
ROLES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS IN MAKING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNCTIONAL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The functionality of any country's education system determines to a large extent that country's level of development. This is based on the fact that the education system produces the needed human resources who will provide the material resources for national development. When the education system cannot produce individuals who are capable of solving practically their personal problems and help to achieve national goals and aspirations, that education system becomes worthless. It is based on this, that this paper stresses the need for functional education at primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria and the roles that school administrators and teachers should play. The paper defines functional education as the type of education that inducts the child into his/her immediate society, prepares him/her for adulthood to contribute positively to his/her country's development. Certain principles that guide the practice of functional education are also stated. In view of the importance of functional education to national development, the paper makes some recommendations that if utilized will aid development in this country.

The level of development of any society or nation largely depends on the relevance and functionality of the education system. Educational practices and goals should be geared towards the attainment of national goals and aspirations as well as solving societal problems. The education given to the child should be such that will help him fit into his environment and make him contribute positively to the development of his society and nation in his adult life. An education that does not expose the child to the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills certainly will not

help him solve his personal problems in adult life as well as contribute to the development of his society.

This is why in Nigeria today, an engineer for example would have to seek the services of a roadside mechanic to repair his car when it is broken down. It all points out the worth and values of our education system to our society presently. Thus Fafunwa (1994:17) saw “education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives”. Therefore to educate means to adapt the child to his environment.

It is in this light that this paper is billed to stress the roles of school administrators and teachers in making primary and secondary education functional for the purposes of individual and national development via these sub-headings.

1. The concepts of functional education and national development.
2. Principles of functional education.
3. The roles of school administrators and teachers in making education functional at primary and secondary schools levels.
4. Importance of functional education.
5. Summary
6. Conclusion
7. Recommendations

Concepts of Functional Education and National Development

Many countries and societies see functional education from different, though related perspectives. Thus, according to Zellbeger (1999), the United States and Germany since 1920 see functional education as that which comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. A kind of undirected natural education, that is different from the deliberate goal- oriented education which is directed by man.

In Western Europe functional education is referred to as the type of education that comes from the child’s needs, and that which uses the child’s interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. Its purpose is to develop the life of the mind, that acts from the “wholeness or organic life” in relation to practical life presently and in the future. Again in United States and England the concept of functional education is that which starts with the child and is based on a practical work-plan which the child is expected to master the subject-matter. The subject-matter to be taught must be in accordance with its importance to the life of the child in his childhood and adult life. The lessons are based on phases in life of the learner, the nation, the environment and the daily life.

Functional education must be given along side with directed or goal-oriented education to ensure proper shaping of a human being, since the functionality of education contributes immensely to the development of any nation or human society. In the old African education or traditional education, functional education is seen as participatory type of education. In the words of Fafunwa (1994), the child gains his educational experiences through participating in ceremonies, rituals, imitation, recitation and demonstration. He is involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, goldsmithing etc. The child was equally exposed to some recreational subjects like wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display etc.

The child was equally given some intellectual training like the study of local history, legends, the environment, comprising of local geography, plants and animals, story telling, poetry, riddles, proverbs etc. The old African education actually offered the child integrated experiences and made him fit in well to his society in adult life. Hence Fafunwa (1994) stated that it combined physical training with character-building and manual activity with intellectual training.

However, in many African countries currently, this form of participatory education has been suppressed by the adoption of Western form of education which is more theoretical than practical or functional. This has greatly affected the rate of societal and national development. National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people; by producing social amenities like good education, infrastructure and social services. According to Ishmael (1995) national development process must be visualized in its broadest context if it is to meet the expectations of the citizenry for a more elevated standard of living. As such, the most all-encompassing goal of national development is the progressive realization of the abilities and talents of each individual for his/her own satisfaction and enhancement of the goal of the community and the nation. This is only achievable by the system of education which is functional; where every individual is taught to fully learn to participate in meeting the needs of the environment and exhibit their various knowledge and skills for the development of the country.

Principles of Functional Education

There are certain fundamental principles upon which functional education should be practiced to achieve success in its goals which is mainly the induction of the child into the immediate society and a preparation for adult life for national development. These principles are as follows:

1. Children should be judged from the stand point of their own world-view and describe them in terms of concepts drawn from their experiences and be taught according to their criteria. They should be related to like persons that ought to be respected and nourished.

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2. Functional education is based on the natural need of the child to enquire and to know, to observe and to work, and especially to play.
3. The child must be put at the centre of the curriculum that will no longer be made in line with principles foreign to the child.
4. The educator should know properly the child's interests and the changes that he undergoes as he grows up physically and emotionally.
5. One should not demand from the child an action, unless he has a natural need for it. The child should be placed in conditions that will naturally induce that action by satisfying a need. The motivation of the child should not be external; (fear of punishment or hope for a reward) but internal, out of genuine interest in the discussed question and in the activities connected with it). The interest or self discipline will replace the external forced discipline.
6. Education should develop the intellectual and moral abilities of the child rather than force-feeding him with many facts that are quickly forgotten, or are accumulated in the memory like an alien material.
7. There should be an "active school" where the classroom would be a kind of laboratory.
8. Since the child must in the future live in a social framework, he must be introduced to work and to subjects that prepare for social activity.
9. There should be stimulation of the moral and spiritual needs of the child.
10. The school should have a minimum of a common core curriculum and leave other subjects as free electives; since there is no point in trying to develop skills that not everyone has a talent for.

The Roles of School Administrators and Teachers in Making Education Functional at Primary and Secondary Levels

Primary education according to FRN (2004) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. While secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The goals of primary education according to FRN (2004:8) are as follows:

1. Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
2. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;

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3. Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
4. Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
5. Develop in the child an ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
6. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity...

In line with the above are the broad goals of secondary education which are to prepare individuals for:

- a) Useful living in the society, and
- b) Higher education

A careful analysis of the goals of both primary and secondary education as stated in the policy has made provision for functional education for the Nigerian child. Even though it is not expressly mentioned that functional education shall be given at primary and secondary education levels, yet these goals make it clear that even the goal-oriented or formal education is expected to be functional too. It is therefore the responsibilities of school administrators and teachers to ensure that those goals are achieved in order to make primary and secondary education functional. School administrators at the primary and secondary schools are the principals, assistant or vice principals, headmasters and assistant headmasters and other professionals who help operate schools. They, along with the teachers can make education at these levels functional in the following ways:

1. **Plan Class Curricula:** The administrators should help the teachers plan the curricula for their classes, ensure that they are relevant to the needs and interest of the students as well as the entire society where these students will function at adulthood. Any fact or subject area is interesting if it is related to the current social activity of the person learning it. Hence there should be a relationship between theoretical studies and the students natural actions and environment.
2. The school administrators and teachers must ensure that students are made to participate in class activities instead of remaining unconcerned in class activities.
3. Teachers should adapt their teaching to the natural growth of the students.
4. Administrators and teachers should consider functional education in its first meaning, that is present everywhere and at all times (even without organized educational institutions) and its essence, the mutual influence of the members of society, and of their life-styles that act on every human. In fact they should borrow a leaf from the old African education system whereby learning took place at anytime and at all places.

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5. Teachers should strive to arouse in the children spiritual longing, like the love to do good and of work, that will not come by force, but rather in free atmosphere and in suitable living conditions. For this purpose administrators and teachers should create a lively and happy environment, where the child will act enthusiastically.
6. In this era of technological advancement students should be exposed to the practical knowledge of what they are taught. They should be allowed to practice on their own as to make discoveries that could lead to inventions and innovations.
7. School administrators and teachers should draw up programs that can help keep students' behaviours under control. They should make rules, regulations and procedures that cover the entire school as well as behaviour plans for individual students who regularly cause trouble. This will enable them to develop into responsible adults that will contribute positively to the development of the country.
8. They should also design programs to keep schools safe and free from drugs, alcohol and cultism. Discipline should be instilled in the students to ensure a disciplined society.
9. They should ensure that functional skills assessment are open-response, task-based assessment which requires problem solving and transferable skills.
10. Administrators and teachers apart from placing emphasis on intellectual training should equally help the students to develop physical skills by engaging in some psychomotor activities like; jumping, climbing trees, performing balancing acts and engaging in competitive games.
11. They should equally encourage good character development by training the students to be upright, honest, kind and helpful to others.
12. Students should be taught to have respect for elders and those in authority. They should be taught to greet and be polite when they are expected to do so.
13. Administrators should as well make provisions for vocational training like weaving, carving, blacksmithing etc. The disadvantaged or physically challenged children should not be neglected. They should equally be given some vocational skills to enable them be useful to themselves as well as the nation at adulthood.

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14. Administrators and teachers must ensure that students are taught community participation. They must be made to appreciate their roles as members of their immediate and extended communities. They should be taught to participate in some community works like road clearing, tree planting, crop harvesting, farming etc.
15. Students must be taught their cultural heritage like naming ceremonies, marriage rituals, funeral ceremonies and some good religious practices, mood of dressing etc.
16. Lastly, the administrators and teachers must in the course of giving functional education emphasis on the “Goodman concept”; that is the development of good virtues.

The Importance of Functional Education

Functional education as opposed to formal education is of immense importance; Functional education connects all study with specific needs and roles, towards which the child’s interest should be directed in the way the child will gain thinking habits and develop the technical means needed for them, that will improve as time goes on. This will help him solve his practical problems even in adulthood formal education has no educational value, because the activity of the mind is separated from life and does not arouse interest in the outcome of the performed work. With this, learning becomes an end for itself. On the other hand, functional education concentrates on non-formal goals to train students towards a practical mastery of the subjects, to get them into the habit to adapt to any situation, to bring them to experience first-hand with studied subject by do-it-yourself work and experiment. The teacher only plays the role of “a go between” between the subject and the student. The teachers show the students the relation between the studied subject and the real life situation.

Furthermore, functional education has lead to important innovations; like putting the child at the centre of learning, making the child to have a creative spirit etc. Functional education is a sure way to national development, because when the country produces the needed human recourses through the education of the youth, the needed material resources for national development will be assured.

Summary

This paper has x-rayed the need for functional education system for a developing country like Nigeria. The child has to be trained to fit in well into his immediate environment and also to contribute positively to the development of his country in adulthood. The goal of education must be in line with the national goals and objectives. The basic principles upon which functional education must be practiced are

equally stated in this paper. The various roles of school administrators and teachers in making education functional at primary and secondary school levels, even though they operate goal-oriented or formal education are equally mentioned. The paper finally stated the importance of functional education as opposed to formal education.

Conclusion

In view of the subject matter of this paper which is the need for making primary and secondary education in Nigeria functional, the following conclusion can be drawn.

1. Functional education is for the induction of the child into his/her immediate society and a preparation for adulthood.
2. School administrators and teachers have immense roles to play in making primary and secondary education functional in Nigeria.
3. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, while stating the goals of primary and secondary education levels in the National Policy of Education in 2004 has indirectly made provision for functional education.
4. Functional education system is the quickest and sure way to National development since it produces needed human resources for national development.

Recommendations

The paper hereby makes the following recommendations;

1. The present formal education system in Nigeria should be complemented with functional education.
2. The present education curricula at primary and secondary education levels should be re-planned to accommodate the functional education system.
3. Teacher education programmes should equally emphasis functional education.
4. Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized for school principals and teachers to enable them understand the need for functional education in our country.

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