

## CREATIVE AND FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION AS SOLUTION TO NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC RECESSION

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### **Abstract**

This paper stressed the need to fight the current economic recession and guard against its future occurrence in Nigeria through creative and functional education. It discussed the key concepts: creative education, functional education and economic recession. It also highlighted Nigeria's national educational goals comparing it with the principles of functional education as presented by Egbiji (2013), making an evaluation. The paper further discussed how creative and functional education can reduce the effect of economic recession. Factors working against creative and functional education in Nigeria were also discussed. Conclusion was drawn before suggesting the way forward in using creative and functional education to fight economic recession in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Creative Education, Functional Education, Economic Recession.

Nigeria remains one of the greatest countries in Africa. She is greatly endowed with both human and material resources. Nigeria has an estimated population of 170 million and occupies a landmass of 924,000 square kilometers. The generally favorable climatic conditions and predominantly arable land endow the nation with a rich bio-diversity of bountiful flora and fauna as well as

mineral resources (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Education is an excellent instrument for harnessing Nigeria's abundant human and material resources. If the abundant human beings in Nigeria are not adequately and appropriately educated, the material resources will not be harnessed and national development will not take place. In fact, the education that has the potency for effecting national development and not creating other problems (such as unemployment) is creative and functional education. Indeed, economic recession in Nigeria in spite of the abundant natural resources is a bold question mark on the type, quality and quantity of education provided in Nigeria. The position of this paper is that Nigeria should still critically re-examine her national policy on education and pass judgment on its functionality. Economic recession in the light of Nigeria's abundant human and material resources is a paradox. Something is still certainly wrong. Nigeria must fix it.

### **Creative Education**

The concept of creativity is not easy to define. According to Mgboro (2013), the definition of creativity was shaped in three distinct eras: in diverging era, it was viewed as divergent thinking which led to development of brainstorming tasks; in packages and programme era, it was viewed as evolving series of strategies for critical and creative thinking; in the ecological era, it was seen as a process of assembling idea by recombining elements already known but

wrongly thought to be unrelated to each other. As a process, it implies acquisition of skills rather than attitude through interaction which can be made better through practice. 'Recombining' entails that the creative process is one of putting things together in unexpected ways. Creativity is therefore an act, an idea or product which changes or transforms the existing domains into new ones (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Creative people are seen to be innovative and dogged. They take and tolerate risk, ambiguity and uncertainty.

Creative education therefore is when students are encourage to solve problems when faced with challenges and this can be used in all subjects. Instead of being taught to reiterate what was learned, students learn to develop their ability to find various solutions to problem. Coming up with various out-of-the box solutions is known as divergent thinking and there is no one way of cultivating this skill.

### **Functional Education**

Hornby (2012) defined the word 'functional' as an adjective used to describe anything that is practical and useful, with little or no decoration. Thus, functional education is education that is useful to the beneficiaries and the society at large. Ogbiji (2013) stated that in Nigeria and other developing countries, functional education is the education that equips the child with the knowledge, skills and values needed for effective living within his environment and the world at large. Functional education, therefore, is utilitarian and not decorative.

### **The Meaning of Economic Recession**

According to Ibenegbu (2017), the National Bureau of Economic Research gives latest definition to the economic recession: “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy and lasting for more than few months, visible through the whole-sale-retail sales, industrial production, employment, real income, gross domestic product”. In general, the economic recession is defined by a long-lasting increase of unemployment, drop in the stock market, negative growth of GDP and decline of the housing market. Nevertheless, it is less severe than economic depression. The economic depression is the long-standing economic recession. Nigeria is experiencing economic recession because of a significant decline of GDP in the first and second quarters of 2016. The following data was presented by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

### **Consumer Prices Spike**

	May 2015	May 2016	%	Price Elasticity
Tomato (Basket)	₦12,000	₦45,000	275%	Low
Pepper (Basket)	₦6,000	₦20,000	233%	Moderate
Yellow garri (50kg)	₦11,000	₦18,000	63.6%	Moderate
Rice (50kg)	₦9,000	₦14,500	61.1%	Low
Beans (50kg)	₦15,000	₦16,000	6.7%	Low
Onion (Basket)	₦4,000	₦10,000	150%	Moderate

A little review of Nigeria's national objectives was done here to show how far it was committed to functional education

### **Nigeria's National Educational Goals**

According to FRN (2014), the specific goals of education in Nigeria are to:

- ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual;
- ensure the quality of education delivery at all levels;
- promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction;
- ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of the society and the world of work;
- collaborate with development partners, the private sector, Non-governmental organizations and local communities to support and fund education; and
- promote information and communication technology capability at all levels.

Pursuant to this section of the National Policy on Education, Egbiji (2013) listed the following as Principles of Functional Education System:

- The education system must see the child from the stand point of his own world view, ... in other words, the education system must be child-centered.

- The education system must be based on the natural needs of the child, to inquire and to know; to observe and to work or play; by arousing the child's spiritual longing that will not come by force. In other words, it has to follow the principles of child psychology.
- The child must be put at the centre of the curriculum whose development is not based on principles that are exterior to the child.
- The educator should be knowledgeable of the child's physical and emotional development.
- The traditional externally imposed discipline that is based on fear of punishment or expectation for reward must give way to the internally developed discipline that is based on genuine interest or passion. In order to activate the pupil, the teacher has to put the pupil in a condition that will naturally induce that action in order to satisfy a felt need.
- Functional education develops intellectual and moral capacities of the learners, rather than force-feeding him with facts that have no relevance to his real life.
- In a functional education system, the classroom is the laboratory where learning activities form a bridge between the learner and his natural needs.
- Functional education introduces the child to work and to subject that prepare him for social activities as the child must in future live in a social and economic framework.
- Teachers in a functional education system are those who stimulate the moral and spiritual needs of the learners, aid them to acquire knowledge through self study and personal experiences rather than spoon-feeding them with facts which are foreign to them. The main quality of such teachers is enthusiasm rather than scholarship and the understanding of the child and his needs rather than following a rigid curriculum.
- Functional education acknowledges individual differences in the learners and as such does not subject every learner to the same curriculum content and skill development. It however has a minimum of "common core curriculum" and leaves other subjects as "free electives".
- Examination in a functional education system does not constitute a challenge on the regurgitation of facts fed into the memory in the course of study, but an "achievement summary" of the learner performance in the various learning activities during the school year.

Placing Nigeria's national educational goals side-by-side with the above principles of functional education system, one can conclude that Nigeria's educational policy and programme that have been put in place are adequate enough for her functional education programmes to succeed. What has made functional education to elude Nigeria is the lack of will and commitment to policy and programme implementation (by virtually all the stake-holders) on account of corruption.

### **How Creative and Functional Education Can Reduce the Effect of Economic Recession**

Since creative education encourages students to solve problems when faced with challenges, students learn to develop their ability to find various solutions to a problem. They come up with various out-of-the box solutions through divergent thinking. Problems and challenges are plentiful during economic recession. Students that acquired creative and functional education are better placed to survive economic recession. They use their creative ability to find solutions to such decline in economic activity presenting as unemployment, high cost of goods and services, paucity of real income, low industrial production, among others.

Economic recession pressurize people to embrace entrepreneurship. They develop their entrepreneurial skills using the acquired functional education as their bedrock. There is organic relationship between functional education and entrepreneurial education.

Economic recession has taught many graduates in Nigeria that they do not have to write application and submit to every government and private offices and companies endlessly. Instead, they engage in one entrepreneurial skill or the other and eventually become their own boss. Such entrepreneurial skills include tailoring, farming of different kind, computer services, repairs of soft and hardware, poultry, fishery, animal husbandry, bee-keeping, barbing and hair salon, electrical and electronic services,

carpentry and wood-work, etc. Some of those otherwise unemployed graduates soon overtake civil servants whose salary continue to depreciate especially during the period of economic recession.

Functional education equips the child with the knowledge, skills and values needed for effective living within his environment and the world at large. Nigeria being a country richly endowed with plentiful human and material resources only need to develop her great population into quality human beings to harness the abundant natural resources and potential climate. If things are done the way they should be done, Nigerians will have nothing to do with poverty and hunger. By the time we win the war against hunger, we must have abolished poverty. Entrepreneur has always been a factor of production.

### **Factors Working against Creative and Functional Education in Nigeria**

Functional education simply means “do the practical aspect of what you preach or what you teach so that it will be of benefit to the individual and the society at large.” Ogbonnaya (2013) held that: “for education to be functional, it should be seen to equip the beneficiaries with practical knowledge, skills and values for their own benefit and that of the society.”

Some of the factors that work against functional education in Nigeria include the pervading influence of western culture on Nigerian values and culture leading to the erosion of Nigeria traditional values. In traditional education,

children were taught such values as love, respect for elders and constituted authority, dignity of labour, patriotism to one's community, honesty and self reliance. When the white man came to Nigeria, he brought with him his government, his trade, his religion, his language, in fact his total way of life. The real problem is that we dropped our own when we could not practice those of the white man the way he does it within his own society. For example, we dropped our traditional textile industry when we could not replicate the white man's garments; we dropped our indigenous language when we could not actually speak the white man's English, we dropped our traditional religion when we could not actually practice the Bible or Quran.

Creative and functional education also enable recipients to acquire skills for useful living within their society. Western/colonial education emphasized rote learning, memorization and regurgitation of facts. Students were taught the history and geography of Britain, United States of America, Japan, and Portugal with less emphasis on the history and geography of Nigeria. Although, the recent National Policies on Education have tried to correct all these, we are not yet there.

Excessive quest for material possession and worship of money paradoxically work against creative and functional education. For Nigerian's the question is "how far" not "how manage". This means "how far have you gone in acquiring all this money". For many Nigerians, money is capable of buying

anything including educational certificates, high position, employment, beautiful wives and the most luxurious cars. In desperation, we cut corners to get this money instead of actually working for it. Creativity and functionality are sometimes considered unnecessary and undesirable.

Irrelevant educational curriculum is another factor working against creative and functional education. Again, western/colonial education emphasized such subjects as Literature, Civic, Christian and Muslim Religious Knowledge. Subjects like Agriculture, Crafts, Vocational and Technical subjects were given less emphasis. However, now, emphasis is on saleable skills. Hence, subjects like Agriculture, Metalwork, Computer Education, Business Studies, Home Economics, Fine Arts, Auto Mechanics, Electronics, etc are emphasized. We still need some time to transit and actually arrive.

Lack of political will is another factor working against creative and functional education. Sometimes, our leaders lack the will to actually fund education or provide the enabling environment for creative and functional education to advance. Annual budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria has continued to be very low, (never above 10% of the annual budget)

Endemic corruption is another factor working against creative and functional education in Nigeria. On the part of the teachers, instead of encouraging the pupils to engage their hands in crafts, they collect money in

place of brooms, baskets, pots and other crafts-work the children should have produced. During examinations, practicals are easily monetized for the candidates by the supervisors and other officials who handle the examination.

The above are only a few examples of the factors working against creative and functional education in Nigeria. It is true that the Nigerian educational goals presented in the National Policy on Education adequately provided for functional education, the problem is on implementation of those provisions.

### **Conclusion**

Functional education is related to, but not the same as entrepreneurial or even vocational/technical education. The former is wider in scope than the latter. The gospel of functional education is: practicalize what is theorized as knowledge, skills and values for the benefit of the individual and the society at large. Entrepreneurial education is mainly interested in exploitation of economic opportunities. Nigeria's National Policy on Education has adequate provisions for creative and functional education programmes to succeed. Why Nigeria plunged into economic recession is because those provisions in the National Policy on Education are largely not practicalized for the benefit of the individual and the Nigeria society. This is due mainly to lack of will and commitment and of course, endemic corruption. If creative and functional education are seriously and honestly

pursued, economic recession will be greatly alleviated.

### **The Way Forward**

The educational policies and curricula contents for the different levels of education in Nigeria are rich and adequate. The problem lies on the implementation, that is, inculcation of the values, knowledge and skills. The following suggestions are made:

1. Our leaders should show example in the inculcation of values in their daily lives. They should demonstrate modesty in their life style. They should not allow the masses to watch them cruise about in their fleets of luxurious cars and build upstairs everywhere even during economic recession.
2. Why should the Presidency claim to have a list of the corrupt officials and refuse to publish it even when the courts have given order that such a list should be published? Is the Presidency not aiding and abetting corruption? Moreover, how many of the published treasury looters in the States and Local Government Areas have gone to jail? The way forward is that people convicted of financial crimes should be heavily punished to serve as deterrent to others.
3. On inculcation of knowledge and skills, there should be a reformation of the teacher educational institutions.
4. The phased out Teacher Training Colleges (T.T.C) should be restored.
5. The one-year National Youth Service should be reduced to six months. The full one year NYSC time should be used to teach corp members some trades.

The remaining six months should be used by the corps member to learn a trade of his or her choice after which the government should mobilize the corps member to open up a workshop for the trade learned rather than apply for non-existent white-collar job.

6. Employment of graduates or school leavers should be based on practical demonstration of one's area of study rather than presentation of certificates during an interview.

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