
REPOSITIONING SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

Education is regarded as the fundamental of all round development. Development in any nation depends largely on the knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and attitudes of an individual to function effectively and productively in any given situation for sustainable development. Nigeria as a developing nation is confronted with a lot of challenges such as unemployment, insecurity, poverty, inequality, among others. Although several factors have been cited for the persistent high rate of these evil vices, it's important to note that one of the major ways of overcoming these challenges is through effective and functional secondary education. Functional education is an educational system that emphasize practice more than theory. Hence the clarion call for the proper repositioning of secondary education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development through innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. The study examines the concept of secondary education in Nigeria, repositioning of secondary education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development through innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship skill, strategies for adequate repositioning of secondary education and the way forward. Recommendations were made for consideration by educational administrators and other stakeholders in education.

Keywords: Education, Functional Education, Secondary Education, National development, youth empowerment Innovation, Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Education is regarded as the fundamental of all round development. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO,2013), Education refers to the total process of developing human ability and behaviour. It is an organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and value, for all activities of life. Education and sustainable youth empowerment shows glaring connectivity, this probably explained why scholars emphasized the significance of education, for the purpose of achieving the desired sustainable youth empowerment.

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development. - Ogheneruona Erhinyodavwe Iggue Ph.D

Although several factors have been cited for the persistent high rate of unemployment, poverty, insecurity and other acts of violence in Nigeria, the fact remains that the credential for overcoming these challenges is effective and functional secondary education (Eneremadu, Onwuagboke and Nnennaya, (2012). Developed countries of the world like United States of America, China, Japan, Russia, among others have achieved various breakthrough due to their commitment to ensuring an educational system in their countries that is innovative, creative and skill-oriented. Furthermore, countries like Japan, Israel, Korea, and China have achieved developmental breakthrough despite the fact that they have no natural resource endowment. The secret of their breakthrough is their commitment to functional educational system, (Kayode and Adagba, 2014). Functional education is a kind of education that emphasize practice more than theory. Despite the central place that functional secondary education occupies in sustainable youth empowerment and national development, Nigerian educational system has remained non-functional. Kayode and Sunday (2014), posits further that the Nigerian education system has not been functional because too much emphasis has been placed on theoretical and academic knowledge. There is undue emphasis on the possession of certificate instead of on what one can do. The result of this dysfunctional secondary education is that schools turn out graduates without useful knowledge and skills. In this study, the researcher tends to explore repositioning of secondary education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development through proper implementation of viable and functional education with an upgraded curriculum. A functional curriculum is a curriculum that focuses on independent living and vocational skills. The functional curriculum, in contrast to a traditional one, teaches academics with a life skills or practical focus.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), with curriculum as one of its core mandates, developed the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC), and 34 Trade/Entrepreneurship curriculum for wealth creation and self-employment. This is to enable the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) attain four focal areas of needs; knowledge, economy, enabling environment as well as the acquisition of functional skills to attain sustainable youth empowerment and national development. Youth empowerment is a state of being equipped with legitimate and sustainable source of earning to enable one cope with challenges of life. If the youths are gainfully employed in productivity ventures, the tendency to fall prey to such vices that are associated with poverty will be minimal and thus they will contribute to socio-economic development of the nation (Balogun, 2012). This paper therefore focuses on repositioning secondary education for sustainable youth empowerment and national development through proper implementation of viable and functional curriculum.

Concept of Secondary Education in Nigeria

Secondary education is the form of education that comes after primary school education. The students at this level of education are within the ages 10-18. State-owned secondary schools are funded by each state government and are not comparable to the Federal government colleges. Teachers in State-owned secondary schools are expected to have a minimum of National Certificate of Education or a bachelor's degree. Some state-owned secondary schools are regarded as elite colleges because of the historically high educational standard and producing alumni who have prominent citizens in their various careers. However, the college ranking of these schools has since dropped because of the arrival of private schools. Private secondary schools in Nigeria tend to be quite expensive. These schools have smaller number of students in their classes, modern equipment and better learning environment with some exceptions. Most teachers in these institutions possess at least a bachelor's degree in specific course area and are sent for workshops or short term programme on a regular basis (UNESCO, 2013).

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development in Nigeria through Innovation.

By definition, innovation means the “action or process of initiating new method, idea, or product.” Innovation is a term used overzealously in the business and industrial world and has recently made its rounds in educational jargon, (Andrew and McMillan, 2021).

Innovative practice in secondary education involves how we use technology and harness its power. Moreover, innovation in secondary education can be as simple as doing things in a new way, requiring different approaches, processes, products, or strategies. Innovative classrooms are filled with students who are developing stronger communication skills and building engagement capacity amongst their peers. In this digital age, students learning in innovative classrooms can potentially retain more information and process at a deeper level of understanding, (Andrew and McMillan, 2021). Enumerated below are seven examples of innovative educational technology, (Jenny Fulton, 2019).

1. Digital Readers and Tablets.

Increasingly, schools are looking to replace the bulkier hard-copy textbooks with digital ones that are accessible via a tablet. They eliminate the need for students to carry around a heavy backpack full of books, they provide a centralized, accessible place for all reading materials, the regular updates of digital content eliminate the cost of purchasing new textbook editions every few years and apps added to tablets can meet the educational needs of the students and provide for more personalized learning opportunities.

2. 3D Printing

3D printing has already seen an impressive application in the world at large. According to Forbes, 3D printers have been able to create anything from car parts to artificial organs. In the classroom setting, 3D printing can create hands-on models that students can investigate and interact with. For example, students could learn about the geography of an area by observing a 3D map of it. 3D printing reaches both visual and kinaesthetic learners, it engages the students and gets them curious, and it reduces the time teachers need to spend on creating their own models (e.g., for a science class).

3. Virtual Reality

Technology for virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality is rapidly developing. One of the primary uses of this technology in the classroom is to take students on virtual field trips to places otherwise inaccessible. For example, a student could take a virtual field trip to ancient Egypt or to the bottom of the ocean. One provider of this technology is Nearpod VR. It provides engaging, real-life experiences that would otherwise be harmful or inaccessible, and appeals to visual learners who like to see and experience things instead of merely reading about them.

4. Gamification

Students learn better when they are having fun. The use of gaming in the classroom applies this concept by tying together the fun part of play with the content and concepts that students must learn. It increases student engagement, it creates enthusiasm for the lesson, and it provides immediate feedback.

5. Cloud Technology

The cloud hosts apps and services on the internet instead of being on a user's computer. It enable information to be stored, shared, and accessed on any device that's connected to the internet. In education, the cloud is used to store and share digital textbooks, lesson plans, videos, and assignments. It's also used to give students the opportunity to chat live with their instructors and other classmates. In a related vein, cloud technology is enabling a new educational model known as 'flipped classrooms' in which students can watch a lecture before class and spend the class time engaged in discussion, group work, and analytical activities. It reduces the chances of homework getting lost between school and home, it reduces the need for students to carry heavy textbooks, it enables students to easily access information from any device connected to the internet, and it enable quick and easy access to the teacher through live chat options.

6. Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial intelligence is making its way into the educational sphere by means of automating grading and feedback and providing personalized learning opportunities.

It can save the teacher time by doing the grading and giving feedback on their behalf, and it provides greater insights into a students learning patterns.

7. Mobile Technology

Rather than banning cell phones and other mobile devices from use during class, some schools are incorporating this technology into the learning process through educational apps. The wide variety of available apps offers the opportunity for students to engage in their own learning process, and educational apps provide the opportunity to personalize learning to each student.

Technological advancements are truly impressive. Educational Administrators should accept that this is the world our students are growing up in and provide opportunities to expose them to these wonderful developments. However, each new technology should be carefully evaluated and used as a tool to enhance the personal element in the teaching process of secondary education, not to completely replace traditional learning methods.

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development in Nigeria Through Creativity.

Creativity is defined in Wikipedia (2014) simply as a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is created. The something may be an idea, a joke, an artistic or literary work, a painting or musical composition, a solution, an invention, etc. A creative mind is an innovative mind prepared to bring about solutions to problems after identifying such problems. Sani and Maruf (2012) describe a creative person as an individual that present unique and unusual solutions to problems, setting him or her apart from other people. It is necessary to know that we live in a thinker's world. It is therefore, not surprising to see that individuals who are ahead are those who see ahead with the eyes of their mind. These are people who see problem as an opportunity to improve and do something new or something better. Oviawe (2013) believe that there is currently a mismatch between what the Nigerian economy need and what Nigerian youths are studying in schools: "Nigerian secondary education is presently at a crossroad as far as producing individuals who will work to deserve and justify their pay, work independently, globally and bring creativity into their work place."

According to Redecker and Qystein,(2013), skills such as problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, learning risk-taking, collaboration and entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly important. Sustainable youth development through innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship skill is not a fixed state but rather a process of change in which resources exploitation, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are made consistent with the future as well as present needs, (James, Magee, Scerri & Steger, 2015).

The celebrated discoveries of man are not by chance. The minds of men/women were engaged in creative thinking to deliver the visible products we enjoy today. Men like Bill Gate and the computer, Graham Bell and the telephone, Michael Faraday and

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development. - Ogheneruona Erhinyodavwe Iggue Ph.D

electricity, Isaac Newton and physical law of science, the Wight brothers and Aeroplane, and so on. The list is endless. Our secondary students if well guided, can join them, as we begin to ponder the path of their feet, economic empowerment may be established.

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development in Nigeria through Entrepreneurship.

Oviawe, (2013) defines an entrepreneur as "a person who in the bid to survive make profit and own his/her own business." Oviawe characterise a young entrepreneur as someone with confidence and a creative spirit who is willing to take risk, has initiative, and is energised by an inner drive. In addition, Ugochukwu (2015) observed that an entrepreneur is believed to possess some traits such as boldness, confidence, personal leadership ability and force. Garba (2010), described entrepreneurship as a means of providing employment and income generation in the country. Falabi and Olatunji (2014) opined that entrepreneurship is the knack for sensing opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction and conclusion; it is the ability to a founding team to complement one's own skill and talent. It is know-how to find, marshal and control economic/business resources. Looking at these definitions, entrepreneurship is a system of creating employment in a country and through this employment the youths are empowered, which eventually results in national development.

Entrepreneurial education serves as a tremendous advantage to increasing the chances of success as an entrepreneur. It is a creative and innovative response to the environment, (Onyemah and Ebiloma, 2011). This is because training is focused and directed at achieving a purpose.

It is relevant to mention here, that for entrepreneurship secondary education to serve as a scheme for sustainable youth empowerment, school based enterprises like, table water factory, fruit drink, bread industry among others, should be established, where the students can identify potential businesses, plan, create and operate them using the school as mini-incubators. There is also the use of small school businesses to teach students and community members' entrepreneurship education as well as the development of entrepreneurship internship programmes that are used to match students with locally successful entrepreneurs with established entrepreneurship education programmes. Also, entrepreneurship in secondary education should always involve practical aspects such as the teaching of trades like barbing, tailoring, bid making, tie and dye, soap making, hairdressing amongst others so that graduates will be motivated and equipped with abilities and capabilities for entrepreneurship.

Training in entrepreneurship has been used by many nations e.g. Germany set up unique engineering oriented business programmes in the University where their potential engineers are encouraged to seek out ideas and subsequently develop the promising ones from invention phase to commercialization. A nation like Norway has also used entrepreneurship education to inculcate innovation spirit, deliberately targeted at youth empowerment.

Strategies for Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development.

Stakeholders in education are worried that graduates of secondary education in Nigeria lack employable and requisite skills to function well in the society. Nigerian Tribune gathered that even though the Federal Government had approved the mandatory inclusion of trade subjects in the secondary school curriculum and entrepreneurship education in secondary education curriculum as part of efforts to bridge the skill gap, most of the schools in the country lack competent teachers and instructional materials for the effective handling of the 34 trade subjects, (Clement Idoko, 2022).

The Executive Secretary of National Senior Secondary Education Commission (NSSEC), Dr. Benjamin Abakpa, said in Nigeria Tribune that his commission was determined to reverse the trend of turning graduates from secondary education that lack employable and requisite skills to function well in the society, (Clement Idoko, 2022). He disclosed that the Federal Government is already in the process of reviewing curriculum being used for teaching and learning in secondary schools in the country. He revealed that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) had been directed to work with other relevant agencies of the government to undertake the review of the curriculum, adding that NSSEC is one of the agencies collaborating with NERDC to achieve this goal, (Clement Idoko, 2022). Speaking further, the NSSEC boss said the commission had been mandated to revamp the secondary education system to meet the global minimum standard. The NSSEC vision statement centres around equipping our senior secondary school students with quality knowledge grounded in life skills for global competitiveness.

In addition to the strategy of restructuring of the curriculum, the Executive Secretary of National Senior Secondary Education Commission (NSSEC), Dr. Benjamin Abakpa, also strategically, solicited the support of the World Bank in the area of skills enhancement for secondary school teachers in the various 34 trade subjects as part of efforts to address the challenge of the skills gap in secondary education, the collaboration of all stakeholders with National Senior Secondary Education Commission (NSSEC) to ensure that the lost glory of the secondary education is fully restored, and the development of an accurate database for all secondary schools across the country to enable the commission plan well for them, (Clement Idoko, 2022).

Further more. Brain Pickering, (2018) at Contoocook Valley Regional High School, or ConVal, submitted that there are two strategies essential to developing an innovative, creative and skill-oriented learning environment. These are "a culture that empowers teachers and a flexible structure for all students".

➤ **Culture of Teacher Empowerment**

The goal of the "culture of teacher empowerment" is to allow teachers the freedom to explore by creating a culture that empowers them to put new ideas into

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development. - Ogheneruona Erhinyodavwe Iggue Ph.D

practice. An empowered teacher seek out new ideas through research, professional development, collaboration, and continually review curriculum to meet the ever-changing needs of students, adjust instructional methods for varied learning styles and tries out new assessments which offer students creative ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and also take risks and is not afraid to let students choose their learning path while staying focused on the key learning competences.

➤ **Flexible Structure**

A learning environment that fosters creativity and innovation requires a "flexible structure". Contoocook Valley Regional High School, (ConVal) runs a block schedule and has a 43-minute flexible period in the middle of each day called TASC (Teachers in Academic Support Centers). What teachers gain through TASC is the opportunity to address students' academic and personal needs before they become bigger problems? This flexible structure provides the support and interventions necessary for students and teachers to turn their attention to more creative and innovative ventures.

Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development: The Way Forward.

Although every government draws up policies and advance schemes as well as funds to promote youth empowerment programmes, the quantum of such efforts is minute when compared to the large number of youths involved, because of non-enhancement of secondary education with the seriousness it deserves. There is an urgent need for the educational administrators and other stakeholders in education to look specifically at sustainable youth empowerment through innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship education. If promoted sufficiently, it will help to grow the economy and integrate the youths into the workforce, leading to overall development of the nation.

The information technology (IT) business in the United States has been the bedrock for youth empowerment and has created stars and multi-millionaires in Bill Gates, given jobs to Google's SergyBrin and Larry Page, Dangote, Adenuga and Frank Nneji. However, the need of the day is to create many more stars and make available the opportunities for every youth to dream big and try their hands at imbibing innovative, creative and entrepreneurship education.

Nwaiwu (2013) noted that entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity education commands great influence for the growth of any economy. Therefore, the need for proper repositioning of secondary education in the national development of any nation cannot be over-emphasized as it contributes to creation of goods and service, creation of wealth, contribution to the growth of the gross national domestic products (GNDP), reduction in the level of unemployment, etc.

Conclusion

Evidence from the study revealed that Nigerian secondary school students have not learnt sufficient practical skills to allow for self-employment. The Nigerian secondary educational system is expected to rise to the challenge of empowering the youth with the necessary innovation, creativity, entrepreneurial skills, and values for them to live as competent members of the society and contribute to national development.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions have been presented for consideration.

1. Students should be encouraged to develop interest in the skill-based subjects.
2. Enabling environment that will promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship should be created by the Federal Government through education administrators.
3. Real practical work in vocational and technical subjects should be made compulsory for Juniors Secondary School (JSS 3) and Senior Secondary School (SSS 3) students.
4. Teachers should be supported through continuous professional enhancement.
5. Schools should be properly staffed and equipped for teaching skill-oriented, innovation and creativity programmes at an early age.
6. More modern learning aids such as computers, internet web sites facilities, overhead projectors, firms etc should be made available in schools.
7. Teachers who are responsible for knowledge should be properly motivated. As such good incentive, salary increment and better working condition for teachers should be given attention.
8. Playfield should be made available in all schools for various sports training. This will enable some talented students to become experts.
9. School laboratories should be well equipped, to enable effective practical teaching and learning.

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Repositioning Secondary Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment and National Development. - Ogheneruona Erhinyodavwe Iggue Ph.D

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