

# FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION AS A BASIS FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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## **Development**

For some time now many people have observed a misdirection in the way children are educated the world over. For instance, Okolo (1993) observed that education in Nigeria has been fraught with problems arising from both the teacher, the students and the environment where such schools are sited. Many people, (rightly or wrongly,) have established that:

- 1) The educated persons no longer have places of honour and recognition in the society.
- 2) The youths no longer see the relevance of education in acquiring wealth and fame, so have abandoned it.
- 3) School dropouts are making it in life through dubious means and nobody seems to challenge them, rather they are hailed and honoured in the society by the society.
- 4) Hard work and honesty which education teaches do not seem to pay any longer in Nigeria.
- 5) Fraud, both within and outside the school is rampant as certificates are easily bought off the schools, and some teachers trademarks with morals and for a token fee in exchange for their professional integrity.

The situation is very pathetic indeed. As a result of this, graduates from many schools no longer defend the certificates they claim to earn. Core professions are losing students very fast as most children have less time to think constructively and intellectually to enable them opt for such professions. The manpower development pattern in Nigeria within the last few decades has been lopsided. There is therefore urgent need to look at the type of education that our children are exposed to those days. If the manpower needs of this country are no longer met, whose fault should that be, (the teachers, the students, the environment or the government (Federal, State or Local)? Who should con-eel this imbalance? How should it be carried out? The various papers for this conference should be able to diagnose and treat this ailment for the betterment of the country.

If education is necessary for manpower development in Nigeria, and even the world over, what constitutes a functional education? What roles are the stakeholders in education expected to play so as to ensure manpower development?

## **Concept Analysis**

It is important to review some key words that lend to give direction and dimension to this paper. Generally speaking, when the concept education is mentioned, what readily comes to mind is teaching and learning, then school and the teacher, together, they try to give meaning to what education actually is. It is therefore very important to look at the way many people look at the word education that is expected to develop manpower in Nigeria.

Okafor (1984) sees education as a process of the development of the potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary, according to the right reason and to achieve perfect self-fulfilment.

By this definition, some people may question whether a person who has not reached the maximum activation of the developed potentialities when necessary, but who nevertheless, activated some levels of the development potentialities is not engaged in educating activities. It is not even clear who should determine the maximum activation as suggested by Okafor

In the opinion of Hirst and Peters as reported in Nwabuisi (2001: 110) educating people suggests a family of processes which set out to develop in individuals, the desirable qualities. Nwabuisi then questioned:

- (a) What are these desirable qualities learners should acquire?
- (b) Who should determine these desirable qualities?
- (c) Who should acquire these desirable qualities, students or teachers or both?
- (d) What is the expected outcome of acquiring these desirable qualities?

In a similar way, Cremin (1971) defined education as a desirable systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and sensibilities. The implication here is that, education should embrace the transmission and acquisition of values among other things, both through formal, informal or non-formal process. This is agreement with Ryle's (1947:53) definition of education. According to Ryle, educating a child means stimulating his total development.

He further observed that:

What will help to make us self-controlled, fair-minded or hard working are good examples set by others, and then ourselves practicing and failing, and practicing again until perfection. This is what we call practice makes perfect.

The early man's education in its simplest form means inculcating in the young people the value of hard work for sustenance and subsistence. According to Nwabuisi (2001: 118), the Hebrew education emphasized the value of obedience to parents and people in authority in their educational pursuit. Nwabuisi also explained that the Spartans educated the youths to develop valour, physical fitness and to instill in the youths the value of the intellectual development. On the other hand, Nwabuisi posted that the Roman's education was aimed at developing in the youths, those values that would make them good citizens for the preservation, strengthening and perfection of the state. By this definition, education is seen to be geared towards inculcating firmness, fortitude, and brevity, self-restraint, reverence of the gods, prudence, dignity and justice. These qualities are capable of stimulating personal development, which is a forerunner to manpower development. What direction is Nigerian education taking?

From the fore-mentioned definitions of education, it is evidently clear that education embraces both individual self-development and the national manpower development. This means that, when an individual is educated, then there are signals to manpower development. Barminas and Garbs (2003:151) advanced that education is the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economics, political, sociological and human resources. This means that education is a process by which society through its agents, deliberately transmits its cultural heritage, its accumulated knowledge (values, skills) from one generation to another. It is also a way of giving its recipients direction to personal and collective development and advancement.

Educating the child is expected to mean the development of his society. However, Okolo (1993) lamented the sorry state in the education of the youths in Nigeria. He further opined that: \-It is equally clear that education for all its worth in this country in its aims and functions, has really not generated or promoted right values and priorities even or should we say, especially, among those supposed to be educated.

Professor Okolo by this analysis, has given a serious indictment of education in Nigeria. According to him education has failed to develop the needed manpower needs of the country, because it has failed to teach the right values. The problem of examination malpractice, cultism, coupled with incessant industrial action (strikes), over populated classrooms, congested hostels, harsh conditions of service for teachers at all levels and other social vices have threatened proper education of the recipient. Barminas and Garba (2003) opined that the main purpose of educating an individual is to refine and make him useful to self and the society he belongs. The major recipients of formal education, are the restive youths, who should be properly guided to career choice for self fulfillment.

According to Adedoyin (2004:2), youth restiveness is a symptom, consequence or an outward manifestation of an imbalance in their education, employment and personal self-development. President Obasanjo observed that the youths are the foundation of a society, their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and the general security of a nation (Adedoyin, 2004). The president further explained that through the youths' creative talents and labour powers, a nation makes giant strides in the economic development as well as in socio-political attainment.

This is why Oranu (2004) opined that education in Nigeria was regarded, some years back, as the collective responsibilities of the family, community, state and some times, nation. This relationship and close tie enabled the community to see any child from that community, first as a child of that community, before the child was known to which family he belonged. This change has serious negative implications on the national manpower development, as nobody cares even when a child misbehaves. The people prefer to castigate such a child's parents instead of seeing him as a child from that community and so correct the misbehavior. This is why Utume (2001; 1) opined that development originates from a people's chosen way of life, determined by their needs. This means that development can neither be imported nor imposed but it is adaptable to local cultures where it operates. They are the ones to identify the parameters to measure development.

On the concept of manpower, some refer to workers as manpower when considering them as a means of producing goods (The New Webster Dictionary 1993). In other words, manpower implies the situation where the individuals are capable of influencing the society either politically or

economically. Such a person or group of persons have a direct or indirect way of stable living and can also have a positive effect on other people to the point of developing them politically, socially or economically or otherwise.

Development, in the opinion of Nwana (1995) is the harnessing of available resources by a people for the realization of their major objectives, solving their major articulated problems without deliberately creating new problem situations. On the other hand, Okolo (1995) posited that development does not start with goods, but that it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline. According to him, without these three, all resources remain latent and undeveloped or undeveloped.

On national development, Adams (2000:50) simply defined it as "growth and improvement in welfare of the citizenry of Nigeria". That is, creating the situation where the citizens of Nigeria will have easy access to life, with every member of (he society playing out his roles, because an average Nigerian has job to fall unto for survival.

The implication here is that when there are cases of unemployment or general insecurity arising from the anti-social activities of restive youths, then there is no national development. Manpower development in such state or situation can be said to be poor. When one casts his mind a little back, one can easily see the poor and insensitive manner in which manpower development is treated with levity. This is why Combs (1985:189) opined that when the welfare of the youths is taken poorly and jobs are not created for the jobless lot, this unfamiliar and stress-provoking situation makes youngsters to resort to socially deviant behaviour. And in the words of Isyaku (1998:5), "there has been wide spread observations and fears that unemployment situation in Nigeria many lead to a significant proportion of children remaining ignorant, poor, underdeveloped, unscientific and technologically illiterates". The resulting effect is expected to lead to increase in crime rate and other social disorders like cultism, violence and prostitution. Manpower development and youth empowerment can therefore rid the society of these vices, because, the New Webster's Dictionary (1993:251) sees manpower as " the persons available for some purpose', or "regarded as one of the resources of a nation, industry...". The implication here is that, both the person and the individual in a nation and the activities available to these people to perform are relevant and important when manpower is mentioned. One thing is clear, and that is manpower development means people development, which also influences nation's development. Functional education is therefore a basis for proper manpower development in any country.

### **Components of a Functional Education**

To be called on educated person, one's knowledge should positively affect the way of looking at issues and situations. A person who merely passed through a school system may be referred to as a knowledgeable person and he cannot be functional in his society. It will therefore be a logical tragedy if a person is said to be educated but such a person has in no way changed for the better. Both the learners and their parents have freedom to choose the course they intend to read at school, though the teacher's role is to guide them it is the course the learners choose that determines the level of empowerment and manpower development of both the individual and the society.

If the learners are not properly guided by their teachers, or if they are more influenced by the desires of their parents, and peers, then, the children may not do very well in the discipline they have been forced to study.

A functional education will therefore take cognizance of the following very important issues as its components. They are:

### **Cultural and Environmental Education**

To be a good scientist, (lie person must see and record what he sees but not what some on tells him to see or to record. In a typical African cultural setting, many of the cultural provision influence the way a child learns, thereby making such education not to be functional. The cultural provision do not allow the children to question any observation, rather, the beliefs are taken without questions (Agogo, 2001; Fafunwa, 1980).

Harmmond (5978) opined that culture means a complex whole, which includes knowledge beliefs, morals, laws and customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society. These cultural provisions differ from place to place and from people to people, for education to be functional, it should be able to transmit the culture of the people in a systematic way without injuring the people's belief system. To this end, Stones (1993:339) opined that the environment in which the school operates should be rid of cultural barriers that run counter to their

co-existence, Such a situation would provide the best environment for the upbringing of the student This is why Agogo (2003:10) posited that Nigeria's diverse cultures and multifarious tribes have gone through a series of transformations so as to help the child live better in this modern society. Agogo then stressed that hybridization of both Western and Nigerian cultural values in good proportion can still sanitize Nigeria and the Nigerians into proper career choice.

### **Provisions of the National Policy on Education as a Component**

•The National Policy on Education (FME, 1981) posit that education in Nigeria is no more s. private enterprise, but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of government's complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. It is expected to be used a? an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. This means that, the government should be interested in what the child learns and how he learns and subsequently what such a learner-will come out to be. The beneficiaries are expected to address the manpower development needs : I the country. The courses to be run should therefore be relevant in terms of the needs of individuals as well as in terms of the kind of society that is desired.

The national objective of Nigeria is related to the Nigerian philosophy of education. The philosophy is therefore based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen For this to be in harmony with Nigeria's national objectives, it should be geared toward se/-actualization and better human relationship etc. All these are oriented towards inculcating certain values as well as acquisition of some appropriate skills, which are necessary for the manpower-development initiative of any country.

### **Science and Technological Education as a Component**

The National Policy on Education stressed that science and technology education should be studied in terms of technical education. Accordingly, FME (1981) explained that Technical Education is that aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. This is knowledge of science and technology has made the world to be a global market. Any functional education should therefore incorporate basic but necessary scientific and technological literacy into all school programmes. This is why a good knowledge of computer if very relevant to every person in Nigeria of today, to enable the beneficiaries apply scientific knowledge for the improvement and solution to our environmental problems for the use and convenience of man and his society.

It is now observed that the world is at the threshold of technical information explosion as well microelectronic revolution (Agogo, 2002). There are expected to create new ways of living and working which in turn, will make" new demands on the educational system. This will create new demands for skilled manpower needs in technical and vocational education. Many factors, such as food, shelter, transportation, communication, energy and so on, will be affected. A functions; educational should take note of this trend too and train her people in this direction. All it takes is the training and retraining programmes for most workers to develop appropriate skills for various occupations that science and technology education shall create and expose the people to.

### **The Political and Socio-economic Dimension as a Component**

When Ryle (1975:53) opined that by educating a child, a total man is also educated, he meant that such a child should benefit from both the political, social as well as economic knowledge from school, to be a balanced individual. The beneficiary should be able to read political games of his locality or even of his country. He should be able to read and also analyze properly the political mapping in terms of people's political choice and political direction. He should be able to predict the trend in the youth's socio-economic ambition and its likely effects on national development. A functional education for manpower development, should therefore take cognizance of political, social as well as economic education of the nation, especially, of her teeming youths. It is hard to get along with idle people. Aside from depressing one, they can also be a bit dangerous and retrogressive. If the political and socio-economic atmosphere of nation is therefore, chaotic, then one will find it difficult to survive in it, as there may be confusion and genera! lack of direction.

Every child needs political education to survive and function well is a democratic setting like Nigeria. This education will enable one to contribute his quote towards the over-all development of the country.

### **Girl Child and Women Education as a Component**

The education of a child begins even before birth. Accordingly Maduewesi (2001:1) posited that a well fed, emotionally healthy pregnant woman is likely to bring into the world a child whose education will be smooth and relatively easy to handle. The mother, who is closest to the child, is expected to be her best teacher. In an African culture provision, girls and women's roles in the society are played to the background. The culture does not believe that girls and women can contribute to the development of their societies. Even when these categories of people are reluctantly educated, they count it all a loss. And because education is a form of social security investment for many families, the education of the girls, most of whom are likely to be married early, is seen by the African culture, as potentially unrewarding. According to Iheanacho (2003:39), the husbands are expected to reap the fruits of women labour. On the same vein, Tanko (1995) established that even though women contribute 60% of the rural foods, earn 10% of the money incomes, yet regrettably, they own only 1% of the family assets. From this analysis, girls and women form a indispensable part of human resources for development. Education of girl-children and women is therefore expected to help in the manpower development of the country and so, should be encouraged, irrespective of the provisions of the African culture.

### **Vocational and Technical Education as a Component**

The National Policy on Education (FME, 1981) stressed Vocational and Technical Education, especially in providing trained manpower in applied science, technology, commerce and other vocational disciplines. It is also to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, home management as well as economic development. Vocational and technical educations are the basis of the technology development. If this is taken properly, there shall be increase in middle level technicians as well as increase in home management and nutrition. The 6-3-3-4 education system stresses acquisition of right vocational skills to fill the middle level manpower needs of the country. It is therefore a component of functional education.

### **Implications of Functional Education on Manpower Development**

There is a popular saying that the road to happiness cannot be travelled with stolen goods. Therefore, one's survival can be threatened by the bad, actions/activities of others around. In the same vein, for education to be useful for proper manpower development, such education should be functional. It should be able to meet the needs of all levels of development. A highly skilled manpower calls for training at high levels, though high level manpower cannot work well without the low level manpower. Otherwise, the high level manpower will be forced to perform low-level manpower functions. If this happens, valuable human assets must have been wasted. A functional education should therefore strive to develop all appropriate levels of manpower that the country may need to function well. This then calls for proper teacher preparation. Nwosu (1999:43) opined that a teacher is that person who manages the teaching/learning process. Such a Person helps he learner to imbibe ideas and knowledge to develop appropriate skills. In addition, Nwosu stressed that, the teacher should have a high intellectual capacity to understand the learner's growth and development. The learner's experience is guided and he is inspired to actively participate in the teaching-learning interactions. The teachers are very important to the point that the National Policy on Education (NPE) asserts that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (FME; 1981). If Nigeria is to develop her manpower, then the place of the teachers in education cannot be over looked. Ukeje (1996:11) posits that teachers are the real builders of tomorrow and that no country can build a great nation with inefficient and disgruntled builders. On the basis of this, Nwosu (1999:154) rightly advised that:

Nigeria would be best advised to urgently grant teachers a very attractive and inspiring employment package and working environment that would motivate them to become true, effective and efficient agents of rapid, ail round and sustainable national development.

This means that, manpower development of any country has a lot to do with her teachers and other stakeholders in education.

### **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, my task as I earlier posited, is to raise more questions for participants to address. In this paper, I have tried to take a position that functional education is the bed rock for manpower development in Nigeria. This is true for all countries, that is, developing and the underdeveloped. Participants are expected to address, more in-depth, those components that make

education to be functional, or they are at liberty to disagree with my own position. However, if this paper has made you to raise more questions on this theme than you had before now, or it has raised some confusion, then it has succeeded.

However, it is important that this conference isolates factors that make education functional, and also whether education has anything to do with manpower training and development.

It should also be able to take a firm and concrete stand as to who should develop manpower needs and invariably, should constitute manpower development needs, with particular reference to the Nigerian situation.

I wish you good deliberations on this theme-Education and Manpower Development.  
Thank you.

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