

# FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION AS PANACEA TO TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Most academic careers of female teenagers have encountered serious problems as a result of the negative repercussions of Teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy has become a common vice among teenagers (girls) and it is so alarming that it has assumed the subject of every small talk among public health practitioners, the same way the subject of weather is, for the English. It is noteworthy that most of the these teenagers (girls) who started engaging in illicit sex at the ages of 12-19, did it out of ignorance, not knowing the consequences of teenage pregnancy. This paper therefore, presents the thesis that if the girl-child is exposed to functional education early in life, it would go a long way in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy in developing countries. It is on this premise, that this paper discusses the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy and present how functional education of the girl- child can help to reduce the vice of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Functional, Education, Panacea, Teenage Pregnancy and Nigeria.

Among public health workers, parents and school administrators, the issue of teenage pregnancy has assumed a serious challenge. Globally, teenage pregnancy has become a pervasive phenomenon that has affected the development of the girl-child. It affects the health, social, economic and political progress and empowerment of the girl-child (Oke, 2015). It is a general truism that teenage pregnancy is not a common vice only in developing countries. It is a problem which is experienced in both developed and developing countries of the world and has been a source of worry for public health workers, policymakers, parents, international organizations and the general public.

Statistical reports released by the World Health Organization (WHO) show that 16 million girls between the ages 15-19 give birth every year and 2 million girls under the ages of 15 give birth every year, worldwide. According to UNFPA (2012), in developing countries, one-third of young girls give birth before age 20.

A clarion call is sounding to parents and guardians to rise to the responsibility to build and institute laudable value system in the girl-child very early in their lives. This is because most girls who fall victim of teenage pregnancy come from either broken homes or unfortunate parenthood (Report of 'the Counsellor'). Functional education which is characterized with problem-solving approach is what teenagers need to get them occupied both at home and in school. Functionality in Education refers to inculcating in the child Values Education (VE) that ensures holistic development of the learner in order to empower him/her to be a problem-solver in line with the societal existential needs (Odum and Ezekwe, 2015). A common saying goes that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop". When the mind of the child is filled with rational thinking and how to proffer solutions to life's problems, he/she cannot think about illicit sexual relationship. On the other hand, if parents in this contemporary era will rise to the responsibility to know who their child really is, who is her friend both at home and in school, where they go and what they watch per time, they will not likely derail in life. Be that as it may, this paper sets out to fashion a veritable model of functional education for teenagers, which can help forestall teenage pregnancy as well as sexually-transmitted diseases among young people.

### **The Concept of Functional Education**

Functional education is a pragmatic type of education that empowers the learner for self-reliance and problem-solving. Functional education can be seen as teaching in a manner that ensures holistic development of students in line with the society's needs and aspirations. However, according to Igboabuchi (2003), Functional education is associated with three ultimate concepts; they are instrumentalism, Empiricism and experimentalism. He states that functionalism is a philosophy that is based on scientific tradition with its roots in the indigenous philosophies of the natives.

Obviously, in providing functional education for the learners, knowledge of the subject matter must be intertwined with the elements of indigenous wisdom, intuitive discretion, truth, skills, productive potentials so as to produce meaningful individuals who will be functional in their societies. The Nigerian educational system will be able to do this, if it can embrace Values Education and science and technology the kind the Chinese education system operates with. Expousing on the above premise, Odum and Ezekwe (2015) categorically, state that the Chinese industrial prowess and production exploits have been able to launch them to the apogee of the global economic index. Other Asian Tigers like Singapore, Malaysia, India, Taiwan are blazing the trail in medicine, technological production and functional education.

### **Salient Area of Functional Education and the Role of Parents/Guardians**

The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria has taken a step forward to introduce entrepreneurial subjects to be taught in our schools and they have been reflected in their curriculum as trade/entrepreneurial subjects. However, qualified instructors and teachers for these subjects have not been adequately provided to sustain the new scheme. The serious dearth of qualified instructors, teachers, equipment and workshops has turned the laudable idea to elephant project. The following are the salient areas of functional and/or pragmatic education, among others:

- Electrical installation maintenance
- Hair styling, and beautification
- Garment making/fashion designing
- Leather works (sandals and shoe making)
- Carpentry and joinery
- GSM repair and maintenance
- Computer operation and maintenance
- Event making and decoration
- Catering and craft practice
- Paint-making, painting and designing
- Building technology
- Plumbing and fitting
- Animal husbandry.

During long vacations, it is imperative for parents and guardians to send their wards to entrepreneurial centres where they can acquire these skills. From the period of enrolment in school and the time of graduation, if students are exposed to these skill acquisition opportunities, there is high likelihood that the child will become self-reliant and can even train himself/herself in tertiary education.

## **Overview of Teenage Pregnancy**

The concept of teenage pregnancy can mean several things to several people. It has been defined in various ways by different perceptions people hold about the concept as well as how each country perceives who a teenager is. Some authors in some countries may view a teenager as any child under age 18 while others may view teenager as those within the age bracket of 15 to 17, and most times they are categorized as children under the age of 20. According to Gyan (2013), teenage pregnancy can be defined as a pregnancy that occurs in young girls between the ages of 13 to 17. To Maliki (2012), teenage pregnancy can be defined as a pregnancy that occurs in an under-aged girls (usually within the ages of 13-19). Teenage pregnancy is defined as a pregnancy in young women who have not reached their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday when the pregnancy terminates, irrespective of whether the woman is married or not depending on the country (Wikipedia, 2008).

From the foregoing definitions, it could be deduced that the age range of the individual is significant when defining teenage pregnancy. Therefore, the position of this paper is that any pregnancy that occurs in the life of an individual who is under the age of 18 and she is still dependent on a guardian/parent.

## **Some Statistical Reports on Teenage Pregnancy**

Every year, the incidence of teenage pregnancy is on the increase. It has been reported that an estimate of 16 million girls between the ages of 15-19 give birth every year, with 95 percent of these births occurring in less developed countries. This report makes up 11 percent of all births worldwide (The World Health Organization, 2012). In developed countries, there is a quantum leap in the case of teenage pregnancy every year. A survey conducted by Grunseit in United States of America in 1997 reveals that each year, more teenage girls particularly those younger than 17 years old become pregnant. Similarly, it was also reported that each year, about 500,000 adolescent females become parents before completing high school in the U.S. (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and unplanned pregnancy, 2011). In England, according to the World Health Organization (2012) nearly 42,000 teenagers became pregnant as well as in Wales during the year 2006.

Every day in developing countries, 20,000 girls under the ages of 18 give birth. In Ghana, it was reported that, nearly 33.4% of recorded childbirths occurred to teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 (Xinhua, 1996). He also report that one out of three girls aged 15 to 19 residing in the central region of Ghana has a child. Similarly in Nigeria, according to report, one out of every five girls had given birth by the age of 18 (The Sun, July, 20, 2013 Editional). In Slums, Ghettos and rural areas where birth rate among teenage girls is increasing in geometric proportion, the situation is worse and has demystified statistical record gathering.

### **Causes of Teenage Pregnancy**

Some of the factors attributable to teenage pregnancy are discussed hereunder:

➤ **Unfortunate Parenthood**

Both in developed and developing countries, there are parents who do not have the virtues of being parents. Perhaps they are products of broken homes or even teenage pregnancy. These calibers of parents lack what it takes to train up their wards with good value systems. Consequently, their girls tend to be prone to rape, illicit, sexual relationships, indiscipline and teenage pregnancy.

➤ **Poverty**

According to Popenoe (1998), most teenagers that get pregnant are from low socio-economic status parents. Guttmacher Institute (2005) also reveals that teenage girls who belong to poor families are more likely to get pregnant because they are easily tempted by money from men.

➤ **Early Exposure to Sex at Childhood**

When teenagers are exposed to premature dating from age 12, they are liable to fall into sexual activities. To Miller (2006), most girls are having sex at early ages between 10-13 years. In other words, Guttmacher Institute (2004) reveals that 60 percent of girls have their first sexual intercourse before their 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. The unrestricted use of cell phones by teenagers now gives them access to different porn sites in the internet thereby giving them the urge to indulge in illicit sex. Similarly, their opposite mates have easy access to them through the cell phone by bombarding them with erotic text messages and pictures. Parents have a very onerous responsibility to this regard.

➤ **Sexual Abuse**

There is high level of rape and several dimensions of sexual abuses teenagers fall prey to in this contemporary time. Rape is a form of sexual abuse and it has gross effect in the present and future life of teenage girls who are victims causing them unwanted sex and teenage pregnancy. HSU (2010) asserts that between 11 and 20 percent of teenage mothers had wanted sexual experience preceding their pregnancy. Saewyc, Magee and Pettingell (2004) in their study indicated a strong link between early sexual abuse and subsequent teenage pregnancy in industrialized countries.

➤ **Lack of Sex Education/Illiteracy**

Lack of sex education has been identified as one of the major causes of teenage pregnancy. To Mehta, Groenem, and Roque (1998), many teenagers are not taught about methods of birth control and how to deal with peers who pressurize them into having illicit sex. Lack of education causes most teenagers to be deceived by the adult men who lure them into sex. It is disheartening that many

pregnant teenagers do not have any knowledge of the central facts surrounding sexuality.

➤ **Lack of Use of Contraceptives During Sexual Intercourse**

Emotional euphoria plunges teenagers into having sex without protection. Slater (2000) is of the view that most teenagers lack knowledge of, or access to conventional methods of preventing pregnancy as they may be too embarrassed or frightened to seek such information. Young girls often think of contraception either as ‘the pill’ or condoms and have little or no knowledge about other methods. They are often confused by negative, second-hand information about contraception from their friends and the media.

**Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy**

Teenage pregnancy is an enemy and thief of destiny. The repercussions can be unamendable till the end of one’s life. It can mar the marital destiny of the girl child making her to remain as a single mother. Men most especially in developing countries seem to reject single mothers for marriage only on exceptional circumstances. To Melissa (2012), teenage pregnancy could lead to drop-out, unemployment and numerous emotional traumas. Early motherhood could result in adverse psychological development of the girl-child.

It can bring about emotional anarchy as well as destabilization of the mind there by leading to unproductive mind in latter life.

According to Marnach et al (2013), teenage mothers between 15-19 years old are more likely to develop anemia, preterm delivery and low birth than mothers between 20-24 years old. The teenage mother can become easily frustrated and find suicide as the only way to overcome grief. Teenage pregnancy could make the girl-child to grow up in poverty, have more health problems, suffer from high rates of abuse and neglect, and even results in dropping out of school (Ogon, Ajeya and Yunusa, 2013).

The health consequences arising from teenage pregnancy can be harmful. To Lemos (2009), young mothers’ inexperience of looking after themselves contributes to adverse health conditions most especially during pregnancy. The young inexperienced mother is prone to negative behaviours such as smoking and drug addiction and her immaturity affects her ability to seek proper and timely health care.

**Epilogue**

This paper, on a pragmatic approach, chooses to adopt the tool of functional education to reduce the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria. From the foregoing, it is apparent that functional education empowers the teenager for

productivity. In other words, such education has capacity to engage the hands and minds of young people thereby shutting them off from thinking of irrelevances which illicit sexual relationship is one. In developing countries like Nigeria, such pragmatic education of the girl-child would go a long way in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy. During long vacations, parents and guardians have the responsibility to send their wards to skill acquisition centres as we stated earlier in order to occupy their minds. Functional education is able to cover the cognitive domains of learning objectives, the Affective domains, the Psychomotor domains and the entrepreneurial or manipulative domains on that premise, this paper suggests that if parents, guardians, school administrators, teachers and policy makers would adhere to these recommendations outlined hereunder, the incidence of teenage pregnancy would be drastically reduced:

- Policy makers in Nigeria should institute a policy framework that will mandate every parent to enroll their wards into skill acquisition schemes during holidays and ensure that such entrepreneurial centres are provided in all the states in the country.
- Our school curriculum should encapsulate in detail sex and relationship education and emphasis should be on ways and methods of preventing unwanted pregnancy.
- Parents should engaged early in sex and relationship education of their children. They should be open with their children at home about emotional intelligence and always seek to know intimately their children's relationships outside the home.
- Government should train and employ facilitators and entrepreneurial teachers in primary, secondary and the universities to be able to drive functional education in our educational system.

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