

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE INHIBITING
THE EFFECTIVE PROMOTION OF FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION IN
NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF KWARA STATE
SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

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ABSTRACT

The paper looked into the problems that are militating against the effective promotion of functional education (FE) in Nigerian schools. Specific attention was paid to functional education in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Efforts were made to highlight the provisions made in the national policy on education (NPE) for functional education. The paper also investigated into the problems that are inhibiting the promotion of functional education as perceived by some selected secondary school teachers. Since the National Directorate of employment (NDE) fills the gap created by lack of enough functional education in schools, questionnaires were administered to them to find out some of the problems being encountered at their own end. The investigations revealed that lack of teachers especially in the sciences, vocational and technical, inadequate provision of functional laboratories and workshops, poor attitudes of parents to practical oriented courses etc. are serving as impediments to the promotion of full functional education in Nigeria schools. It was also discovered that the NDE which takes remedial measures to the problem of unemployment caused by non-functional education received in schools faces a lot of problems ranging from lack of tools for trainees, lack of ready markets for finished products and low patronage from Nigerians. Recommendations were thereafter made on the need to address all the problems identified so as to promote functional education and ensure self reliance for Nigerian graduates and the nation at large.

Introduction

Education, especially a quality one is the bedrock of all meaningful development needed by individuals and the society. Any education that will be termed as qualitative can equally be referred to as functional. A functional education is such that will prevent poverty and dependence on others for one's livelihood and sustenance. Functional education empowers the recipients and it is also a good avenue for employment. The essence of all forms of education is for the recipients to use the knowledge and skills acquired to influence their environment, bring about dynamic changes to their own lives and the society. This can be realized only when functional education is provided for maintained and pursued rigorously. The common neauseating practice in Nigeria today is for graduates of Nigerian Universities to be

roaming the streets after their National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) as a result of non-availability of employment. These ones find themselves in this predicament often as a result of almost purely literary courses offered at schools. Such courses did not give room for self-reliance or any self-generating ventures. Hence, the problem of gross unemployment.

This paper examined the problems that are militating against the development and promotion of functional education in Nigerian schools.

Concept of Functional Education

According to Bello (2003), functional education is the type of education that is relevant to the needs of the people whereby self-reliance will be maintained. It refers to the use of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through learning.

Operationally, functional education can also be considered as a systematic study of techniques for making and doing things through what can be regarded as "vocational education" which is purposely designed to make individuals fit for gainful employment in recognized trades as semi-skilled workers or professionals.

This involves skills that could be obtained either in a formal setting like the school or in an informal setting as in the case of apprenticeship. Functional education has been described as the type of education that is relevant to the needs of people whereby self-reliance would be maintained.

Functional education in the pre-colonial Days.

Before the advent of Islamic and European influence, Nigerians had their own ways of providing functional education for the masses. This was done through the indigenous education. Fafunwa (1984) classified the purpose of indigenous education into three:

- (1) To discipline all the faculties of the individuals,
- (2) To bring out the best human qualities in individual, and
- (3) To help individuals at different stages to become useful and contributory members of their society.

In taking care of functional education which aided youth empowerment and employment in the pre-colonial days, the indigenous education was truly functional. Infact, according to Fafunwa (1974), functionality was the watchword then. Functional education which empowered the youth and provided for full employment

was made possible through the pursuance of the following courses and programme:

(a) Vocational training in form of:

- Agricultural education, trade and crafts including smithing (iron, silver, gold, carving, barbing, music , farming, fishing, animal care and animal rearing etc)
- Exposure to community activities such as road and bridge constructions.
- Involvement in wrestling, swimming, hunting, drumming etc.

(b) Professional training

This involved local profession like Native doctor, weaving, apprenticeship system was adopted whereby interested children were taught the professions for a number of years.

(c) Trade and crafts

Petty trading, basket weaving were vocations often used as part-time to ensure engagement all the year round and promoted quick income. With all these functional strategies embarked upon, the problem of unemployment was hardly experienced. All youths were fully equipped to take care of themselves and their families.

Functional education in the colonial Era

Formal education started in Nigeria around 1842 when the missionaries came to Nigeria for the purpose of their evangelical assignment. The missionaries did not have the aim of educating the Nigerians in the real sense of it. Their main purpose was evangelical. Hence, they concentrated on helping the people to be able to read and write so that they could read the Bible, become school helpers, dispensers, interpreters and clerks for the local native courts.

The colonial government that followed later came with a similar but different approach to education. Their own kind of education was aimed at achieving their political goals. Different commissions that later assessed Nigerian education according to Taiwo (1980), especially phesstroke commission, Ashby commission and others found out that the schools curriculum did not reflect the needs and interests of the African youths and so stressed the need to make education functional and relevant to the aspirations of the society. (Molagun, 2006; Osokoya, 1987).

When Nigeria became independent in 1960, efforts were made to ensure that functional educations that would make Nigerian Youths self-reliant was provided for

and pursued. This was addressed during the national curriculum conference of 1969. As a result of this gallant step, adequate provisions were made for functional education in the National policy on education that later followed.

Provisions made for functional education in the national policy on education.

National policy on education is government way of achieving that part of its national objectives that can be achieved using education as a tool. Nigerian government has seen the role that functional education can play in achieving the over-all goals of the nation. Hence, in section one of the policy document, one of the stated aims of education is the acquisition of appropriate skills, ability, competencies, both mental, physical and social as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Also, in section three, under Primary education, the NPE emphasized the need for the provision of basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

Moreover, in section four under the aims of secondary education, the policy gave as one of the objectives of secondary education, the preparation for useful living within the society. This is also an emphasis on functional education. That is, all school leavers should be able to learn a trade while in school so as to be self reliant, be useful to themselves after leaving the school.

The former Junior Secondary school (Now Basic 7-9) has been so designed to take care of the needed empowerment. Students are to learn different trades like carpentry, home management, metal works, creative arts, practical agriculture, local craft, business studies etc. It implies that students who could not proceed further after basic 9 can easily pick-up a trade and make himself fully employed and self reliant.

The policy on technical education and higher education laid emphasis on practical knowledge. Before the introduction of the new policy on education, technical education was seen by the general public as what is inferior to other types of education (Taiwo, 1974) However, the Nigerian government has placed emphasis on technical education as one of the means of making Nigerian Youths self employed.

Technical education objectives are very laudable, but it is to be noted that most of the technical schools lack the needed facilities and amenities to train and inculcate the necessary skills that can make the recipients truly self reliant.

It is sad to note that laudable as all the aims of education at all levels are, there is hardly much to show for it in our schools. For instance, though the federal government proposed a revolution in the school teaching methods, to cater for the acquisition of relevant skills, most of the teachers yet adhere to the traditional chalk and talk method.

Apart from this, most schools have no standard libraries and workshops where practical knowledge can be effectively acquired. And even where these facilities are available, there are no equipments for quality training. In some cases, teachers with relevant skills are not available in schools, hence, most of the work done are more of theory than practical and so-cannot give the youths the needed skills for self-reliance. Nigerian government is yet to provide enough facilities for school such that will promote functional education and thus enhance Youths empowerment and employment. That is why many Nigerian graduates have turned themselves into armed robbers and 419 over night. Nigerian streets are full of social vices because an idle hand in the devil's workshop.

Uptil now, introductory technology teachers are in short supply in our schools, laboratories are very scanty, most equipment imported are rotten as a result of lack of workshops for installation of such equipment.

The provisions made in the National policy really indicated the interest of Nigerian government in promoting functional education. Unfortunately the different problems in and outside the school setting have consistently militated against the realization of government intentions.

Some of the militating factors identified by Bello (2007) are:

- (1) Corrupt practices of people who matter within the school system.
- (2) Poor maintenance culture of public materials and equipment.
- (3) Absence of classroom blocks and furniture
- (4) Inadequate or complete absence of workshops and other teaching materials.
- (5) Lack of qualified (technical, skill oriented) teachers
- (6) Poor government attention to functional education in schools, (funding)
- (7) Poor monitoring and supervision of school.
- (8) Poor or wrong notion about vocational and technical education.

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- (9) High cost of living that results in low standard of living.
 - (10) Lack of job after completion of education.

The problems identified by Bello (2007), above have made it highly necessary to investigate more empirically into what is happening in Nigerian schools regarding the factors that are militating against the promotion of functional education which is a major gate way to Youths empowerment and employing world-wide.

It is expected that the result of such investigation will help the government to be more familiar with some of the reasons why many Youths are roaming the streets and are turning into armed robbers daily.

Government and schools will see the need to take more practical steps and also intensity steps already taken in promoting functional education and ameliorate the problem of unemployment in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study includes:

- (1) To investigate into the availability .of functional-oriented courses in Nigerian Schools.
- (2) To investigate into the availability of teachers who are to impart relevant skill and knowledge into learners.
- (3) To find out the general altitude of parents to skills oriented subjects in Nigerian schools-.
- (4) To investigate into the availability or workshops and other teaching materials in schools.
- (5) To suggest greater measure that the government and the schools can take to really promote functional education and thus enhance Youth empowerment and employment (YEE).

Research Questions

- (1) What are the factors that are militating against the promotion of functional education in Nigerian secondary schools?.
- (2) Is Nigerian system of education designed to really promote functional education?
- (3) What are the problems that are confronting the National Directorate of employment (NDE) programme in Nigeria?

Methodology

Purposive sampling techniques was used to select one hundred (100) secondary school teachers used and the thirty (30) post graduate teachers that reacted to the level of relevance of Nigerian system of education regarding functional education. The same method was used to select twenty-five (25) NDE officials that responded to questionnaires on the problems confronting the ministry.

The response expected from the respondents was either yes or no. The information collected from the study was analysed using simple percentage.

Three set of questionnaires were drawn, the first aimed at finding out from 100 teachers the perceived problems that are inhibiting the promotion of functional education in schools.

The second set in formulated to find out whether or not Nigerian system of education T caters for functional education. Thirty (30) post graduate teachers reacted to this. While the third set of questionnaire were addressed to twenty-five (25) NDE officials.

Each of the questionnaire used consisted of two sections 'A' and 'B'. While section A' was based on the personal data of the respondents, section B was based on the factors being investigated into.

The first questionnaire on factors militating against the promotion of functional education in schools (FMAPFES) consisted of four items. The other one addressed to the post graduate teachers consisted of three items. While the one addressed to the NDE officials consisted of four items. For effective scoring, there were two alternative responses of which the respondents were to respond by ticking the appropriate answer from either yes or no as the case may be.

Data analysis

Research question one:

What are the factors that are militating against the promotion of functional education in your school.

Table 1

Summary on factors that are militating against the promotion of functional education in Nigerian schools

| | Questionnaire items | Yes | % | No | % |
|----|---|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| A. | Do you offer all the sciences pre-vocational and vocational technical courses? | 30 | 30% | 70 | 70% |
| B. | Do you have enough teachers for the science* pre-vocational and vocational courses? | 40 | 40% | 60 | 60% |
| C | Do you have laboratories and workshops for practical subjects? | 30 | 30% | 70 | 70% |
| D | Parents are not favourably disposed to pre vocational, vocational and technical courses | 45 | 45% | 55 | 55% |

Discussion of results in table 1

The table above shows that only 30 (30%) of the respondents said that their schools are fully offering the practical oriented subjects while 70 (70%) said that such courses are not fully offered in their schools. .

On whether or not the schools have enough teachers especially for the sciences, and other skill oriented courses, only 40 out of the 100 respondents said Yes while 60 said No.

Responding to the issue of availability of laboratories and workshops, only 30 of the respondents said Yes while 20 said No.

One whether parents are favourably disposed to the offering of sciences, pre-vocational and vocational and technical courses, 45 out of 100 respondents said Yes while 55 said No.

Research question 2

Has Nigerian system of education taken care of the promotion of functional

Table 2

Summary of teachers' responses on whether Nigerian system of education has taken care of functional education.

| | Questionnaire items | Yes | "%" | No | % |
|----|--|-----|-------|----|-------|
| A. | Nigerian system of education has truly taken care of functional education. | 5 | 16.6% | 25 | 83.37 |
| B. | Nigerian system of education focuses on self reliance for youths empowerment and employment. | 7 | 23.3 | 23 | 76.6 |
| C. | Curriculum of schools should be more practicalised while theory should be de-emphasized. | 5 | 16.6 | 25 | 83.3 |

education?

Discussion of results in table 2

Table 2 results shows that only 5 (16.6%) of the 30 respondents affirmed that Nigerian system of education has really taken care of functional education. While 25 said that the system of education has not really pursued functional education. Also only 7 (23.3%) said that Nigerian system of education focuses on self reliance, youths empowerment and employment while 23 (76.6%) of the 30 respondents did not succum to this view.

On the need to make the school curriculum more practical oriented and less emphasis on theoretical approach, 25 (83.3%) supported this view while 5 (16.6%) set that they are okay the way they are in the schools presently.

Research question 3

What are the problems that are confronting the National Directorate of Employment programme in Kwara State.

Table 3

Summary of the officials of NDE response on the problems that are confronting the NDE programme in Kwara State.

| | Questionnaire items | Yes | % | No | % |
|----|--|-----|-----|----|-----|
| A. | Are there enough resources to run the employment training programmed | 6 | 24% | 19 | 76% |
| B. | Are the needed tools enough for the trainees? | 9 | 36% | 16 | 64% |
| C. | Are there easy patronage and ready markets for the products of the youths trained? | 12 | 48% | 13 | 52% |
| D. | Are the trainees well motivated by the government and the society? | 7 | 28% | 18 | 72% |

From table three above, only 6 (24%) of the respondents stated that there are enough resources to run the employment training programme of the NDE while 19 (76%) said the resources are not enough.

Moreover, 9 (36%) said that the tools and other equipment needed for training are enough, while 16 (64%) said that the tools needed for effective training are grossly inadequate.

On whether or not there are ready markets for the products of the youth trained and easily patronage 12 (48%) of the respondents said Yes while 13 (52%) said the trainees have not been experiencing easy patronage from the society. On whether or not the trainees are well motivated by the government and the society, 7 (28%) of the respondents said Yes while 18 (72%) said that motivation being given is not enough.

Results and discussion

The findings above, looking into table one reveals that most of the secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis are not fully offering the science, the pre-vocational and vocational courses as expected probably because of lack of qualified teachers to handle such courses. The problem is a serious one especially because no education can rise above the number and quality of teachers that handle education.

The findings also reveal that most of the schools are lacking standard laboratories and workshops needed for the practical aspect of students' learning.

It is also said to note that some parents are not favourably disposed to pre-vocational and vocational courses because they have the feelings that such are meant for semi idiots.

The information in table two also shows that Nigerian system of education has not been fully addressing the issue of Functional Education especially on the need to focus on all that will enhance self reliance, youths empowerment and employment (YEE) thereafter. The findings also revealed the need to make the school curriculum more practicalised so that the recipients will become self reliance and be creative in all their endeavours.

From the table on the problems that are confronting the NDE programme in Kwara State. It has been revealed that landable as the NDE programmes are to take care of the problem of unemployment in the state and in Nigeria at large, the effects are not too pronounced in the sense that the resources needed to run the training programme are not enough, there are no enough tools for the practical part of the training. It is equally sad to note that the few products produced by the trainees have not been heavily patronage and there are no markets for them. One should not forget Nigerian mentality of preference for imported goods over and above Nigerian made goods.

All these problems put together are militating against functional Education in Nigeri,an.

Conclusion

The place of functional education in the overall development of any Nation cannot be over emphasized. Clamouring incessantly for full employment for Nigerian graduates will for a long time remain a mirage unless, the problems identified through the studies carried out in the paper are fully addressed. Courses that are to be practicalised in our schools are taught theoretically, teachers that are the core part to

ensure self-reliance are in short supply. The workshops & laboratories where they are available are just glorified stores. How can full empowerment and employment become realistic with all these myriad problems?. Something will have to be done more urgently. It is only when these problems are tackled that one can say that Nigerian Education is truly functional.

The NDE programme has really been filling the gap created by unemployment, Nigerian government has done much along this direction but no stone should be left unturned in addressing some of the problems revealed through this study. Nigerian Youths are found roaming the street 2 to 4 years after they have graduated. The problems above and some others not discussed under this study are responsible for this daily street -roaming.

Recommendations

From the findings of the studies carried out has indicated in this paper, the following steps will have to be taken in and outside Nigerian schools:

1. Emphasis should be on practicalising the self-reliant oriented courses such as the sciences, pre-vocational, vocational and technical courses.
2. Pre vocational, vocational and technical and science teachers are to be supplied adequately to Nigerian schools.
3. Principals of schools, teachers and Nigerian government should look for avenues through which parents will be encouraged to motivate their children whenever they are interested in offering the vocational and technical courses.
4. Well equipped laboratories and workshops for practical work should be built for all schools right from primary to tertiary levels.
5. The NDE programmes, listed below should be further enhanced by Nigerian government:
 - (a) Special public work (SPW) which is meant to link the unemployed graduates with the collaborators who need their services should continue.
 - (b) Environmental beautification scheme (EBS) which is similar to the clean and green programme of governor Saraki's scheme where graduates are taking as supervisors should be intensified.

- (c) Vocational training development programme through which unemployed graduates are retrained on local government basis should be retained. This is done through the provision of "School on wheel" usually modularized equipment is put in place to impart vocational training to Nigerian graduate to empower them in the field of their choice.
- (d) The small scale enterprises (SSCE) under which there are the start your own business (SYOB) programme Which takes care of graduates and non-graduates should also be intensified.
- (e) Rural employment promotion programme (REP) which is similar to SSCE is basically on poultry and rabbitery and back to farm programme through which credit facilities are given to farmers in form of seedling, chemicals and land cultivation should continue.

The above and other remedial measures taken by NDE should be encouraged. However, the school has the larger work to do. If things are properly positioned and schools are well funded with- the provision of functional workshops, some of the things being learnt through NDE would have been taken care of in the schools.

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