

## Functional Education as a Tool for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Implication for Curriculum Planners.

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**Abstract.** Any nation cannot develop beyond its educational standards or level, thus, education is seen as a catalyst for socio-economic and political development of a nation. The success of many nations is tackling major developmental problems such as poverty, unemployment and inequality among others can be traced to their educational system. Nigeria is not an isolated case as one of its developmental problems is poverty. It is in the light of the above, that this write up examines the relationship between functional education and sustainable development where it illuminates what functional education is, and the concept of sustainable development. The Paper discussed how functional education can be a tool for sustainable development and also elaborated on traditional education as an example of functional education and how it can be harmonized with formal education for effective result. It further explained functional education as obtained in the objectives of national policy on education and explicate the concept of curriculum planners. The write up also looked at the implication for curriculum planners. The paper concludes that functional education is a force that can reduce poverty, create job opportunities and raise income rates. Lastly the paper give some achievable recommendations to the government and other stake holders among which are: ensuring functional education through its funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational project and

programmes and ensure that the objective of our educational system is geared towards producing a total person with requisite skills knowledge and values relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

Keywords: Functional education, Sustainable development and curriculum planners

### 1. Introduction

Education is the bedrock of socioeconomic and political development of any nation. Developed countries like China, Japan, Russia and United States of America among others have achieved various breakthrough due to their commitment to ensuring a functional system in their countries. All of these nations have been able to overcome several developmental challenges like poverty, unemployment, ignorance which are harmful to human existence and whose presence could lead to other social vices like; insecurity, crisis, conflicts and wars among other social ills. One of the enduring legacies that any society can give to its younger generation is education (whether is formal or informal). It is a means by which the norms and values of a given society are transmitted to its younger ones. From time immemorial, every activities or programme aimed at equipping the younger generation with skills and knowledge are considered necessary for them to function effectively and contribute to the overall development of the society.

The continuing problem of poverty, unemployment, inequality among others has bedevilled 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 like poverty alleviation and women for women where women are trained in different skills by non-governmental organisations, and other foreign government agencies. It is evident that 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. The only way to check these challenges is through effective and functional education which is a vital enterprise that touches the lives of both present and future generations yet unborn Asaju et.al (2013) in their study, they concludes 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 to other social ills experienced in the country.

## 2. Functional Education

According to Idowu (1999), functional education is the total process of bringing up individuals to develop their potentials (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) to the fullest and consequently be able to contribute maximally to the development of the society. Arogundade (2011) adds that functional education seeks to prepare people, especially youth, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers who will contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. The need for functional education started emerging in the mid-1980s. In the mid-80s, the Nigerian economy collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof. There was large scale layoff of workers and retirement as a result of structural adjustment programmes and bad economic trends in the country. During this situation, functional education, which would have salvaged the situation, was not encouraged. He further observed that tertiary education has not properly include the philosophy of self-

reliance such as creating a new productive cultural environment that will promote pride in primitive works and self-discipline, encouraging people to actively and freely take in decision and decision affecting their general welfare, promoting new set of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges.

In many European countries, universities and technical colleges train students of science, economics and business management in skills that help to build more sustainable societies. Programmes such as peace education, human right education, Environmental Education, and youth entrepreneur schemes are carried out in many schools. Hence, such initiatives help students and teachers to gain an understanding of inter-linkages needed for sustainable development. The emphasis has been on education that will provide life and occupational skills that will enhance the potentials of individuals reinforcing self-sufficiency and improving quality of life.

## 3. Sustainable Development

According to Adams (2006), sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. Sustainable development has given better economic opportunities to people without collapsing ecological functions of the economy. Sustainable development is not about balancing anything. It does not mean striking some lowest common denomination equilibrium between environmental, social and economic factors; it is about maintaining the basic environmental condition without which economic development cannot take place at all. Indeed, in the case of climate, it is about maintaining the fundamental environmental conditions for civilization itself.

In the past, people learn the hard way to maintain the social conditions for economic growth. It took the middle of the twentieth century for people to accept the need to invest some of the proceeds of economic growth in maintaining social conditions health, education, and welfare. But by then, five decades were spent deciding whether communism or fascism

was preferred. It took another four decades before both options in that grimes choices were finally done Adams (2006).

#### 4. Concept of Curriculum Planners

According to Obasi (2018), the term curriculum is hydra-headed in that it defies all efforts to pin it down to a definite meaning. The differences in the definitions stem from the varied views writers have on the nature of knowledge itself and the nature of learning. Traditionally, curriculum was perceived as information passed from one generation to another in the form of organised knowledge. He added that under such definition, curriculum will comprise of essential subject or even the mastery of collection of books. He also added that, in the middle year of the twentieth century, the definition of curriculum was broaden to include diversity of leaners and our understanding about learner differences. The focus was then on what was experienced by the student. Also, by the third of the twentieth century, and driven largely by the financial concerns, curriculum planners focussed their efforts and define curriculum according to product or outcomes. From the above, curriculum can broadly be defined under five cognate subheadings:

- As a subject matter, curriculum consists of permanent studies, the rules of grammar, reading rhetoric; logic and mathematics at the secondary level, the greatest book of the western world. Put differently, the curriculum is a planned programme of learning opportunities to achieve broad educational goals and relate objectives. The curriculum is all of the learning of the students that is planned by and directed by the school to attain its educational goals.
- As a plan for learning, curriculum of a school can be conceived of as a sense of plan events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students.
- Curriculum is those experiences set up by the school for the purpose of disciplining students and shaping their ways of thinking and acting. The

curriculum is greatly considered to be all of the experience that leaners have under the auspice the school.

- As an outcome, the curriculum is a planned learning outcome for which the school is responsible. The curriculum is a structure set of learning outcome (objective) resulting from instruction. Curriculum is concern not with what students will do in the learning situation but with what they will learn as a consequence of what they do.
- Curriculum Planners are both professionals and non-professionals because it is an elaborate and involving task. Taking these into account, it follows that any effective curriculum planning and development will include: curriculum experts, teachers, parents, learners, psychologists, subject specialist, philosophers, administrators/representatives of ministries of education and other interest groups like social workers, doctors, traders.

#### 5. Traditional Education as an Instance of Functional Education

According to Fafunwa (1974), every society has its own system of educating their younger members. Every society whether simple or complex has its own system for training and educating its youth. He explained that educational goals and methods generally differ from place to place and perhaps time to time. Any education, he argues, can only be evaluated in terms of how it meets the needs of that given society.

Traditional African education to Fafunwa, is characterized by functionalism, social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual, and moral values. Learners learned by doing in a process that is distinguished by its integrated experience, a continuous method of assessment, adequate flexibility as opposed to rigid compartmentalization as well as intricate interwoven methods and content.

The aim of this education, to him, includes:

- To develop child's lateen skills.
- To develop character
- To include respect for elders and those in position of authority
- To develop intellectual skills.
- To acquire specific vocational training and to develop healthy attitude towards honest labour.
- To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
- To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Traditional education which encourages apprenticeship training has been viewed as an alternative source of man power training and development in Nigeria. The period of learning (apprenticeship) differs in trades and establishment of a company. After an apprenticeship length of time, the apprentice is allowed to perform some work. This is to evaluate his skills so far, after that, he then progresses on the journey of becoming a man, the apprentice is initiated into the gild. At this time, he may prefer to own his business, join others, or stay with his master.

#### **6. Functional Education Curriculum as a Tool for Sustainable Development**

Cookey (2003), defines functional education as the education in which the ability to perform productive tasks is more emphasized than education that aim at producing ideological conformity. It is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory. Cookey went further to say that Nigerian education has not been functional because too much emphasis has been placed on theoretical and academic knowledge. There is undue emphasis on the possession of certificates instead of on what one can do. According to Ukeje (1992), the education processes are geared primarily to prepare students for examination. Through this process of education, the students acquire knowledge and facts without understanding and without saleable skills, the result of this

dysfunctional education is that schools turn out graduates without useful knowledge and skills and who becomes alienated from their own environment. Functional education is a leveller of opportunities. The case in Nigeria where majority of 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 if Nigeria operates a functional curriculum.

Functional education will produce graduates who are entrepreneurs and self-dependent and ready to practice what they have learned in the school. These entrepreneurs will also become employers of labour. More jobs will be created and income will be generated. The end result is that many will be lifted from their problems of unemployment and poverty. Functional education will lead to reduction or elimination of other developmental challenges and social ills presently experienced in the country. Thus vices like corruption, insecurity, poor governance, ethno religious crisis and even illiteracy among others could be attributed to high rate of unemployment and poverty in the country. According to minzer (1992), for functional education to be functional, it should be relevant to the needs of the nation of society and should not only train high level man power but contribute to all development of the nation. A functional education promotes the welfare of its citizenry, advances science and technology and economic growth, enhance democracy. Education is a pivot on which other factors are resolved.

#### **7. Functionality and the Objectives of Nigerian Post Basic Education**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) believes that:

*There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To this end, 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 and social abilities and competences as equipment for the*

*individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.*

Based on National Policy on Education, Post Basic Education is that which children receive after successful completion of nine years of basic education and passing the basic education certificate examination (BECE). It includes:

- Senior secondary education.
- Higher school and
- Continuing education given in specialized career and enterprise schools to either basic education graduates who are not proceeding to senior secondary school, or senior secondary graduate that are not preceding to tertiary level.

Objectives of post basic education (PBEC) for functional education as obtained in the National Policy on Education 5<sup>th</sup> edition include:

- (i) **To provide man power in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades:-** the society needs competent auto mechanic and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, electronics and computers data base web, network technicians, book keepers and clerks, medical technicians, nursing assistants and graduates who are skilled in different areas to function well. Umo (1978), through functional education, qualitative manpower is produced. The education system of any nation determines its type, nature and calibre of manpower to be supplied.

The educational system and the commitment to human resource development have been attributed to the level of achievement and breakthrough experienced in the country. Nigeria is adjudged to be one of the richly blessed countries in terms of human and material resources. But using this wealth to better the life of her populace has continued to be a mirage. Even meeting the basic necessities of life like; food, cloth and shelter has been very difficult for many of her citizens. Nigeria needs functional educational system to bring about high quality man power that 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 the other sectors of the economy. The wealth of the nation will be redistributed to favour the populace. There will be enough employment opportunities which will lead to income and invariably the decline in the high rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality. This will bring about an improvement in the wellbeing of the populace in the country.

It is in the light of this that some states in the country have establish some training schools to be able to produce more man power in different areas to improve the economy of the country for example there is a motor machine school established in Enugu where many apprentices are enrolled to be trained in that area. Elsewhere in Plateau state a secondary school called BUTECHS is established to train students who are at the post basic level indifferent skills like carpentry, sciences and technology so as to improve manpower and increase potentials in the younger generation so that by the time they complete their studies they can use those skills to be self-reliant. The students on completion, will not only be self-reliant but will also contribute to the sustainable economic growth of the nation.

Since the inception National Directorate of Employment in 1987, many people were trained in different skills and are now operating micro enterprises in the thirty six states of the federation and federal capital territory (Abuja). It will be pertinent to mention that currently, many unemployed youths are on training under the national open apprenticeship schemes in various training companies nationwide who are running apprenticeship scheme in partnership with the directorate.

In addition to functionality and Nigeria post basic education, Umo (1978), says through the introduction of functional education, qualitative manpower is produced. The functional education in Nigeria is to train qualify man power in Nigeria that will be productive. The introduction of technical education in the post basic education will equipped the graduate with the basic skills that will make them to be self-

employed because of the skills learned in school through entrepreneurship education.

**(ii) Inspire students with the desire for self-employment and achievement of excellence:-** the impressionable needs inspiration to help them achieved sustainable future for example the introduction of entrepreneurship education which encourages creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-work in the post-basic education curriculum, will help inspire them to acquire entrepreneurial ideas and put them to use for sustainable future.

Anho (2011), says entrepreneurship education is a form of education which makes people to be responsive to their personal families, national needs and aspiration. Entrepreneurship competence carries with it, the concept of skills and mental awareness which are needed to understand the functioning of an already existing business. Entrepreneurship education is about developing attitude, behaviours and capacities at the individual's level. It is also about application of those skills and attitudes that can make many forms during an individual's career, creating a range of long term benefits to society and the economy. Entrepreneurship helps to reduce the rate of unemployment and poverty in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria, Africa and the world at large. Through equipping the recipients with the knowledge and skills for setting up and running small scale businesses, the biggest employer is the private sector. Entrepreneurship education has the capability of providing jobs for many people in factories, agriculture, enterprises, other service industries and small-scale businesses.

According to Anho (2013), entrepreneurial education is capable of building good human and personal relationships thereby addressing personal and social challenges. The idea of personal and social challenges can be addressed with basic functional and entrepreneurship education. Managers and administrators with such education will allow their personality to radiate joy and goodness in their endeavours. According to World Bank (2004) entrepreneurship education reduces rural and urban migration by engaging the rural

population gainfully. This will check the overcrowding unemployment and underemployment experienced in the urban centres. Such overcrowding has been associated with agitation, joblessness, robbery, stealing, gangsterism, oil pipe vandalism among other vices which breach a personal and societal peace hence national security concern.

**(ii) Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development:** - the Federal Republic of Nigeria government has been making various efforts to enhance skill acquisition for youths and employment. However, education for all (EFA) reported by Babalola (2011) shows that sufficient attention is not given to skill training for youth and adults. The entrepreneurship education is said to be integrated into the curriculum and only concentrated on few students who are interested in developing their entrepreneurial skills. At the University of Nigeria Nsuka, in 2010, the centre for entrepreneurship and development research (CEDR) was set up to promote entrepreneurial culture and mind set, skill acquisition, self-employment, economic independence and self-actualization.

## 8. Implications for Curriculum Planners

As computers take over more and more routine tasks, the nature of work across the entire economy is undergoing rapid transformation. The overall or net trend across the economy as a whole is towards creation of more cognitively demanding jobs (Jerald, 2009). Therefore, any school curriculum that emphasises following rules, directions or instructions to find solution to a problem as is the case in Nigeria, is in effect, preparing students for a job that may not be available by the time the students graduate. That does not mean that following instructions

to accomplish a task is unimportant but rather that it is no longer an adequate skill for success in the global job market.

Given the overall trend towards higher skill demands, and the transitory nature of many low-skilled service jobs, it makes more sense to prepare all students for post-secondary education or training so that they have the chance for higher-skilled and highly-paying work.

## 9. Conclusion

Functional education is a catalyst for reducing the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. Despite the central place that functional education occupies in sustainable development, Nigerian educational system has remained non-functional. When the educational system is functional, it will bring about accelerated growth in the economy. When graduate of the post basic education can practice what they learnt in school without waiting for government jobs, more jobs will be created and income enhanced.

Functional education is very important that there is urgent need for all post basic education schools in Nigeria to comply with the presidential directives to the effect that entrepreneurship be made compulsory for all students of post basic education in Nigeria, irrespective of their area of specialization. This policy decision was based on government awareness of the crucial role of entrepreneurship education and training in fostering employment generation among the teeming youth, economic growth, and wealth creation.

## 10. Recommendations

- The government at all levels should show its commitment and political-will to ensuring functional education through its funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational projects and programmes.
- Government should ensure that the objectives of our educational system is geared towards producing a total person with requisite skills knowledge and

values relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

- There is also the need for government's resurgence and technology as well as technical education in Nigeria. This should start from the primary level.
- The overwhelming role of entrepreneurial education, as part of poverty eradication, self-reliance and national security, and development has been succinctly stated above. Since its benefits are enormous, adequate steps should be taken to requite entrepreneurial education by providing at all levels of governance-federal state and local government areas, suitable environment through proper curriculum planning and implementation, and by proper funding and equipping of entrepreneurship education.
- 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.

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