
FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION: THE PANACEA FOR YOUTH RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This work was de-limited to youth restiveness in Nigeria. It explained the role or education as a strong agent of change. It analyzed the phrase “youth restiveness” and some of the ways it manifests itself in Nigeria it found the category of people that for perpetrate it. It found that failure to screen learners with intelligence tests at the early stages of formal schooling is one of the major causes of restiveness. It also discovered that lack of aptitude test even for those whose intelligence quotient (I.Q) are high lead to wrong placement. Again it found that aptitude test can reveal people with specific aptitudes (talents) even among those whose IQ are low for academic work. These people can still develop and live fulfilled life. Some of the recommendations include that government should provide intelligence and aptitude testing facilities and human resources for screening learners as pre-requisites for proper classification and placement in various types of institutions of learning.

Traditionally, the main aim of education is to make people to be functional. This is done through education where people acquire appropriate skills, values, attitudes, norms and traditions of their society in order to become successful and useful members of the society. However, some types of education that people receive today have failed to accomplish these objectives. People now pass through schools without

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allowing the schools to pass through them. According to Adeyinka (1995), the 6-3-3-4. System of education in Nigeria was introduced to restore the skillful nature of education but the objective has been relegated to the background by parents who send their children to “Miracle centres” so as to become doctors by force when they are not even academic materials.

Lack of functionality in education has been seen by the researchers as the root of youth restiveness. Students who found out that they cannot make it academically resort to causing problems here and there. They join bad gangs, secret cults and armed robbery. These youths who could have been busy with one form of trade or another such as tailoring, shoe making, carpentry,barbing. Mechanics etc, are now idle because they cannot cope with academic activities. Remember an idle mind they say is the devil’s workshop. Thus these youths become criminals and terrorists in the society vandalizing the nation’s scarce resources and destroying life and property. The researchers are of the opinion that functional education could serve as a remedy to youth restiveness and this can only be achieved by properly screening the students with psychological testing (intelligence and aptitude testing before they move to SS classes so that those students who cannot achieve academically can join any trade of their choice after their JSS three. In the light of the above introduction, this paper will discuss the following:

1. Functional education
2. Lack of functional education
3. Effects of lack of functional education
 - a) Unemployment
 - b) Youth restiveness
4. The need for intelligence and aptitude testing in functional education.
 - a. Intelligence testing
 - b. Aptitude testing

Functional Education

Abraham (2011) had posited that functional education is that type which equips the student or recipient with relevant skills and knowledge to compete with his counterparts from other parts of the country and beyond for jobs. To Zeilbenger cited in Obanya (2003) “functional education is that education that stems from the child’s needs, and that uses the child’s interests as a springboard for steering him towards his desirable activities”. The above authors have pinpointed that functional education is that which equips the recipients with needed skills and knowledge to compete favorably with their counterparts in the society. Again, that functional education is one that has relevance to the child’s needs and interest. Obanya (2003) posited that for education to

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be functional the situation in which the child is growing in and the one he is going to live in should determine what he is going to be taught and how he is going to be taught as well as how he is going to learn. Agreeing with this the Nigerian National Policy on Education (1998) asserted that one of the goals of education is the acquisition of appropriate skills, development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. This simply means that any learning or education that does not lead to the acquisition of skills for self development and contribute to the development of one's society cannot qualify to be called functional education.

Lack of Functional Education

For education to be functional the trainer or the system needs to take cognizance of the child's potentials, needs and interest and channel them towards preparing him to have appropriate knowledge and skills required to function effectively in his environment, other things being equal. These other things include the quality and quantity of teachers to handle the various teaching subjects using the various teaching methods to drive the lessons home, quality of instructions and curriculum contents that will inculcate the values of the national goals in the learners, availability of facilities and infrastructural resources, conducive teaching and learning environment as well as the desirable behavior of the learners and their readiness to learn.

Even if learners are ready and the facilities available are inadequate and the number of qualified teachers for effective teaching and learning is inadequate, the result will still be inadequate learning because there might not be enough teachers to give the students adequate attention and the available ones might not be qualified to handle the various teaching subjects or manipulate the various teaching methods to drive the lessons home. Even if every other things are readily available but the environment is not conducive for teaching and learning as some environments are perpetually plagued with one crisis or the other and school could be closed down and in most cases the teachers embark on strike for non-payment of their salaries and other remunerations which disrupt teaching and learning, inadequate learning will be the case. It is a known fact that many secondary school students have negative attitudes towards teaching and learning with the hope of obtaining the certificate through the "Miracle centres" and they often succeed. How do they acquire the skills and knowledge for self development and contribution towards the development of their societies or succeed in tertiary institutions.

Abraham (2011), acknowledging the adverse effects of inadequate teaching and learning on functional education stated that "with poor quality education in the Niger Delta, most youths lack the requisite preparation to compete for more prestigious jobs placements in oil companies located in and around their communities". The ill-prepared

Niger Delta youths readily fail the recruitment tests and eventually resort to acts of restiveness as the only alternative.

Another major bane of functional education is failure to screen the learners early enough and properly classify and place them. Everybody wants to go to higher institution but is everybody an academic material?

Effects of Lack of Functional Education

Lack of functional education is responsible for many vices in the society which include

(1) Unemployment

Osalor (2012) described unemployment as “a Hydra-headed monster” and the rate in Nigeria according to the report of National Bureau Statistics was 23.9 percent in 2011. These are people that are not gainfully employed by the government or any organization. The point is that there has never been a time in history when the government of any country has employed everybody. In 2009 the rate was 19.7 percent and in 2010 it was 21.1 percent. This shows that the number has increased from 2009 either because people keep graduating from all levels of the educational system or is inflated by the number of those who dropped out of school and those who went to school because others are going, and without any focus. It is a known fact that many people who are not academic materials or whom their parents bribe people to take WAEC, NECO, JAMB exams etc. for them. get into tertiary institutions to do some of the professional courses like medicine, law, engineering etc just for the prestige, only to be frustrated out along the line. This group is among the unemployed that roam the streets as unemployed graduates. One may ask where they expect to be employed into and what input will they make if employed. A colleague recently told of their first son that they struggled and got admission into one of the tertiary institutions. When he claimed to have graduated they also struggled and got him a job in a bank, only to be rusticated by the bank for faking his certificate. This one roams about the streets today as an unemployed youth.

Youth Restiveness

Another adverse effect of lack of functional education is Youth restiveness. Youth restiveness encompasses violent activities ranging from disruption of political, religious, academic, social and economic activities, outright lawlessness in the society, kidnapping of citizens and foreign workers, intra and inter-cult activities, armed robbery, vandalization of oil and gas pipelines, political thugry, reckless shooting and killings, recently in Nigeria, bombing has been added. Onwubiko and Okonkwo (2013) attributed this ugly monster to non-visionary political leadership in Nigeria. While Anusiem and Anuonye (2012), blamed it on unemployment, grinding poverty, inadequate educational opportunities and resources, lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate information and communication and bad governance. Most of these points

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are overt factors. The main problems are to be traced from the covert point of view, from the underlying factors - poor family upbringing functional education

The Need for Intelligence and Aptitude Testing in Function Education Intelligence Testing

Intelligence tests, also called mental ability tests, intelligence quotient (IQ) or scholastic tests are instruments used to measure the general learning ability of the individual or the individual's general ability to engage in intellectual tasks (Uckman) cited in Onunkwo (2003) and Wechsler (1998) defined intelligence as "the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment". So, intelligence is the ability to coordinate and manage mental processes well. General mental tests determine the overall brain power of individual learners. Level of general intelligence is usually determined by the intelligence quotient (I.Q). For instance any person with IQ of 75% can only be sent to special school and be managed to a point. One with IQ of 100% is only an average student, 120, 130 and above have very superior mental capacities.

Anastasi (1986b) stated that typical intelligence tests measure scholastic aptitude or academic intelligence. These abilities like verbal, numerical abilities and other abstract symbols are the abilities that predominate in school learning. Intelligence tests help to understand the learners' strengths and weaknesses so as to plan on how to bring them to their maximum functioning level. Therefore, intelligence tests help to categorize the learners and place them where they belong for maximum functioning. These tests indicate those who are uneducable idiots, mentally defective, dull and backward, normal, bright or genius but in our school system the learners are often jumbled together without screening and on the long run, many will be frustrated out while some others manage to graduate in what they do not even understand.

Many of these learners who cannot pass a course start forming gangs (cults) to fight "whoever" they think is the enemy of their progress (restiveness).

Aptitude Testing

Aptitude testing was developed by psychologists when it was discovered that some students who scored very low in general intelligence or mental power tests performed excellently in certain activities, which shows that there could still be hope for some people who are not of the academic stuff. For instance, an individual who is classified as mentally defective due to his/her intelligence test score may do well in mechanical or artistic work. This encouraged measurement of students' abilities in specific activities to know where an individual is talented and direct him/her where he/she can get the required training for self development and still contribute to the development of his environment instead of constituting a nuisance. For instance one

may not be able to study any course in the University but can do well in other specific areas. Intelligence and aptitude testings are very important to understand the learners, classify them and refer them to where they can get the best in life.

Conclusion

Functional education is the solution to restiveness in Nigeria. Some political leaders that are blamed for restiveness in the country are victims of inadequate teaching and learning. One cannot give what he does not have.

Unemployment, restiveness etc as cited by many researchers are but the overt problems that are emanating from the covert issues. Education is an indispensable agent of change but where people pass through schools without the schools passing through them, they may even come out worse. Some end up in jails, some as criminals and cultists. The major problems should be traced from the absence of psychological testing and qualified guidance counsellors to administer them and shortage of qualified teachers to handle different teaching subjects in our schools. Some primary schools in the rural areas do not have instructional materials and the necessary facilities and infrastructure. In some states the teachers are not motivated to put in their best so they leave the children to their fate and go about their businesses. Students who have aptitude for academics should be helped to be properly trained and others who have specific aptitudes should be encouraged to develop their talents. This will go a long way to sanitize the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research the following recommendations are made

1. Government should provide facilities and human resources to screen the learners early enough and properly classify and place them in the school system
2. Government at all levels should see to it that the learning environments are stimulating and conducive.
3. Enough qualified teachers should be employed at all levels of education to handle the various teaching subjects using different teaching methodologies.
4. Government should provide centres with facilities and infrastructure for people in vocational training
5. Government and well meaning Nigerians should help to empower those in vocational settings to succeed and be self-reliant.
6. Teachers should be motivated to prevent them from migrating to other sections of the economy.

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