



Making All Levels of Education Functional and Qualitative in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This is an in-depth analysis of the concept of quality and functionality in Education stressing the need why education in Nigeria would not kill the prevalent disease of ignorance, poverty and sickness except it is made functional and qualitative. What is responsible and what is the extent of damage this poor state has caused, and what should be done is the focus of this paper.

Keyword: Levels of Education, Functional and Qualitative Education.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, Education the world over is the bedrock for the socio-economic and political development of any nation. It is on record that developed countries of the world like China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S among other countries have achieved various levels of breakthroughs due to their commitment to ensuring functional Educational system.

It is also pertinent to point out that former third world countries like Singapore, Indonesia, India among others have achieved tremendous progress, largely through the instrumentality of their deep seated commitment to quality Education. Even countries without natural resources have also achieved inspiring breakthroughs, basically due to their commitment to functional Education.

Interestingly, these nations over the years have been able to overcome and reduce to the barest minimum developmental challenges of poverty, unemployment, inequality, ignorance, which are not only inimical to human existence, but also sources of social vices like insecurity, crisis and conflicts and war among other social ills, through the instrumentality of quality Education.

Sadly, and in contrast the perennial problems of poverty, unemployment, inequality among others 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 non-governmental organizations, and other foreign government agencies in promoting Education, not much has been achieved in reducing the measure of poverty, unemployment, crime, environmental degradation among other social ills. Not much has also been achieved in technological breakthroughs.

These abysmal picture(s) called for questioning the huge budgetary provisions and releases for the Education subsector by various levels of government over the years. In other words, despite the huge resources spent on the provision of Education, the rate of poverty is still very high. In fact, recent statistics from the National Bureau for Statistics, NBS, UNDP and the World Bank indicate that poverty rate in Nigeria is put at over 60%. The question on the mind of people then is:

- i) *What is responsible for this poor state?*
- ii) *What actually is the extent of damage this poor state has brought?*
- iii) *What is missing in the provision of quality Education?*
- iv) *What can be done to reverse the situation?*

Asafri et al (2013) concluded that the declining future and standard of Education in Nigeria has affected our efforts on human resources development with great consequences on governmental societal efforts at reducing substantially the poverty rate and the challenges at various levels of Education.

It is even more frustrating to know that in spite of the huge expenditure on Education at all levels, our Educational system have failed to produce in its products a combination of skills and positive values necessary for building self-reliant economy and for further significant growth and development in the country generally.

Indeed, the Nigeria Educational system has rather produced more corruption, high incidence of Examination malpractice, bribery, extortion, cultism and sexual harassment, incessant labour unrest at various levels of academic and non-academic unions. Others include: poor funding, decay in infrastructure, weak institutions, and inaccurate data.

Truly, this gloomy picture of Nigeria Educational system gives a strong indication that something is deeply wrong somewhere down the lane. It is either, we missed the way and therefore the processes, or the inputs and management are completely and totally wrong.

Addressing the Need:

For instance, the 2013 National Policy of Education in section 1 subsection 3a-c, 4as reviewed pointedly insists that the Nigerian philosophy of Education is based on the following set of beliefs.

- a) Education is an instrument for national development and social change.
- b) Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria.
- c) Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society.
- d) Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges.
- e) Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

Obviously, with all these problems steering on the Educational system, there is greater need for the infusion of some salient variables and elements into the Educational System such as quality assurance, functional and sustainable Education in order to achieve the national goals and objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education.

The truth is, quality, functionality and sustainability are ingredients of an articulated national goals, well-planned curriculum for each level, standard assessment procedure and administration of test instruments, capacity for processing examination, data gathering, analysis and utilization, assessment of outcome, access and quality of pupils and students' enrollment.

Understanding the Import of education

This truth will be clearer, if the import of what Education is clearly understood. What then is Education?

Truly, there is no universally accepted definition of Education. Education means different things to different people, culture and society. In other words, what is considered as constituting education may be viewed differently by others.

From Plato to Alfred Whitehead, Emile Durkheim, F.B. Castle, F.C. Okafor and Fafunwa, etc, the definition of the concept of Education continues to evolve in all its ramifications.

For instance, while Whitehead (1907) defined Education as "The art of acquisition and utilization of knowledge." Fafunwa (1974) sees Education as the aggregate of all the processes through

which a child develops abilities and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to society. But in a sharp contrast, Okafor (1981) defined Education as a process of acculturation by which the individual is assisted to attain the maximum activation of his potentialities according to the right reason, and to achieve thereby his self-fulfillment or self-realization.

From a different perspective, Okoh (1998) underscored Education in three different ways. These are:

- 1) That Education is a process of developing, preserving and transmission of culture of a people from one generation to another. It is an activity of continuous all-round development of individuals for life in a society.
- 2) That Education can be used as a product, with the characteristics of an overt or covert, implicit or explicit change. Thus Okoh contends that the end product of Education is the production of the “Educated Man”, who according to him is a man who has the intellectual and moral strength to make the world a better place to live in.
- 3) Okoh sees Education as a discipline with a body of systematic and organized knowledge. In his view, Education can be seen as the process of teaching, training and learning in schools and colleges for the development of knowledge and skills to prepare individuals to live happily with themselves and others.

From all these perspectives on Education, one fact is obvious that Education presented, received and practicalized must be functional, qualitative and sustainable. These are indeed ingredients in any good Educational system.

The education received must first achieve positive purpose. In fact, if there is no functionality there is no education in the real sense of the concept.

Wikipedia, an online Dictionary defined Education as an act or process of developing and cultivating (whether physically, mentally or morally) one’s mental activities or senses, the expansion, strengthening and discipline of one’s mind or faculty; the forming and regulation of principles and character in order to prepare and fit for any calling or business through systematic instructions. The result of these, as determined by the knowledge, skill or discipline of character acquired; the act or process of training by a prescribed or customary course of standard or discipline.

In summary therefore, Education is considered as:

- The Process
- The Activity
- The Outcome of skills, knowledge acquisition that makes a man/woman a better citizen, and a more productive person to himself or herself and to his/her society. However, if the process of acquiring that knowledge or activity is not functional and qualitative, the expected outcome will be jeopardized and would not be achieved and if it is not achieved the aim and objective of Education is defeated.

What then is a Functional and Qualitative Education?

Generally, functional education is the equipping of a recipient of education with the Knowledge and skills needed to solve a problem, to be most productive and enhance performance of a productive task. Functional Education helps the society at large to meet its developmental needs and challenges.

Good (1999) defines functional Education as “Education for which there is an anticipated application, which thus assumes that the learner has immediate measuring, transferable into action of his learning activities”.

Besides, Akuma (1998) quoted Cooley to the fact that functional Education is that in which the ability to perform productive task is more emphasized than the Education that aims at producing ideological conformity. It is a kind of education that emphasizes “practice more than theory”

Defining further the concept of Functional Education, Obanya (2003) in Dienne (2011) defined functional Education as that kind of Education that inculcates specific functional skills, acquired from any Educational system to enable learners understand life situation adapting to it and contributing to its development.

Giving a further breakdown of functional Education at a different realm, Obanya said,

- A) Functional Education in basic literacy programme, refers to the application of reading and writing skills to solve day-to-day problems which include the improvement of one's living condition.
- B) In Special and Inclusive Education, functional Education is the acquisition of skills and abilities that will enable a physically challenged child overcome disabilities.
- C) Furthermore, in Vocational Education, a functional Education system should inculcate in the learner appropriate skills to function in the labour market.
- D) But, in the teacher training process, a functional Education equips the teacher with the appropriate aptitudes and abilities needed to promote learning and bring out the best in learners.

Exploring further the concept of functional and qualitative Education, UNESCO/UNICEF (1983) in Maple (2011:370) sees Quality Education from three perspectives.

- 1) Quality Education refers to the extent to which an Educational system meets or tends to respond to the economic needs of the society.
- 2) It refers to the effectiveness to which an Educational system promotes or reinforces among children and young people, the culture, values, morals and attitudes particularly to a given society.
- 3) It refers to pupils/students performances or standard of attainment in different school subjects.

Why is Education in Nigeria not Functional and Qualitative?

From the above analysis, it is obvious that Education delivery must be functional and qualitative if it must meet national objective and ensure individual advancement. The question then is if these ingredients are as crucial as this why then is Education in Nigeria not functional and qualitative?

Discovering the *why*, will lead to the way out. Discovering the *why*, will lead us to the how to come out of it. When the cause is known the solution is in sight.

There could be a mirage of causes but in this paper intend to discuss only a few. Some of the numerous factors for the poor state of education in Nigeria include:

❖ The unacceptable many years of Military misrule.

- There is the common feeling among Nigerians and particularly the academia that the military neglected the universities because of their opposition to military rule. As a result, there were several running battles that were fought, won and lost. Several universities were closed down for one reason or the other. In reaction, grants and salaries of university lecturers were not paid by the government. This poor state of things created general laxity among university lecturers. Professors' and Lecturers' commitment were thrown overboard. The extra effort needed to deliver on curriculum content, to bring out the non-formal content was lost, on the altar of uncertainties.

Indeed, the prolonged military rule in Nigeria has had a big negative toil on the Education system.

Military Rule from 1960 – 2017.

- 1) Gen. Aguiyi – Ironsi - Jan. 16, 1966 – July 29, 1966 - 6months
- 2) Gen. Yakubu Gowon - July 29, 1966 – July 29, 1975 - 9years

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|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 3) Gen. Mutala Mohammed | - July 29, 1975 – Feb. 13, 1976 | - 7months |
| 4) Gen. Obasanjo | - Feb. 13, 1976 – Oct. 1, 1979 | - 3years |
| 5) Gen. Buhari | - Dec. 31, 1983 – Aug. 27, 1985 | - 1 year,
6months |
| 6) Gen. Babangida | - Aug. 27, 1985 – Aug. 26, 1993 | - 8years |
| 7) Gen. Abacha | - Nov. 17, 1993 – June 8, 1998 | - 5years |
| 8) Gen. Abubakar | - June 8, 1998 – May 29, 1999 | - 11months |
- **Total number of years of Military Rule – 28years**
 - **Total number of years of Civilian Rule – 29years**

Thus, from 1960 when Nigeria gained Independence, the Nigeria Military ruled in 28years. Thus, half of Nigeria existence from 1960 had been in military rule. And greater part of the Military Rule the Educational system suffered untold setback.

❖ **The Constant General Labour Unrest in the Polity.**

The Nigeria society has also been constantly bombarded with several general Labour Unrest prompted by non-payment of salaries among other reasons. This unpleasant and unstable state of affairs in the polity unknown to policy makers, created apathy within lecturers, teachers and other workers in the Education sector. When apathy is created, commitment is lost, and functionality becomes a mirage.

It was recorded that in 2013 alone, the education system in Nigeria recorded the following strikes actions. In fact, 2013 was declared Nigeria’s season of strikes in Education sector.

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|----------------|--|
| ASU- | 5 months of forced break |
| ASUP- | 7 days of warning strike and subsequent general strike action |
| NUT- | Declaration of strike action in states over the non-implementation of 18,000 million wage |
| ASUU- | Declaration of strike action over the non-implementation of key issues reached in 2009. |
| COEASU– | Declaration of 7 days warning strike the subsequent general action over the non-implementation of agreement reached in 2010. |

In fact, apart from the cases of incessant strikes, there had been other minuses in the nation’s Education sector, which in one way or the other may have affected the fortunes in the sector in a damaging manner.

- The killing of 40 students in College of Agriculture in Yobe.
- The killing of 12 students allegedly by the Nigeria/Nigeria Police, and the 5 leadership of NAN

Sources: *Nigeria Leadership Newspaper January 2, 2014 online according to a recent World Bank study.*

- It is necessary to know that functionality is a product of services, and labourer’s commitment to academic duties on the part of teachers, lecturers and students at various levels.

❖ **Poor state of Educational Infrastructure Development at various levels of the Educational system.**

- Without any contradiction, functional and qualitative Education cannot be delivered in a poor School Plant System. The richness and proper management of a School Plant determine the depth of teaching and learning. If curriculum content will be developed then every School from the university system down to the lower levels must be stocked with current, relevant, flexible and sustainable infrastructural facilities and instructional materials. Infrastructural facilities are the hands-on aids

upon which functional Education is delivered to the pupils and students. It is sad that according to records, over 2,015 Primary Schools in Nigeria are without physical buildings. The classes are held under trees. The quality of teaching conducted under such inhumane condition is better imagined.

What is the budgetary percent for infrastructural development for universities?

- Less than 10% of Primary School Pupils have access to textbooks.
- Nigeria has less than 10% textbook availability.
- Elite schools have 80% availability ratio
- Rural schools have 1% availability ratio.

The security of textbook is most service in the tertiary Institution. Local publishing is very insignificant. A very high proportion of textbooks have to be imported and of course the prices are exorbitant.

❖ **The politicization of Education.**

- The introduction of politics into the provision of Education is also a major reason why Education is not qualitative and therefore not functional.
- Political Leaders should take politics out of Education, as the continual neglect of this sector has paralyzed the polity. Nigeria has toiled with some educational programmes, which have only served as conduct to transfer money to the corrupt political leaders and their cronies using flimsy political reasons. The effect is that political consideration is more often than not the reason for citing education infrastructures; either to win votes and political goodwill. This state of affairs, indeed, defeats the aim of Education in the true sense of it. Education is not a privilege. It is fundamental right. Every citizen, segment and geographical region deserves to be educated but not at the expense of another region.

❖ **The presence of corruption in education.**

- The sad commentary is that *corruption has done more damage than imagined*. Monies met for the provision of School Plant facilities are unjustly carted away on a daily basis at the expense of the ordinary citizens. For instance, the federal government **launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976, but as noted its failure due to lack of funds, sadly necessitated by corruption** among other factors. Money met for the recruitment of teachers is more often than not diverted to personal use by political Leaders and policy makers and implementers. It is reported recently that Nigeria is in deficient of over 100,000 teachers in the Nation's Primary Schools (T.C. 2).

❖ **The oil boom of the 1970s**

- Ironically, the oil boom of the 1970s also actually occasioned the gradual decline in the quality of Education. This was when functional Education was taken away from the Nigeria Educational System. As a matter of fact, increased need for higher Education during the Oil boom of the 1970s, compelled with political pressure, led to the establishment of many universities. Accordingly, an explosive expansion in enrolments during this period marked the beginning of the decline in quality of Education as access became opened by the programme/heavy weights no existing facilities, which prompted the political class to engage in half-backed programmes and projects. And commitment became short supply as emphasis shifted from quality to quantity and from Functionality to universality.

How to Make Various Levels of Education Functional and Qualitative in Nigeria

Education as bedrock

Having conducted an in-depth analysis of the concept of functionality and quality in Education and why Education in Nigeria is not functional and qualitative, it is proper and needful to proffer some solutions to the perennial decline.

In this paper, I completely agree with the common saying that Education is the bedrock of development in any Nation, including Nigeria. But, sadly the depth of this statement is easily lost by policy makers, and implementers in particular who pursue personal aggrandizement, parochial, and sentimental consideration of issues in Education sector.

Education as a Public Health Issue

Generally, policy makers and policy implementers must reconsider and gain the depth of the import of education for the socio-political development of Nigeria by treating Education as a Public-health. The functionality and qualitative Education determines the health and well-being of the Nation.

Towards Positive Thinking

This is not only because the socio-political economic development of a nation is determined by the quality and level of Educational attainment of the citizens, but also because as a man or nation thinketh so he is (we are). Our thinking must change; we must as citizens, policy makers, and policy implementers, whether in public service sector, teachers and students think right and think positive, if we must realize the National aspirations set out in the National Policy on Education. If we don't think positive and right we stink

Towards Embracing Sustainable and Holistic Planning

As a nation we may not have a problem in planning. Nigeria is not lacking in experts in Education, but lacking gruesomely in engaging in holistic and sustainable planning. Political officer holders abandon laudable programme and projects of their predecessors wantonly to the detriment of generality of the people.

The position in this paper is that policy planners must embrace sustainable planning, by reintroducing the concept of National Rolling Plan, at least in the Education sub-sector. The re-introduction of the effective implementation of National Rolling Plans will not only fast track development but also endangers commitment to national policies.

Perhaps, it is necessary to point out that the responsibility for administrating the Education sector in Nigeria is shared among the federal, state and local governments. Mainly, the Federal Government superintend over tertiary Institutions. The States take care of Secondary Education, while the Local Government handles Primary Education. Despite this arrangement, the Federal Government is expected to support the State and Local Governments on counterpart funding arrangements to enhance the quality of Education in the country. This is because education is on the concurrent list in the 1999 Constitution. There are also Commissions established for different sub-sectors of the educational system and are charged with various responsibilities for the sub-sector.

Primary Education Level

Primary Education provides the foundation for other levels of Education. Primary Education in Nigeria therefore, is for children aged between 6 and 11 years.

- For the challenges in this level, this paper prescribes the following:
 - = **Access:** Opening and/or improving greater access to Education to cover the dismal shortfall in School enrolment and bridge regional disparity. It is said that over 10million children are out of school. According to Asemu 2014, the enrolment rate in 2010 was as high as 95% in Southern Zones, but as low as 19.91% in the Northern Zones. This means that gender disparity must completely be rope out.

- = Manpower Development: Engagement of more well-qualified Education teachers. UBE (2012) National Personnel Audit Reports revealed gross inadequacy in the quality and quantity of teaching personnel in the Unity Primary and Secondary Schools. As a nation, we are seriously short of the proposed 1:30(1:40) in the transition years Teacher-Pupil ratio.
 - ❖ In general, these prescriptions border on Government Policy initiation, decision execution, effective implementation and government proactivity, which will determine policy outcome, and policy actual. All these depend on how focus is the government power and specifically the capacity of the said government officials.
 - ❖ In taking steps, it must be noted the low number of graduates going with the teaching profession and the offering of courses that are not appropriate or relevant to the level and needs of most basic teachers in most Colleges of Education.

Secondary Education

Secondary Education occupies a critical place in our Educational system. It is generally designed to prepare students for effective functionality in society and for entry into tertiary level of Education. If these objectives would be realized then steps must be taken to:

- = Stop Examination Malpractice at this level and in other levels. Examination malpractice is an aberration in an Educational system. Examination malpractice kills all mental alertness and sharpness. It prevents pupils and students from exercising their minds for better performance.
- = Provision of adequate and durable infrastructures in all schools. Quality Education is a function of use of current facilities, teaching aids, support initiatives.
- = The urgent need to implement and introduce policies and initiatives on e-learning in teaching and learning need not over emphasized. In fact, it is now clear that 80% of the functionality and quality depend on 70% implementation of e-learning and adoption of ICT as a stool for enhancement at least.
- = Implementation of the Policies on Vocational Technical Education in the country. The Primary role of Vocational Education is to train low-level technical manpower. That is, master Craftsmen for Commerce and Industry, Agriculture. This type of Education lays emphasis on hands on the desk. It emphasizes skills acquisition – that is bringing out the best in each students.
- = De-emphasizes on Paper Qualification on Secondary students. It is not how many papers one has but what one knows and practice.
- = **The adoption of appropriate teaching methodology:** The adoption of appropriate teaching method will determine the depth and quality of lesson which will determine learning outcome among pupils and students. A teaching method that emphasizes students memorization only, will certainly deny them of seeing teaching contents as life experience.
- = Low transition rate should be tackled. Quality is also affected by the low transition rate currently being faced. Government should of possible introduced low school JS3 school fees, to allow every candidate sit of.
- = Proper Management of Secondary Education will also take out of the present quagmire. School Leadership gives direction and inspires teaching and learning. In other words, effective teaching and learning at the Secondary level is a direct product of good Leadership, and good organization structure. Leadership proactivity is most needful if quality and functionality are in view. The truth is good Leadership provides mentorship.

Higher Education

The Tertiary Education is under the supervision of Commission set up by law and which operate as parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Education at the federal level. The Commission is responsible for Policy decisions, affecting these Institutions, maintenance of standard through a system of periodic accreditation of courses distribution and monitoring of Government funding, appointment of members of governing Boards.

One would therefore imagine that quality and functionality would be the watch word of these Institutions but the reverse is the case. What should be done?

- = Capacity upgrade. There is a growing need for infrastructural capacity upgrade to give room for the growing surge for University Education. Aremu (2014) gives a clear picture in a table:

Year	No. Applicant	No. Admitted	Per %
2004/05	841,878	122,492	14.5
2005/05	916,371	76,984	8.4
2006/07	803,472	88,524	11.0
2007/08	911,653	107,370	11.8
2008/09	1,054,060	NA	NA
2009/10	1,182,381	148,000	12.5
2010/11	1,375,652	360,000	26.5
2011/12	1,493,604	400,000	26.8
2012/13	1,503,889	500,000	33.3
2013/14	1,670,833	520,000	31.1

- = Emphasis on Character Education. Although University degrees are awarded on the Basis of worthiness in learning and in character, in actual sense this is not the case. There has been growing cases of character failure and summersault. This ugly trend calls for re-introduction of Civil Citizen Education.
- = Greater Policy Initiative against sexual harassment. Policy makers in the various Institutions of higher learning must come up with more transparent and all-embracing policies to protect both male and female students and teachers against all forms of sexual harassment.
- = Paying less emphasis on Paper Qualification. University Education is for life, impact and positive actual contribution to the growth of the society. This should be promoted at all times.
- = More Funding. Running a University is highly capital intensive therefore, Federal Government must be progressively fund tertiary Institution if quality will be achieved and maintain.

CONCLUSION

Education can be qualitative but not functional.

In-spite of the inadequate but huge expenditure on education at all levels; it is regrettable that our educational system has failed to produce in school leavers a combination of skills and positive values that would make them self-reliant and morally sound citizens empowered to produce further wealth, working on the wheel of sustainability. It is sad that policy somersault and/poor implementation strategies are mainly responsible for this ugly picture.

Therefore, as Prof. N.S. Okoroma, (2017) pointed out in his inaugural lecture, ‘Education policies and programmes of whatever design must be matched with adequate efforts at the

implementation state. According to him, because “we have not done so, hence, quality may appear to be improving while standard (functionality) (output, product or performance) have continued to ebb.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

If quality and functionality will be maintained the following steps and prescriptions should therefore not only be taken, adopted, but also be taken at the prescribed mode, time and frequency for the overall benefit of the nation at large and at the various levels of Education. These steps include:

- ❖ Making relevant and adequate curriculum, geared towards meeting the emerging socio-economic demands of the 21st Century.
- ❖ Engaging qualified and experienced manpower at the various levels.
- ❖ Development of strong Institutions or systems.
- ❖ There should be practical war against greed and corruption in the Educational sector, and re-enforcement of culture of examination ethics.
- ❖ The government – local, state and federal should increase the budgetary allocation to Education to at least 26%. Improve on the infrastructures at the schools and rehabilitate existing schools between regularly.
- ❖ Learners should be guided to improve their levels of functional and sustainable education including ICT to support their needs to have a workforce that is enterprise. Productive and equipped oriented to compete in business. This will enable them to work confidently, effectively and independently in life.
- ❖ Conferences, workshops and in-service training programmes should be organized for reliable and qualified officers on how to implement Policies and Programmes.

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