

FUNCTIONAL AND QUALITATIVE SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING VISION 2020 IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on functional and qualitative Social Studies Education in achieving vision 2020 in Nigeria. The paper reveals that education is the fulcrum on which development of any nation hinges. In order to achieve the millennium Development Goals (MDGS) as well as the realization of vision 2020, all efforts should be geared towards aligning functional and qualitative education in Nigeria. Since the global trend today is to strengthen educational sectors at all levels, Nigeria has reviewed her educational system from 6 – 5 – 4 through 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 to (9 – 3 – 4) tagged universal Basic Education at the foundational level. Despite this review, over 70% of school age population is out of the school system, while majority of our youths are jobless. Going by this, much is still required in improving our educational system. The goal of making education available to all citizens has to be modified from ability to read and write to functional and qualitative literacy.

Introduction

In achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) as well as the realization of the vision 2020, much is needed in improving our educational standard. All efforts must be geared towards aligning functional and qualitative education at all levels in Nigeria. The Nigerian government introduced the 9 – year Basic Education programme as one of the means of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) by 2015. This prompted the need for the revision of the existing school curriculum hence, the National Council on Education (NCE) in 2005 directed the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to review, re-structure and re-align the existing primary and Junior Secondary School curriculum into a 9 year Basic Education programme (Falade and Olowo 2009). Nigeria has reviewed her educational system from 6 – 5 – 4 through 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 to 9 – 3 – 4 tagged Universal Basic Education (UBE). Despite the review, over 70% of school age population are out of the school system, which the large army of the youths are jobless (Olowo 2008, Durosoro 2008)

For Vision 2010 vis-à-vis Education For All (EFA) by the year 2020 which had mass literacy as one of its components not to elude the nation, Nigeria education has been modified from ability to read and write only to functional literacy, In acceptance of this challenge, the Nigerian educational research and development council (NERDC) made some adjustment in both the primary and junior secondary schools curriculum. This was contained in nine o'clock Nigeria Television Authority Network News of Wednesday, August 30, 2008. The purpose of this adjustment according to Adeniyi (2008), was to embark on a serious qualitative functional education system where the average Nigerian graduate would have been prepared in character, attitudes and skills to be functional job provider or employer of labour than a job seeker, as part of the move to bring about the vision, it was stated that subjects like Business Education, Civic Education and the like would be introduced at these levels. As the government undertakes efforts geared at restructuring the economy to enhance performance and facilitate productivity, greater attention should be given to reviewing our present

educational system to make the nation's productive Capacity, Effective participation as socio – economic reform process dependent on provision of qualitative education to the citizenry (Adeniyi 2008).

Ajeyalemi (2008) opines that the objective of using education as an instrument per excellence for bringing about national development in Nigeria (NPE,1997, revised 1981, 2004, 2007) seems not to be realized yet. The intended curriculum described as worthwhile earlier is not being implemented as planned, he argues further that, there have been quantitative but not qualitative improvements in education since independence. He acknowledged that access has improved in terms of enrolment, but the infrastructure and the needed facilities have not expanded to cater for the larger increase in enrolment. The teaching / learning inputs that would ensure quality education are inadequately provided. It is on this account that the paper is aimed at examining how the concept of functional and qualitative Social Studies education and national productivity could assist in achieving vision 2020 in Nigeria.

Qualitative and Functional Education

Majasan (1988) cited by Adeniyi (2008) viewed qualitative education as good and relevant education achieved through diligent learning and research, which produces sound and useful knowledge and creative skills of production and development. This is that education that not only emphasizes the total development of the recipients but also makes every provision, through appropriate legislation, workable policies and appropriation of resources to make it work. The admixture of elements of culture, morality, manners, art, science and technology, knowledge application, and creativity as well as values, skills, characterized qualitative education and positive personal values, including personal freedom, hardwork and self- organization with go a long way in promoting qualitative and functional education (Adeniyi 2008).

Functional education is the type of education that enables the child to face practical problems with practical solutions. This is the hull mark of our indigenous education before the advent of western education in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Fadeye (2005) agrees that through this medium a child acquires practical knowledge and skills necessary for survival in his environment. Functional educational encourages discipline, respect for elders and constituted authorities, respect to the norms and values of the society as well. In support of this assertion, Ajeyalemi 2008 viewed functional education as one of the most efficient ways to groom excellent leaders and empower the poor. In the past decades, Nigeria has made great efforts to produce good leaders and reduce poverty through education. But as the country with the largest black population in the world and with limited educational expenditures, Nigeria, unfortunately, still lags behind in the pursuit of all the millennium development goals particularly those relating to universal literacy, eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

Fafunwa (1982), revealed that education in the African society was regarded as a means to an end and not an end in itself and as such the main guiding principle was functionalism. Particularly, education emphasized learning by doing, social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values. The curriculum according to him was relevant to needs of society and the learners. Functional education refers to education that comes from the child's needs, and that 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; and acts from the wholeness of organic life, with reflection to practical life in the present and in the future (Ajeyalemi 2008).

Zeilbeger (1999), highlighted principles of functional education, among which are that:

- (1). Functional education is based on the natural needs of the child to enquire and to know, to observe and to work, and especially to play; it strives to arouse in the child spiritual longing, like the love of the good and of work, that will not come by force, but rather in a free atmosphere and in suitable living conditions; for that purpose, the school should create a lively and happy environment, where the child will work enthusiastically.
- (2). The child has to be put in the centre of the curriculum but not according to the principles exterior to the child.
- (3). The educator should get to know properly the child's interest and the changes that he undergoes as he grows up physically and emotionally; hence the teacher should adapt his teaching to the natural growth of the child.
- (4). The education will 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 a foreign substance, without any connection to his life. Any fact is interesting, if it is related to the current social activity of the one learning it. Hence one should not separate between theoretical studies and child's natural action.
- (5). An "active school" is needed, where the classroom would be a kind of laboratory. The art of the teacher will be reflected by his ability to bridge between the studied material, that is not very attractive, and the natural needs of the child: "the best way for achieving that goal is play".
- (6). Because the child must in future live in a social framework, one must introduce the child to work and the subjects that prepare for social activity.
- (7). The teacher should stimulate moral and spiritual needs, cooperate with his students, rather than lecture them; he will aid them in acquiring knowledge through self-study and personal experiences; his main quality should be enthusiasm rather than scholarship; and for that is needed a completely new kind of teacher training, that would be mainly psychological, and focus on the understanding of the child and his needs.
- (8). There is no point in trying to develop skills that not everyone has a talent for. The school should have a minimum of a common, core curriculum, and leave other subjects as free electives; the ideal should be "a school made to fit the size of the child" in every stage of his development; because every individual is different from another to a certain extent, in his physical and psychological traits. "Education is not preparation for life, but life itself". Only to the extent that the future trends express themselves as present needs, is education a preparation for his life as an adult.

From the definitions and principles of functional education outlined above, it seems evident that functional education is not an education limited to merely learning the subject matter or as an end for itself, but that functional education attempts at non-formal goals – to train students towards a practical mastery of the subject, to get them into the habit to adapt to any situation, to bring them to experience first-hand, the studied subject by do-it-yourself work and experiments. It connects all studies with specific needs and roles towards which the child's interest should be directed. In this way, the child will gain thinking habits and develop the technical means needed for them that will improve as time goes on, and that will aid him in solving his practical problems. (Ajeyelemi, 2008)

Functional Basic Social Studies Education in Nigeria

Basic education is the education given to children within the ages of 3 to 14/15 years. This implies that the child will spend 6 years in primary education and 3 years in junior secondary education which is compulsory and free (FRN 2004: 13). Adelore, Okediran and Augustus (2005) further submit that basic education is a compulsory education for the child which is supposed to be a pre-requisite to social, economic and political advancement of a people worldwide. It is the pillar on which all other levels of education (senior secondary and tertiary) are built. It is also known as fundamental education (Ogunkunle, 2008). Basic education includes adult and non-formal education programme at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out-of-school youth (NPE, 2004:13)

For Basic Education to be functional according to Durosaro (2008), it must not only give cognitive and effective development but it must also make the citizens acquire some basic skills. He equally added that, a functional education must give people a vocation instead of creating a pool of job seekers: it must be able to develop a pool of job creators who could even be self-employing. In order to comply with the rapid changing roles of education and agitation to produce functional and effective citizens in an ever dynamic society, Nigeria has reviewed her educational system. The primary and junior secondary curricula are being reviewed to re-focus the system to functional education by the introduction of local craft, Primary Science and Social Studies at primary schools and Basic Science, Basic Technology and woodwork at the junior secondary schools. Ajeyalemi (2008) declares that, with functional education, the teacher is just a “go – between the subject and the student and he enables the functioning – the live relation between the student and the studied subject.

Functional Basic Social Studies education is a discipline that takes its root primarily from but not limited to, subject of Social Science (Akinola, 2008). Essentially, it reasonably and systematically draws on relevant concepts from these disciplines to address socially related issues and themes. It is more adequate not only in helping the youth to understand the Nigerian society, people and their problems, but also in equipping them with the knowledge, understanding and competencies to assist in improving the society (Olowo, 2008). Social Studies education in Nigeria has been structured and taught to provide learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitude and values that would enable them to become functional citizens capable of addressing the problems and issues of their society. The integrated nature of Social Studies education makes it possible for emerging national and global issues, cutting across a number of discipline, to be incorporated into it as recent curriculum revision exercises have demonstrated.

Functional education leads to important innovations as it puts in the education centre-stage the child and his needs and its moral and social world view wishes to make the houses of learning into houses of education that promote the creative spirit.

Promoting National Productivity through Functional and Qualitative Basic Social Studies Education

Nigeria as a nation ranks among the developing nations despite her human and economic resources, owing to the fact that there is problem in her level of productivity. Going by this, there is the need to overhaul our educational system in order to improve the national productivity. In the words of Myint (2008), lack of education and skills among the population is a crucial factor in under - development as education and skills are required to raise the productivity of the people in the developing countries by their skills, enterprises, initiative, adaptability and attitudes.

Adeniyi (2008) opines that productivity is crucial and strategic to the socio-economic development of any nation, for it enables the society to generate value-added services through maximum and judicious utilization of available resources. In achieving this, a comprehensive education that will impart and impact the right attitudes, skills and knowledge as well as stir up the productive potentials of the citizenry, is urgently anticipated at this crucial time. Hence, the point of emphasis is simply that national productivity through functional basic Social Studies education is not attained by chance or over-night. It takes conscious development of our children and youths basic education.

Nigeria is desirous of development in order to attain the goal of building a united, strong and self-reliant nation. Nigeria according to Ogunkunle (2008) believes in the capacity of functional education to promote a progressive and united nation. It, however, needs to be noted that productivity via functional education is not inborn rather it is developed. In essence, it takes training and acquisition of essential skills and experience for it to be developed. Social Studies education by scope and nature are well disposed to defend this process. This is in agreement with Nebraska Social Studies mission statement (1995) that:

The mission of the Social Studies is to develop capable citizens who are empowered with knowledge, skills, and attitudes enabling them to make informed decisions in a culturally diverse and interdependent world.

In addition, it equips the youths and other learners with skills that will make them engage in proper interpretation of their environment and serves to assist them to responsibly adapt to the environment or alter the same as situation may demand (Akinola 2008).

Social Studies education frees learners from the possible imprisonment of the environment and takes the learners the masters of complexities that the environment is prone to specifically, Social Studies Education develops learners the following:

- ❖ Intellectual skills: This is ability to grasp new information and engage in critical reasoning.
- ❖ Personal Life Skills: The learners are made to develop positive attitudes and behaviours, and gain emotional stability.
- ❖ Social Skills: The learners are developed in the areas of inter-personal relationship with respect to comradeship, friendship, cooperation, leadership and followership.
- ❖ Entrepreneurial Skill: Learners are exposed to information that could assist them in pursuit of career in life.

The above reveal the fact that Social Studies education is given to total development of learners. When this is allowed to be in place, learners would have been sufficiently prepared to take their places in the society and at the same time act responsibly in such positions

Conclusion

The bid to reduce poverty level in line with Millennium Development Goals, (MDGS), Nigeria as a developing nation needs a comprehensive functional education that will impart and impact the right knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as stir up the productive potentials of the citizenry, functional and qualitative Social Studies education is the answer. The paper under scores the reality of functional education offer by Social Studies as a problem solving discipline as very crucial to realizing national productivity. This is on the account that Social Studies offers education that provide young learners with the relevant skills, attitudes and values that capable of addressing the problems and issues of the country.

Recommendations

For Nigeria as a nation to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as well as in the realization of the vision 2020, functional and qualitative education has become inescapably imperative. Also, in order to contribute meaningfully to national development, the bottom line is that functional qualitative education the hinge on which the door of literacy is held should promote excellence in every sector. Based on this, the paper recommends that:

Social Studies education should be enlisted as a compulsory subject and should not be terminated at the junior secondary school level. It should not be taken as elective or general Studies Programme that are hardly taken serious, but as a core course of study. This will go a long way in assisting our youths to exhibit and discharge their skills, right attitude and knowledge that will accelerate the nation's productivity and development.

Also, the government, both at the state and federal levels, through the Ministry of Education in conjunction with other regulatory bodies/agencies in education should provide basic infrastructure, teaching and learning equipment, material and other resources that are grossly in-adequate for the ever increasing student population at every level.

On a final note, re-structuring of Social Studies Curriculum to strengthen the teaching and learning of social responsibilities by the youths towards their communities, individuals and corporate existence of their beloved nation, Nigeria. This can be achieved through training and retraining of Nigerian teachers on the skillful use of suitable strategies that will enhance the effective functional qualitative education for nation productivity.

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