

FUNCTIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION & CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY, INSECURITY AND NATIONAL UNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The need to transform the educational system which is knowledge-based into functional or pragmatic-based educational system has been quite a topical issue in recent times in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world. This paper assessed functional business education, challenges of democracy, insecurity and national unity in Nigeria. In order to tackle the challenges of democracy, insecurity and national unity in Nigeria, the paper argued that functional business education is indispensable at all levels of education. The relevance of functional business education cannot be overemphasized in a democratic setting as it is a potent means of shaping the minds of people to function effectively for themselves and for the society. The paper recommended that Federal government should urgently make conditions of teaching service favourable for the teachers as well as stop alienation of teachers in decision making coupled with lack of genuine consultation on education policy formulation in order to guarantee functional education for skill and national unity and development and concluded that true democracy must ensure secured environment and National unity needed for functional business education as such educational programme, as a matter of necessity creates jobs for the teeming population.

Keywords: Functional business education; National unity; Democracy; Insecurity.

Introduction

Education, irrespective of its structure and organisation is targeted at inculcating in the recipients skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to better themselves and the society. Every nation, developed or developing formulates education goals to be achieved within the framework of the nation's goals. Though the formulation of these education goals is less easy but implementation has been an illusion in almost every developing country of the world. This is because most developing countries such as Nigeria were colonised by the Europeans with a distorted form of education which off-course should not be an issue if both the human and material resources of the country are properly harnessed since independence in 1960 by the Nigeria political leadership. Education becomes distorted and irrelevant when the recipients cannot translate the skills into concrete valuables. The demerit of this form of education is the production of people without functional skills and abilities for self-development and for the society. This situation necessitated the establishment of business education as a functional education to equip the recipients with the needed skills to be self-reliant and also contribute for the development of the nation. Entrepreneurial skills also are developed from business education that are essentials to the nation's growth and development. This implies that functional business education would make a country to attain its heights in development and promote national unity. It is also expected that sustainable development would make the citizens of a country to live happily and responsibly which is a function of functional business education.

Functional business education can only thrive and sustain under a system of government that is responsible to the plight and yearnings of the people which is the hallmark of democratic governance. It is the intention of this paper to scholarly examine the nature of education; functional business education and how it can contribute to capacity building in a democratic setting; challenges of insecurity and National unity and to make recommendations and conclusion.

The Concept of Education

The word education is derived from the Latin word **educare**, which means to lead out apparently from ignorance. Another Latin word associated with education is **educere** meaning to form or train. Education can broadly be defined as the body of knowledge which experience (consciously or unconsciously) yield for one, as well as knowledge, values attitude, skills and sensibilities which one acquires (formally or informally) with the aim of impacting positively on the individual's life in the society. Education is the initiation of the individual into activities or modes of thought and conduct considered worthwhile by the society. To make these possible, Nigeria formulated five national goals of education as contained in her National policy on Education (NPE) (2013). These goals aim at building:

- A free and democratic society;
- ii. A just and egalitarian society;
- iii. A united, strong and self reliant nation;
- iv. A great and dynamic economy;
- v. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

To achieve these five national goals of education, Business education which is described as an education for and about business could play a vital role. Functional Business Education has been viewed as a potent instrument of change for any nation, stemming the tide of insecurity in the country as people would deliberately and consciously going about their routine jobs, hence promoting national unity. It is the main engine for the development of any individual or nation. Succinctly, no responsible government would neglect its education system. This is because no nation develops above the quality of its citizens. It is the citizens that make things happen; bring about positive changes; and consequently, contribute to the foundation on which national development and unity revolves. These could only be attained through the instrumentality of functional education which is skill-driven rather than knowledge-driven (Fuandai, Shiaki & Gbari, 2007). In the same thought, Fafunwa in Maduewesi (2002) stressed the need to educate people with practical skills instead of knowledge –driven education so as to contribute maximally to national growth and unity in Nigeria. Teachers are expected to keep abreast of such innovations so as to produce functional citizens, who would contribute to the development of the society (Offorma, 2010).

Nigeria needs education that would be practical and skill development-oriented or functionally-driven to fortify its youths with skills needed to perform contemporary tasks. Dike & Eze (2009) posited that although the validity of any education system is gauged by the relevance of her curriculum, it must be pointed out that such education is in fact determined by the quality of its implementation process, which in essence requires the training of teachers that would impart the skills to the students in the schools. It must consider the learner and his environment; such as matching the learner with the speed of advancement; produce solutions to learner needs and those of the society.

Concept of Functional Business Education

The term Business education is viewed differently by scholars and institutions based on their notions and orientations. This implies that there are numerous definitions of Business education. According to Adeniji (2002), Business education is a part of total education which

trains the recipients in business related skills as well as general education at specific levels with the aim of preparing the youths for work in business, industry and the office. This shows that business education aims at equipping its recipients with skills that will make them to function effectively as entrepreneurs, office or factory workers. In the same vein, to make the recipients to be responsible and functional members of their societies, business education also gives them general education based on their age and specific level of education. It should however be noted that despite the fact that youths constitute the active proportion of a country's population, business education is not only restricted to the youths.

Adegbenjo (2004) stated that Business education is an aspect of the total educational programme which provides knowledge, skills and attitude needed to perform in the business world as a producer, consumer and an entrepreneur. This definition implies that business education inculcates managerial and decision making skills in its recipients which will make a person to do well in his position as a producer of goods and services or a merchant who functions as a middleman. Business education skills are also very useful to consumers of goods and services. This is because they make the consumers to be rational in making choice and utilizing their resources in satisfying their numerous needs and wants. It is in line with this that Osuala (2004) opined that Business education is a broad area of knowledge that deals with a nation's economic system and also identifies and explains the rate of business contentment and experience that prepare individuals for effective participation as citizens, workers and consumers.

Esene (2006) argued that Business education is an area of professional preparation for career in business education, teaching business subjects and business information which is important for every citizen and consumer so as to better understand his business and economic surroundings. In fact, if education is intended to promote economic sufficiency for the beneficiaries, then there is a positive relationship between functional education and national development (Fuandai, Shiaki & Gbari, 2007). Evidently, the FRN (2004: Section 1:4d) stated that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education.

Characteristics of Functional Business Education

The primacy of functional education is to make an individual productive for himself and the society. For education to achieve its purpose of being functional, it must possess some attributes. According to Fuandai, Shiaki & Gbari (2007), functional education has the following under listed features: relevance, accessibility, empowerment, self-reliance, etc. These attributes are briefly explained below in this paper:

Relevance: Education achieves and attains relevance when it is structured and designed to align with the needs and aspirations of the individual and society. These needs and aspirations must be captured in the curriculum.

Accessibility: Functional business education should be available to every person in a given country to achieve the overall goal.

Empowerment: Functional business education should be designed to empower the recipients culturally, economically, politically, socially, psychologically, etc, to make him a functional member of his community. It articulates a balanced form of education rather than lopsidedness.

Emphasis on Acquisition of Original Practical Skills and Knowledge: Functional

Business education amplifies concrete applicability and usability of skills and knowledge acquired to solve complex problems rather than concentrating on knowledge-based education.

Self-reliance: Functional education is one which emphasizes self-reliance for the recipients. In other words, it prepares and equips people to be on their own; using their knowledge and skills to be self-reliant, create wealth and employment opportunities. This will go a long way in reducing poverty and crimes among the youths and contribute to the economic and national development. Self-reliance connotes self-direction which is the ability to propel oneself toward a particular direction (Udoetuk & Udofia, 2012).

Hinderances to Achieving Functional Business Education in Nigeria

➤ Lack of implementation of Policy Statements and recommendations arrived at education conferences: Decisions, guidelines, policies as well as recommendations reached at various conferences in Nigeria that would have aided the realization of functional business education have bluntly been ignored to implement by the relevant authorities.

➤ **Corruption:** Corruption is derived from the two Greek words *Corrupten* and *Corrumpere*. *Corrupten* which means destruction and *Corrumpere* denoting “to destroy”; “to ruin”; “to break in pieces”. Corruption is a cankerworm in Nigeria. It is a serious issue that many believe that it cannot be minimised as it is soaring daily and its effect is felt by everyone. Today, corruption finds expression in every sector in the country and it seems to be legalized so much that even those who claim to be against it are also involved indirectly. Thus, the seeming backwardness witnessed in every sector of the country today is as a result of corruption. The current deplorable state of our educational system is caused by the corruption of stakeholders. Nothing meaningful can thrive in a country where corruption is promoted by the majority and the corrupt ones seem to be favoured and ranked higher in various institutions. Even our youths have gone mad in an attempt to own material wealth, involve in all kinds of vices and some of them are even consulted to carry out unwholesome acts by our so-called leaders before, during and after elections (Maduwesi, 2002). All these, no doubt, constitute impediments to functional business education, national security, development and unity in Nigeria.

➤ **Teacher Factor:** Teachers constitute significant stakeholders in the education system. They aid in implementing the curriculum .But at some point, many of them have been found to hinder the attainment of functional education in the country due to indifferent attitude towards teaching-learning programmes and processes. Teachers ought to be deliberate and intentional in discharging their duties creditably in the process of achieving the overall objective of functional business education upon which the challenges of insecurity and national unity can be contained. Teachers are seen as reservoirs of knowledge so when they fail to teach students adequately they would not function effectively in the society. Notably, no teacher teaches best what he does not know. In the same vein, Onyeachu (2009) observed that Nigeria needs without delay teachers with good expertise and the determination to transform her citizens into people that are easily employable; can set up their own entrepreneurship business and contribute to national unity and security.

Concept of Democracy

In order to scholarly examine the challenges of democracy in Nigeria in this paper, it is important that its concept is firstly explored. Democracy is a form of government centred on popular representation of people by their representatives and for the good of all. Democracy is a universally recognised ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity. Democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice,

foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society and enhance national tranquility, as well as to create a climate that is favourable for international peace. As a form of government, democracy is the best way of achieving these objectives; it is also the only political system that has the capacity for self-correction. A sincere commitment to promoting democracy and good governance by stakeholders is the only sustainable way of addressing the challenges of insecurity and national unity anywhere in the world including Nigeria. All these are driven by a sound and functional business education. The above principles characterizing democracy only exist in the constitution in Nigeria because every government in the country is rigged and the rigging is always aided by those who claim patriotic but unpatriotic and this constitutes a major setback in the country's overall development. This trend continues to exist from 1999 Nigeria when embraced democracy even though it was described as nascent till date Awotokun (2004). Functional business education is the pivot upon which every other thing in a country thrives which means that the challenges of democracy in Nigeria can be overcome to a large extent if urgent attention is given particularly to functional business education. No nation or individual can truly develop without productive education which scholars observe that it has the capacity of contributing about 60% of the nation's economic development.

Insecurity: Insecurity is the state of being subjected to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. Insecurity as a state of being not secure, lack of confidence or unprotected. By implication, it leads to underdevelopment of both of individual in particular and the nation in general. For instance, while the militancy in the Niger Delta took a heavy toll on the nation's economy because of its dependence on oil for foreign exchange earnings. In 2008 alone, it was estimated that Nigeria lost over three trillion naira as a result of militancy in the Niger Delta (Tawiah, 2012), the Boko Haram insurgency in the North has at the last count left over 16,000 policemen, soldiers and civilians, including politicians dead (UNCEF, 2012; Nigerian Crime News, March 31, 2012). This has resulted in Nigeria being considered as unsafe country for foreign direct investments. Furthermore, given that these inter-religious and socio-cultural crises occur outside of the confines of the law, they challenge and weaken democratic institutional mechanisms that are meant to check them and threaten the consolidation and survival of democratic governance in Nigeria (Duruji, 2010). All these have threatened functional business education, national security and unity in the country. The inter and intra-ethnic rivalries and religious crises witnessed in Nigeria not only result in the loss of human and material resources that cannot be quantified in monetary terms which occasion untold economic hardship, they most fundamentally breed state of anarchy that threaten the unity and corporate existence of the Nigerian state; leaving those who act on behalf of the state with magnitude of national issues to contend with.

National Unity: The concept of national unity implies 'oneness' 'alike', 'trust', 'mutual understanding'. It is synonymous with unity in diversity which means 'great variety'. Unity in diversity means being one or united in spite of the various differences in the social, political, economic, geographical and cultural spheres. National Unity can be when people have started learning how to build a strong, virile nation out of the different tribes and issues. Specifically, Nigeria is a complex country united by a common colonial experience in spite of the various differences in her social, political, economic, geographical educational, religious and cultural spheres (Tyokase, 2002). This can be achieved through functional education.

The fact that Nigeria has been perching on illusion called unity is not an overstatement right from the colonial era to the post-colonial era, the country has been grappling with the problem of putting the nation together. Attesting to this, Ajiboye (2011) while appraising 50 years of Nigeria's independence affirmed that at birth, Nigeria was

imbued with certain structural imbalances such as the aftermath of the 1964 post elections saga and the consequent military take-over through the first coup-d'état of 1966 down to the numerous communal conflicts, militancy in the Niger-Delta coupled with religious riots in the present time. As part of issues affecting national unity in Nigeria, Mofoluwawo (2012) cited a number of ethnic violence that have engulfed the nation to include the Ife- Modakeke feud, expatriates- militant youths in the Niger-Delta region; Nupe- Yoruba conflict in Kwara state; Junkun- Tiv conflicts, Zangokataf conflicts in Kaduna state. Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Kano Riots of 1966, 1982 and 1997. Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Jos riots and the on-going Boko Haram saga. These incidences are further proof of disunity in the country.

Challenges of Democracy, Insecurity and National Unity in Nigeria

The following challenges among others are inherent in democratic governance which have crippled the development of functional Business Education in Nigeria.

Electoral Malpractice

One of the cardinal tenets of participatory democracy is orderly change of government through credible, free, fair and periodic elections. Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, change of government has been orderly while elections have been periodic. Between 1999 and 2011 three different civilian regimes have emerged and there have been three successive transitions from one civilian regime to another (Obasanjo Regime, 1999 – 2007; Yar' Adua/Jonathan Regime, 2007 – 2011; Jonathan Regime, 2011 till date). The same has been replicated in the legislature. Since 1999, the country has successfully passed through three Legislative Houses both at the State and Federal Government levels viz: 1999-2003; 2003-2007; 2007-2011. However, the credibility, freeness and fairness of the elections that brought about this process have been the subject of thorny debates in contemporary national discourse (Omodia, 2009).

Ethnic Cleavages and Security Crisis

Inter- and intra-ethnic rivalries, religious crisis and insecurity also constitute potent challenges to democratic governance in Nigeria. In the works of Best (2001), Duru and Adewale (2009) and Duruji (2010), it is observed that these issues are within the Nigerian system. According to Duruji (2010), the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 opened up the space for expression of suppressed ethnic demands bottled up by years of repressive military rule. The expression of these demands have resulted in the emergence of ethno-nationalist insurgencies such as the Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta region, the renewed demand for Biafra spearheaded by the Movement for Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the increasing notoriety of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South-West. This has also resulted in incessant ethnic clashes in the Middle Belt region and other parts of the country such as the Ijaw-Itshekiri ethnic clashes in 2009. There have also been frequent inter- religious clashes and sharia-instigated riots in the Northern part of Nigeria as well as the emergence of the Boko Haram Islamic Jihadists with well known preferences in religious belief and social practices (Eso, 2011). Intra-ethnic cleavages as witnessed in the horrors of Ife/Modakeke and Aguleri/Umuleri fratricidal wars in the South-West and South-East regions respectively have also been the order of the day.

Poverty

Poverty is another factor that constitutes great challenge to democratic governance in Nigeria. Unarguably, Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources. This notwithstanding, the nation ranks among the world's poorest. According to UNDP (2009), in

Nigeria, hunger exhibits its ugly face in most homes where the average citizen contends with a life of abject poverty. Thus, the common man is alienated from himself as he lacks the wherewithal to afford the basic necessities of life such as education, medical facilities, and so forth. Expectedly, life expectancy is low compared with those of the developed nations of the world (Olu-olu, 2008). Drawing a comparison in the incidence of poverty between Nigeria and India, Nda-Isiah (2012) submitted that between then and today (1962 and 2012). India has been able to lift 400 million people out of poverty, just as democracy has also flourished in that country. In the corresponding period, however, 100 million Nigerians out of a population of 167 million have slipped into poverty. Statistically, about 10million Nigerians are in absolute poverty, which literally means they cannot afford the basic necessities of life.

From the foregoing, it can be asserted that life generally in Nigeria is threatened by absolute and abject poverty. These realities are much more obvious in rural areas. A factual indicator is the result of the Harmonized Nigerian Living Standard Survey published by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 that showed that large proportion of Nigerians live in poverty.

Weak Democratic Institutions

The weakness of the democratic institutions in Nigeria is another challenge to democratic governance. By democratic institutions, which refer to the Executive, Judiciary, the Legislature and electoral agencies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In principle, each of these institutions is constitutionally empowered to maintain a certain degree of independence and autonomy while serving as checks on each other. In Nigeria, these democratic institutions in the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly are incapable of enacting laws that ultimately aid the success of functional business education in the country but their policies seems to work and better the lot of the policy makers (Omodia, 2009).

Institutionalized Corruption

It has long been established that a political and institutionalized corruption constitutes one of the greatest challenges and threats to democratic governance in Nigeria since the Independence. The incidence of corruption in Nigeria reached a crescendo in 2004 when a German-based international non-governmental organization, Transparency International (TI) in its 2004 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) report, projected Nigeria as the 2nd most corrupt country in the world (132nd out of 133 countries surveyed) (Akinyemi, 2008). The Transparency International's CPI is the world's most credible measure of domestic and public sector corruption. According to the Index, every single public institution in Nigeria is corrupt and has failed to appreciate fully the obligation upon them to do something concrete about corruption. The institutionalized corruption has crippled the country educational system by embezzling the funds meant for the development of education in the country at various levels.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made in order to tackle the challenges of functional Business Education, insecurity and National Unity in Nigeria:

1. Federal government should urgently make conditions of teaching service favourable for the teachers as well as stop alienation of teachers in decision making coupled with lack of genuine consultation on education policy formulation in order to guarantee functional education for skill and national unity and development.

2. Electoral-malpractice, ethnic cleavages and security crisis , corruption and indiscipline which rob Nigerian education sector the capability of meeting the desired expectations of its stakeholders should be avoided and fought collectively by all and sundry.

3. The three tiers of government should take the issue of funding education very serious in order to provide conducive conditions; educational infrastructures; facilities and materials for functional education to take root and sprout self and national unity and development.

4. Establishment of entrepreneurship training workshops in schools and colleges by the State and Federal Government for practical training on food production and other creative skills for self-reliance.

Conclusion: The development of any nation is realized by its functional educational system . True democracy must ensure secured environment and National unity needed for functional business education as the paper established . Such an educational programme, as a matter of necessity creates jobs for the teeming population thereby bridging the poverty and unemployment gaps in the country .

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