

EDUCATION, WORK, AND PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss the issue of education, work and productivity in Nigeria. It analyzes the concept of education and the state of education in Nigeria. It also analyzes work situation in Nigeria, discussing why many graduates of tertiary educational institutions in the country are jobless, in spite of ample possibilities of work. Finally it discusses the issue of national productivity which is obviously enormous even from crude oil resources alone, but argues that the productivity is not realistically evident because of corruption and fraud by some people at the helm of affairs in government and in the private sector. It is therefore recommended that morality should be realistically built into the process of education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Education is a vital aspect of man's life. We all have to learn in order to know. Without knowledge, we cannot make progress. A child, for instance, has to learn about his society in order to interact and make progress in his society. The learning is ascertained when knowledge is attained. There cannot be knowledge without learning. The learning may however take various forms, conscious, and unconscious, direct and indirect, concrete and abstract, sense-perceptual or intuitive, rational or even revelational. Knowledge still has to be acquired to claim that learning has taken place. In effect knowledge which is a hallmark of education has to be manifested as a product of learning. But the knowledge, whether of skills, aptitudes, competencies, or dispositions or whatever content, has to also be of value to the individual and society towards the development of the individual and the society in order to qualify as knowledge in the process of education.

Akinpelu and Frankena allude to these facts of education that involve an 'X' teaching a 'Y' disposition 'D' through method 'M' (Akinpelu, 1981; Frankena, 1973). In their explanation of 'X', 'Y', 'D' and 'M', they state that the 'X' is the teacher who can be seen as the society, an individual teacher, or even oneself; the 'Y' is the learner; the 'D' is the disposition, that is the worthwhile content, skills, values, attitudes, competences etc; and the 'M' is the morally acceptable method through which the worthwhile disposition is expected to be taught. Thus the relationship among 'X', 'Y', 'D' and 'M' involves the *process* of education. The end point of the process is the *product* of education. Thus, an educated man is expected to manifest worthwhile disposition in the society, for his own development and the development of the society. Whatever the skills, attitudes, competences, knowledge and understanding he has acquired in the process of education should enhance his development and the development of the society. Peters, and Hirst and Peters also make assertions about this justification of education (Peters, 1966; Hirst and Peters, 1970). But it is found that all over the world various percentages of people display various amounts of this all-round requirement of *education* (acquisition of knowledge and understanding for the development of the individual and the society).

Various forms of knowledge and understanding are acquired by various people and various people display various dispositions towards their individual development and the development of their various societies. The crucial issues are the acquisition of various kinds of knowledge and understanding; and the disposition of various people towards the development of themselves as individuals and their disposition towards the development of their societies.

Science, arts and social sciences, are various forms of knowledge that we acquire variously at societal and individual levels. The advanced nations possess the scientific knowledge more than the less developed nations if we consider the scientific advancement that is found in the Western world in terms of industrial, technological, military and information indicators for instance. Their space science, their computer dexterity and even medical advancement in the realm of the natural sciences are also to be commended. In the area of arts however, for instance in terms of dance, drama, and aesthetics the less developed nations are nations to be reckoned with. But in the area of social sciences for instance in the area of management sciences, and politics, the Western world is also clearly in the lead. We only follow the Western world for instance in the practice of the politics of democracy, a political ideology that has spread steadily and surely from United States of America to most parts of the world today.

While the advanced nations lead in the sciences and social sciences as explained above and the less developed nations make some assertions in the arts, the advanced nations make various impressive assertions in the arts too. For instance they still generally hold tightly to their mode of dressing rather than copy the less developed nations in this regard, and there are various other aesthetic fancies of theirs that they would still prefer not to disregard. On the contrary in the sciences and in the social sciences, the less developed nations generally go after the established directions of the advanced nations. We are largely interested in Western medical practice, agriculture, engineering, chemistry, biology, technology, business management, space science and computer information science. Our education in these areas and even in military and political areas are largely of the Western type. There is no problem in this our Western tendency if we can also imbibe their disposition towards education for individual and societal development which is the endpoint of real education.

Education in Nigeria

Education involves learning the content as well as using the content for the development of the learner and the development of his society (Peters, 1966; Hirst and Peters, 1970; Akinpelu, 1981; Frankena, 1973). Our knowledge of Western science and social sciences like space science, biology, chemistry, industrial science, business management, and military science are used by our people sometimes for the development of the society but often times to cheat and frustrate our society. Our knowledge of Western political science is also sometimes used for the political development of the society but often times for the frustration of the society.

Our former Nigerian military leaders have sometimes used their Western military education to take over the reigns of government from civilian politicians rather than to defend the political and territorial integrity of the nation. Similarly our civilian politicians have sometimes used their political education in Western democracy to defraud the nation and loot the treasury and pursue corruption rather than to defend the democratic ideology of representative democracy (Omatseye, 2006; Osuntokun, 2008).

Our scholars in various fields of Western scientific education have also sometimes used their education to frustrate the society rather than to help in the development of the society. This is evident in the fact that our educational system encourages the pursuit of science courses more than the pursuit of arts courses in our tertiary institutions and this has been so for a long time yet the graduates from our tertiary educational institutions in the area of science have not been living up to expectation in terms of initiating the development of scientific equipment that can help in infrastructural development of Nigerian economy. Most of our infrastructures still have to be imported from the Western countries in spite of our long tradition of Western science education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004, p. 39; Obasanjo, 2006).

In effect, our education purports to have good content in the areas of Western science and social sciences but it lacks the *intention* for the development of the individual and the society. Whereas an education that stops at the acquisition of content without continuing to using that content for the development of the individual learner and his society falls short of real education. This has been explained earlier (Akinpelu, 1981; Peters, 1966).

Thus, our education does not often contain the ingredient that propels the individual learner to see the need to use the content of the education for his personal development and societal development. The illustrations given of military education, political science education, managerial science education and natural science education earlier are illustrations in this connection. And this is why the average political leader in Nigeria is not ordinarily interested in the employment of the masses of the Nigerian populace; whereas this is supposed to be an issue that should give a democratic political leader a great concern, he should be interested in his own personal development as well as in the development of the masses he is leading.

Our education does not lead to gainful employment for the graduates many of who are jobless after the National Youth Service Corp that immediately follows their university education. The

enabling environment purportedly encouraged by the government to enhance entrepreneurship for the graduates does not include funding many of these new graduates to embark on one enterprise or another. Thus, there is social insecurity in Nigeria for many graduates who yearly graduate from our tertiary educational institutions without work. This definitely contributes to the increase in the rate of armed robbery in many parts of the nation.

Work

Our education should not only involve giving the learner the science, social science and arts contents but also encourage the learner to use the various contents to enhance his personal development

and societal development. This is not done through government provision and more provision of computers in the spirit of information and communication technology for development; nor through the National Directorate of Employment's scheme of encouraging graduates to learn one small scale business or another (e.g. snail farming, rabbit keeping); but rather by building into our education the *moral disposition* to see the need to help one another in whatever position we find ourselves by virtue of our education.

When this is part and parcel of our education regardless of whether the learner is a science student or arts student, he would graduate from the school system and be a politician that will consider the needs of himself as well as that of the rest members of the society; he will not be fraudulent using people's money for his personal aggrandizement rather he would want to use people's money for the betterment of the lives of everybody. If the learner graduates as a military personnel he will not think of using the content of his education for personal gains alone by thinking of using his education to brutalise the civilians and seize the reigns of government, rather he would be interested in defending the territorial integrity of the nation.

If the learner graduates as an economist he would not think of economic programmes that would make the rich richer and the poor poorer. If the learner graduates to be a natural scientist, he would not think of scientific inventions as near impossibilities in our societies considering such to be virtually an exclusive preserve of the West by virtue of their long history of scientific inventions; he would rather insist on researching on possible breakthroughs in our environment too using our environment materials that God has also blessed us with. This way we would not be talking of transfer of technology (which is impossible anyway) we would be talking of developing our own technology too which may or may not be copied by the West.

The important point therefore is that our education should realistically give us the content *plus* the intention to realistically help one another. That way our education would be really education as it would contain content (science, social sciences, arts) and intention to use the content for personal and societal development. To be sure, we have a lot of mineral resources in this country to the extent that Nigeria needs not be a poor nation, we realize a lot of money from crude oil every year; last year our budget by President Obasanjo was N1.5 trillion 84% based on crude oil revenue (Obasanjo, 2006). But because our education does not contain the ingredient of intention to enhance personal as well as societal development some people in government embezzle certain part of the money for their personal gains rather than for societal development, such that money that should be spent to provide jobs for people and alleviate the suffering of many Nigerians are misappropriated by some of the people in government (Osuntokun, 2008).

In effect, our education needs to be intensified in the area of content but more so in the area of intention to use the knowledge acquired for the development of the individual and the society. When this is done, it would be found that ordinarily the immense material resources that God has blessed us with in this nation are adequate to enable every Nigerian citizen to get one work or another to do and to get reasonable emolument from such work. As for *the productivity*, of course when we are gainfully engaged and the resources abound as they are and there is no misappropriation of funds by people (various workers) then the productivity would be visible, and the naira value will appreciate again. To be sure in the early 70's naira was at par with the American dollar. But now it is N129 to 1 dolar (Obasanjo, 2006); what a depreciation!

Recommendations

- I. It is therefore recommended that Nigerian education whether in the sciences, social sciences, or arts features more emphasis on *intention* to use the content of education for the development of the individual learners and the development of the society,
- ii. The education should feature the need for the product to be disposed towards helping themselves as individuals as well as helping one another (the society) in whatever position they find themselves: military leaders, civilian political leaders, scientists, economists and so on. This way personal aggrandizement, corruption and fraud, will reduce; while *work* and *productivity* will be seen to be in abundance

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, education involves the teacher attempting to foster or fostering in the learner a worthwhile disposition through a morally acceptable method. Thus it involves a process as well as a product. The process involves the teacher, the learner, the worthwhile content, and the method. The

product is the end point of the process, the evidence of education - which can be found in the worthwhile disposition of the learner. In the Nigerian case our education has the various contents (science, social sciences and arts) but the intention of the learner to use the education for his personal, and societal development is weak. This can be made strong by *deliberate mural emphasis* in our educational process so that regardless of what the learner learns (science, social sciences, arts) he would be inclined to use his knowledge for the benefit of himself as well as that of the society, t his would enhance the disposition of our people to make allowance for others to get jobs in this country that is immensely blessed by God with a lot of mineral resources. It would also enhance *evidence of productivity*.

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