

ENTREPRENEURIAL AND FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINING QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Quality education form the basis for which a nation can be developed, and the development of the individual into a sound and effective member of the community as enshrined in the Nigeria philosophy of education can only be attained through quality education. One of the issues dominating current debates on education in this country is the need to re-structure education in such a way that quality can be achieved. A look at the educational system in the country today reveals that quality education has been compromised, hence, making the attainment of these laudable objectives difficult. The paper tried to spotlight some of the problems facing educational system that has tendency of affecting quality such as malpractices in education, instructional materials, quantitative and qualitative human resources, quality assurance and uniformity of curriculum. It recommends that measures should be taken by the Government and other stakeholders in education to ensure that quality is maintained and sustained. And that the Government should not relinquish its responsibility of coordinating education to other bodies.

Introduction

Education is the indispensable answer to human problems in this fast changing world. It is the tool for the development of both human and natural resources of any nation. For education to be meaningful it must be qualitative. Quality education is that which is relevant and adapted to the changing needs of the society.

Obanya, (1983) believes that quality education emphasizes on the development of the 3H of the individual-the Head, the Heart and the Hands so as to be self-reliant. It is noteworthy that education ceases to be qualitative when it produces monsters.

Quality education is seen as a condition through which development of a nation is attained. Education is important for skills acquisition and development of the right type of values among individuals. The demand for education has heightened with increase in enrolment at all levels of education, thus, making existing instructional materials, human resources etc inadequate to the point that standards are compromised.

National Objectives of Education

A nation can only be developed through quality education. Anything less than that cannot bring development. The National Policy on Education (2004) clearly stated five national objectives in education which include building;

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- (a) a free and democratic society:
- (b) a just and egalitarian society:
- (c) a united strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) a great dynamic economy:
- (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

The National educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy of Nigeria's education is linked are;

1. the inculcation of the national consciousness and national unity
2. the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society. That is to educate an individual who can live with others and contribute to the growth of the society.
3. the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
4. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society.

It is seen from the above that the philosophy is tailored towards developing an individual who is sound and a good citizen. This clearly suggests that the issue of quality teaching can not be negotiated to achieve these educational goals.

Quality Education

Quality education is an issue of concern for the government and other stakeholders. Cole, (1996) believes that quality has to do with whether something is good or bad, genuine or fake. This means that there is a standard set to compare the outcome of a product. Quality education can be seen as that type of education that meets the demands and challenges of any nation. It is an education that brings about the acquisition of manpower equipped with skills and knowledge to be relevant to themselves and the larger society. Quality education is the type of education that is relevant and worthwhile to an individual. Gordon and Partington (1993) sees quality education as the success with which an institution provides educational environment which helps learners to attain worthwhile learning objectives including appropriate academic standard. It is universally accepted that the quality of any educational system is a function of quality of the inputs into the process. Any deviation from standard renders the product sub-standard or inferior. Just as the manufacturers of Panadol will always say in their advertisement, "if it is not panadol, it is not the same thing as panadol". Therefore, if education is not standard it is not the same thing like standard. It is obvious that any product that is sub-standard will never be patronized by customers. This pre-supposes that products of education (graduates) who are not equipped with knowledge, skills and competence for functioning in the society will not be patronized. The general opinion of many people as regards the quality of education being provided by our educational system is that the standard is declining. Anyawu and Lloeje (1996) agreed with the general opinion that the quality of educational system in Nigeria has declined drastically.

Educational Malpractices in Nigeria

When educational actors violate the existing norms and values guiding education quality will hardly be attained. The breaking of rules governing education in order to gain selfish advantage could be seen as educational malpractice. Malpractice in educational system has adverse effect on the quality of education of any nation. When rules are not followed a system will certainly collapse, therefore, to maintain standard the products of education should be produced according to set norms. Any form of malpractice will affect standards be it examination leakage, cheating of any form, forgery of certificate, sexual harassment e.t.c.

One of the viruses that have affected quality education is examination malpractice. Marcel and Saidu (2007) revealed that examination malpractice in Nigeria has been on ground 38 years before the establishment of WAEC in 1951. They stressed that the first examination malpractice occurred in 1914 when the senior Cambridge Local Examination leaked. Since then, the cases of examination malpractices have been on the increase. This, of course, has great impact on the credibility of our education products and as well reduced confidence in the operators of educational system.

The issue of malpractices in education Lassa, (2001) observed is not just a Nigeria problem but world wide. Students at all levels of education cheat in examination sometimes with active collaboration of teachers. He revealed other forms of malpractices in education to include, campus secret cults, use of hard drugs, clubs and gang activities etc. these negative vices pose a serious threat to the quality of education in Nigeria. In addition, he observed that other acts of indiscipline which are identified in educational institutions capable of affecting educational standard are stealing, drinking, sexual intercourse, rudeness, bullying etc.

Instructional Materials

In order to handle the problem of students going through the school system without acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills commensurate to the certificate acquired, the use of instructional materials should be given more attention. The use of instructional materials is believed to bring about improvement in the quality of education of any nation.

Adeyemo (1978) and Farrant (1982) saw instructional materials as those things that facilitate learning. This goes to say that instructional materials are indispensable tools in the hands of a teacher because they help in promoting and stimulating learning by individuals. The undue emphasis on verbalism according to Ema (1990) as the only source of communication between the teacher and the learner has proved that words only make learning abstract and inactive. Farrant (1982) maintained that visual materials used in teaching are more effective and result oriented than lecturing. Instructional materials therefore, transform the abstract to reality.

The decline in the quality of education in the country could be tied to teacher's lack of using instructional materials to facilitate learning because they are in short supply. Uyanga (1995) argued that instructional materials seem to be out of circulation, therefore, most teachers teach without using them.

Quantitative and Qualitative Human Resources

The present educational system's concern is that teachers must be oriented and trained towards development of practical skills at all educational levels. The effective performance of teachers in teaching and learning environment can only be achieved through a very good training of teachers. Ali (1992) stressed that in this era of technological break through, the acquisition of sound academic knowledge and skills are fundamental in training of teachers.

The training of teachers may take varied forms based on institutions. Employers may choose to use in-service approach which may take the form of distant learning, workshops, seminar etc. Of course, without the training and retaining, teachers are likely to fall back to routine teaching and repeat the same old notes.

The National Policy on Education (2004) revealed that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This suggests that training has to be accorded high priority, because if we have mediocre teachers, they will produce students who are mediocre. Mediocre begets mediocre, garbage in garbage out.

The increase in enrolment across all levels of education without corresponding increase in number of teachers has brought about high ratio of students to teachers. This has posed a threat to quality education. The insensitivity and inability of the government to recruit more teaching staff to meet up with increased enrolment has grossly affected quality of education in the country.

Quality Assurance

The quest for quality education in Nigeria could be traced back to the early 70s when there was general outcry against examination malpractice and certificate forgery. As a result, the federal government was saddled with the responsibility of maintaining and promoting quality education. The federal government in her wisdom decided to establish agencies and inspectorate divisions to ensure that quality education is not compromised. These agencies that are vested with the responsibility of maintaining and promoting quality and enforcement of minimum standards include

1. The National Primary Education Commission (NPEC)
 2. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)
 3. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)
 4. The National University Commission (NUC)
- Etc.

It is very disheartening to note that the inspectorate services both at the state ministry of education and federal ministry of education have not been performing their roles effectively as expected. The inability of these agencies and inspectorate divisions to perform has affected the standard and quality of education, and this can be attributed to the fact that

1. These inspectorate divisions are used as dumping grounds for the undisciplined principals who failed to give "returns".
2. Most of the inspectorate offices are under staffed.
3. There is no proper motivation for the staff working there
4. They are underfunded and poorly equipped.

These problems can be handled through adequate provision of funds, equipment and staff training programs so as to upgrade their knowledge and skills in the area of supervision/ inspection.

Uniform Curriculum

The government is considered as the major custodian of society's heritage and therefore is charged with the responsibility of developing school curriculum to meet the needs and aspiration of the society. According to Aiyepku (1989) the government after independent saw the need for a new curriculum that will make learning more meaningful to the learner. The change in curriculum was due to the fact that some topics taught in schools were irrelevant and vague to the learners.

With the proliferation of educational institutions in the country, effort should be made by the government to unify curriculum so as to guide against deviation from the national objectives on education. This will help to maintain quality education in the country.

Conclusion

The paper has identified some issues in education that need to be handled well to improve the general quality of education. This paper's major claim is that the government must continue to play the leading role in providing, maintaining and promoting quality education so as to realize the goals of education.

Recommendations

Government is advised to maintain and promote quality of education through the development of a sound curriculum, establish supervisory and monitoring departments to evaluate the quality and the educational products.

In order to lay a foundation for quality and sustainable education in Nigeria, Government should ensure that teachers who are mediocre should be retrained since no educational system can be greater than the quality of its teachers.

The Federal Government should centralize the Coordination of all the levels of education and make funds available for instructional materials in schools.

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