It equips learners to meaningfully transfer a concept from one setting to the other; to be able to transfer or apply what is learned to practical life (Anthony, 2008). Education enables learners to discover their potentials and identify ways to utilize the potentials in impacting others and the society. In relation to a nation, education is an ultimate value and an agent of change. Orobosa (2010) claimed that it is to a nation what the mind is to the body. It is a potent instrument for positive national transformation (Eduwen & Osagie-Obazee, 2016). Charles Habib Malik, who was once a president of the United Nations, speaking of university education declared, "change the university and you change the world" (Gaylor, 2003, p. 10). Extending this statement to general education in the context of this paper, it will be, change the understanding and approach to education, and you change the society/nation. A nation that does not place priority on education does not need external war before it is destroyed, rather, the rot created by its uneducated populace will eventually destroy her from within.

Knight (2006) portrayed education as a subset of learning. Education, according to him, is a deliberate attempt to control a learning situation in order to bring about the attainment of a desired learning outcome. So, education is not meant to be done in a vacuum or just for its own sake, there should be specific goals attained which at the end will influence the society in practical and positive ways.

III. TYPES OF EDUCATION

According to Dushi (2012), education in its all-inclusive form goes beyond what takes place within the four walls of the classroom it is therefore broader than schooling. In order to have a well rounded perspective of education, it should be considered within three broad categories: formal education, informal education, and non-formal education.

Formal Education:

Formal education is usually in school, where a person may learn basic, academic, or trade skills (UNESCO, 2005; Uriah & Wosu, 2012). These days, small children attend nursery or kindergarten and many times this process is considered to be part of formal education. But Drexel University (2014) argued that formal education begins in elementary or primary school and continues with secondary school. Higher education or post-secondary education is at a college or university which may grant an academic degree. Formal education is subject oriented with the curriculum based on certain aims and objectives which are in conformity with the needs of the society and the nation (Dushi, 2012). There are deliberate processes in formal education and it is given by specially qualified teachers who are expected to be efficient in the art of instruction (Uriah & Wosu, 2012). Formal education often involves strict discipline. The teacher is to impact students for out-of-school and societal usefulness;

adding values to the society, identifying and solving problem to make life better for themselves and others. Certificate and degrees are awarded at the end of the program (Drexel University, 2014; Dushi, 2012). Therefore, formal education is not an end in itself but a mean to an end.

Informal Education:

Informal education may be an incidental and spontaneous, non-structured way of providing instruction. It may be through the reading of books or other informative materials in the library or educational websites. Informal education is learning outside of school where everything is structured. There is no particular learning method applied in informal education. It is neither pre-planned nor deliberate; learning does not depend on learner's conscious effort. It can take place anywhere like the home, farm, market, and hotel, but not within a school setting. There is no fixed timetable or mandatory attendance and there is no prescribed curriculum required. This type of education is acquired through experiences and actual interactions in the family or/and community. While it usually requires a long process, the goal is to equip people for meaningful and fruitful living (Dushi, 2012). Through this type of education, people acquire native-intelligence and become adept in the intricacies of cultural and social expectations. Informal education can result in the inculcation of negative disposition since people imbibe attitude, develop skills, cultivate values and acquire knowledge in contexts where no organization or monitoring system had been put in place.

Non-Formal Education:

Though non-formal education is outside of the realm of formal education, it is derived from the term 'formal education' (Dushi, 2012). In non-formal education, learners are exposed to literacy, other basic skills or job skills. Non-formal education may include adult basic education, adult literacy education or school equivalence preparation. Home education, individualized instruction, distance learning and computer-assisted instruction are other possibilities of non-formal education. It is organized for a homogeneous group. It is planned to meet the needs of the people involved. Both the curriculum and the scheme of evaluation are flexible in nature. It is designed to educate those that may not have the opportunity for formal education therefore, it employs a practical approach to learning. The method is deliberate and involves more of learners' participation. Informal education is packaged with the goal of assisting people to build capacity for a useful life of positive impact in the society.

These three types of education are needed in every society and country in order to build different categories of people and equip them for critical and creative thinking. When individuals are equipped with the ability to think creatively and critically, they become positioned to identify a variety of societal problems and also provide solutions to such problems.

IV. GOALS OF EDUCATION

Education is often unwittingly described in terms of its goals. In the attempt to define education, White (1903), Knight (2006) and McCartney (2015) present that which education is meant to achieve as education itself. True education, according to Garber (1996) "is always about learning to connect knowing with doing, belief with behavior" (p. 57). This study identifies some specific goals which are seen as different from a description or definition of education. Education is not an abstraction rather, it is the acquiring of knowledge that is integrated, extended and refined by making new distinctions and reaching conclusion, and then used to perform meaningful tasks (Marzano, Pickering, Arredondo, Blackburn, Brandt, & Moffett, 1992). Farooq (2012) posits that education is to turn ideas into reality. Any education system in which learning remains only on the level of presentation and inculcation of ideas, does not qualify to be so labeled. There are numerous goals which education is to fulfill. This paper identifies some and are here discussed. Individuals make up a society; therefore, individuals need to be developed in order for the society to develop. To build a united and egalitarian country according Otonko (2012), every citizen should contribute. The first goal considered is intellectual development. An effective education is to make learners cultivate sound mental facilities. Intellectual development is not memorization but a logical thinking ability, rational attitude and analytical strength (Farooq, 2012; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). Education is to help students develop ways of thinking and living that are coherent, that make sense of the whole of life (Garber, 1996). It is for creation of well-prepared mind ready to face challenges and thereby bring solutions to societal problems (Fortino, 2012). Knowledge has no value in itself until it has positive effect on real people and their communities (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011; Ozmon & Craver, 2003).

Self-realization is the second goal identified that education is to achieve. Education is to make individual learner know and understand himself/herself. Learners should be able to undertake self-exploration, to value their own right, to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority (Farooq, 2012; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). Education is to create in individual a sense of personal responsibility, initiative and the spirit of service. Personal potential should be discovered and channeled for proper and adequate utilization through effective education for building a better society. Effective education should make people feel comfortable to answer the question "Who am I?" and they should be able to identify their position in the national development process. Education should make students develop physically and have love for personal healthful living (Farooq, 2012).

The third goal is character building which is an essential goal of education. Education is to help students weave together conviction, character and community to nourish a vision of moral meaning which can stand against the

most destructive forces of the contemporary world (Garber, 1996). Character, according to Farooq (2013), is a value of both individual and collective importance which is necessary for a peaceful society. In his description of education in relation to Nigeria, Dike (nd) opines that the type of education that should prevail is values education which involves educating for character and for good moral values.

The fourth goal is the education should make learners develop appreciation for beauty and to create beauty as part of success of life (Farooq, 2012). Just as Orr (2018) declares that education is environmental; people's environment is an indication of the type of education acquired and the effectiveness of the education. Education is to make people understand that they are part of the natural world. It is to let them identify their position in the world and how to make it better for living. An educated person is concerned about his/her environment and works to preserve and make it clean and attractive.

Education is not abstraction, therefore, it is to help learners develop skills that will be useful to maintain life, bring economic prosperity, to uplift social stand and values, and to bring political stability; this is the fifth goal. Skill development—technological advancements, technical skills—makes students to identify and acknowledge their position in the development of society and make valuable and profitable decision. When skills are developed, each person selects job appropriate to his/her ability and interest, and maintains good relationship with fellow workers (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). According to Rothstein and Jacobsen (2006), skills are needed to compete in the labor market, it makes people fulfill their roles as citizens, and it gives ability to participate fully (economy, commerce, politics, religion, and social) in society, in the life of a nation. The meaningful participation by every citizen brings about social reform because education is to prepare people for useful and meaningful life (Abolarin, 2017).

Value inculcation is the seventh and an important goal of education. Knight (2006) declares that education has to do with the transmission of values. George Washington, in his first message to USA Congress, advocated for education that would teach virtue and morality (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). Education is to encourage tolerance of diversity, that there is no basis for jealousies and prejudice. There should equality among citizens. Education is to help students to understand that just as a farmer works on the farm to serve, teachers teach to serve, so are the governors in their office, ministers in passing bills, and the president in directing the affairs of a nation, serve to bring about beneficial and conducive society and nation. Education is to inculcate good judgement in students. Education had a social responsibility, that there is a connection between learning and life that has moral consequence (Garber, 1996). Morality—justice and fair dealing, honesty, truthfulness, maintenance of group understanding, proper respect for authority, just disposition, virtuous habits, rational self-governing character, habits of

cooperation, excellence, hard work habits (industry and self-control), and endurance—should be developed in students by effective education (Otonko, 2012; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006).

The eighth goal of education is worship. Worship according to Farooq (2012) is an important value in education that connects people to God. Therefore, education determines the kind of faith people develop. *The Nation* (2018, June 21) indicates that traditions, culture, and faith are reflections of education. Garber (1996) asserts that education is to help understand how to more faithfully and effectively nurture a vision of being the presence of God in the midst of the world and the creation. Doing this, according to him, is the reason for being, and for being learners that learners may become people who sustain commitment, with gladness and singleness of heart. Education should be oriented to preparation for a calling and not just training for a career (Garber, 1996).

V. WAY TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL GOALS

According to Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), education has not played its role positively in Nigeria as a nation. Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee (2016) assert that a nation cannot be said to have developed when a significant percent of her population are not educated and there is decay in the country's educational system. Emphasis of education should be on achieving the goals of education. When education focuses on the goal rather than only subjects, on the needs rather than process, individuals will be developed and the nation will also follow suit. In the year 2004, education in Nigeria seemed to focus on the needs of the individual learner in terms of the kind of society desired in relation to the environment, globalisation and rapid social change. This focus was changed to entrepreneurship and global economy in 2006 (Lawal, 2013). One could rightly say that education deserves a better and more extensive focus since it is a means to developing an inclusive society over a long-term. The following are suggested ways of achieving education goals that can bring about national development.

1. There is need for government, parent, education administrators, teachers, and students to have clear understanding of what education is about. Education is not only to make people literate, it is to equip them for emotional integration, positive attitude, cooperative responsibility, accountability, practical use of knowledge, and adding of values. Otonko (2012) indicates how Nigerians lost the meaning of education and turned it to money making and political venture. There should be focus on both formal and non-formal types of education to meet the needs of majority of the citizens.
2. Education should be devoid politics. Government should create enabling academic environment through prioritization of funds but should not influence academic for personal interest. Government should identify needs and be sure that

education that exists prepare people to meet the needs through a renewed focus on teaching what is fundamentally important focusing on the needs of individual and society.

3. Teachers are indispensable tools when talking about education. There is need for proper re-orientation and training of teachers/lecturers. Teachers/lecturers should develop the capacity to see the potential in students and develop vision for what learners may become rather than seeing them for what they are currently (Abolarin, 2013). Teachers' duties is beyond recitation in class, it is for them to know that they are building the society builders. Teachers have obligation to the development of education and teaching as a profession (Eduwen & Osagie-Obazee, 2016). In order to achieve the goals of education, there are needs for teachers who provide role models for integrity, care, thoughtfulness, and institutions that are capable of embodying ideals wholly and completely in all of their operations (Abolarin, 2013; Orr, 2018). "Teaching is a high moral calling, and teachers should serve as exemplary models—persons after whom students can pattern their lives" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 36). There is need for teachers whose cultural background is sufficiently broad and deep to enable them to serve at once as examples and as inspiration for learners (Keniston, 1960). Good teaching is not to be reduced to technique but must come from the identity and integrity of the teacher (Abolarin, 2013). There should be engaging and empowering personalized learning experiences for learners by teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).
4. Curricula should not remain the old age ones but current and ones that address the needs of the society. *The Nation* (2018, June 21) indicates that there is need for curriculum that will meet the developmental challenges in the country. The curriculum should be for both the formal and non-formal types of education in the country. Curriculum should aim at enable learners to learn knowledge, develop conceptual and intellectual skills, attitudes, values, and aptitudes conducive to the all-round development of their personality and proportionate with the societal realities and needs. In relation to curriculum, teachers should exercise judgement about the kind of material that are important for student's learning and they should encourage diligent study of the material. There should be intentionality in reviewing curricula to meet the needs of the society and the nation at large. Curricula which are determined by needs, should not be abstractions but practical that will build competence—learning by doing.
5. Admission should not be on nepotism neither should grade be given on favor. Integrity and sincerity should be the watch word in every aspect of

education, from admission to graduation; even to employment.

6. Establishment of Academic Effectiveness Council (AEC). This body is to ensure the practicality of courses offer in the educational institutions. It is to connect the gown and the town. The body will have a clear understanding of the societal and national needs and identify the educational institutions that specialize in the areas of need, sand then make sure the curriculum and the method of teaching meet those identify needs. This may not necessarily be a new council, the existing ones like Nigeria University Commission (NUC) may be empowered to include the responsibility.
7. Accountability is an important thing that must be ensured. As an educational concept, accountability relates mainly to a concern for furthering effectiveness of school system (Anderson, Ball, Murphy *et al*, 1975). Students must be made accountable for their performance, teachers must be accountable for their responsibility, and administrators must be accountable for policies and their implementation.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, education should be understood in a broader sense than it has ever be done. There should be focus not only on formal education but also on non-formal in order to allow citizens that may not be able to acquire formal education educated. In order to have effective education, the question should not just be how? but majorly why? The needs of the nation for development should determine the curriculum, the teaching, the personnel and the education in general. The stakeholders should identify and understand the goals of education and work to fulfill the goals. Accountability should be paramount from students to the administrators to make sure that the education being established is the type that meets the needs and helps to develop the nation

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