

REAWAKENING THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION TOWARDS CREATIVITY AND SELF-RELIANCE

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Abstract

The era in Nigeria when citizens continually depend on the government and its institutions for their survival is believed to have gone because it appears to be that the present day Nigerian governments care less about the well-being of the citizens. Hence, her citizens should rise to self-help by taking active steps to become creative, economically viable and socio-politically relevant. This paper is therefore a call for the reawaking of the philosophy and practice of Nigerian education towards creativity and self-reliance. The paper reaffirmed the importance of education in the development of human resources that are needed for national development. It was clearly noted also that Nigeria has as one of its goals, “the building of a self-reliant nation” made up of creative individuals. However, the writer expressed dissatisfaction on the inability of the education sector of Nigeria at all levels to provide workable modalities that will facilitate the attainment of this lofty goal. Owing to the fact that the world is now highly globalized, the writer submitted that the Nigerian nation is left with no option than to reawaken the philosophy and practice of her education towards ensuring creativity and self-reliance. To do so, the writer suggested among other steps that the Government should with all sincerity and seriousness implement in totality, all educational policies that would promote the development of skills and creative abilities of her citizens aiming at producing self-reliant citizens.

Keywords: Philosophy of Education, Creativity and Self-reliance

Introduction

Education facilitates the possession of imaginative and creative abilities. This is supposedly why Nigeria declared in her National Policy on Education that one of the main national goals which her education is set to achieve shall be the attainment of a united, strong and self-reliant nation, (FRN, 2013). It must be noted therefore that, the task of instilling in the recipients of education, the needed creative abilities that will pave way for self-reliance is dependent on the philosophy and practice guiding the nation’s education system.

It is no longer new to know that the modern world is highly globalized with its unpredictable uncertainties; as such, creativity is one strong force that would enable Nigerian citizens to cope with the uncertainties associated with the globalized world. Of course, it takes a creative man to find solutions to problems which he encounters in his environment. That is to say that creativity is a subject that cannot be ignored especially in this 21st century. It is an indisputable fact that the schools must provide viable grounds for the cultivation and development of creative abilities in each Nigerian child starting from the foundational stage of education. The essence of beginning at the foundational stages of education is because whatever information and

experience the child gathers at early stage of life is consolidated upon as he or she goes on in his or her lifetime.

If creative abilities are developed among individual Nigerian citizens through education, it will surely result to alleviation of poverty, reduction in unemployment and minimal crime rate in the society, among other benefits. Creativity and self-reliance are inseparable because as the saying goes “the end justifies the means”. Self-reliance is usually the end that justifies creativity. On that note the two concepts are discussed together in this paper. Creativity and self-reliance are central in the philosophy and educational thoughts of virtually all the progressive philosophers. The two concepts were also projected in the Nigerian National Policy on Education which supposedly emerged from her philosophy of education and the need to reawaken the philosophy and the practice in that regard forms the central issue in this discourse.

At this point, it is right to establish the concepts of philosophy of education, creativity, self-reliance, and also review two important concepts in any discourse on creativity and self-reliance which are critical and reflective thinking. This review of these key concepts will aid one in understanding what it means to reawaken the philosophy and practice of Nigerian education for creativity and self-reliance.

Review of Major Concepts

Philosophy of education

Philosophy of education is both a subject and a subject matter. As a subject, it is an area of study which exposes one to the skills of interpreting educational concepts and issues using the tools of philosophy; meaning that the relevance of philosophy of education lies in providing clear guidance that serves as a signpost that will lead to an improved process, practice and product of education in any society. Hardie (2012) described philosophy of education as a method of linguistic analysis by which we determine whether educational problems are particularly human or scientifically instigated and whether their solution lies in attitude, perception or approach. Odigie (2016) is of the opinion that philosophy of education is primarily concerned with the critical analysis of concepts, issues and problems of education; with view to helping the educator conceptualize their relevance and for better application. In summary therefore, all philosophers have point of agreement which is that philosophy of education is concerned with the application of philosophical principles, approaches and tools to solving educational issues and problems; illuminate educational practice through the analysis and interpretation of meanings, ideas and concepts and by so doing helps the teacher and other stakeholders to have a wider understanding of the day-to-day educational issues, problems and prospects.

Creativity

Creativity is one of the controversial terms that seem difficult to be defined due to divergent views of scholars. Creativity could mean imagination, originality, divergent thinking, inventiveness, giftedness, etc. In most cases people have ended up discussing the importance of creativity as they try to define it. According to Abe (2006) creativity is referred to as the product of problem solving which involves thinking in a new way and invention of a new product as an answer to a felt need. Omeke (2011) perceived

creativity as a process extended in time and characterized by originality, adaptation and realization; a divergent capacity to transcend the usual ways of dealing with a problem or object with new, more useful and effective pattern. Lee (2011) affirmed that creativity involves a discovery phase of thinking, an insightful phase, or an inductive phase of problem solving as contrasted with logical validation of insight and rigorous testing of hypothesis. They further listed several components of creativity to include, intelligence, flexibility, originality, ability to perceive opportunity in every circumstance, critical thinking and mental freedom, some That is to say that creativity involves solving interpersonal problems, discovering new things and more mutually satisfying ways of interacting with others, freeing one from established routines or rituals of perception and action to redefine situations and to act in new roles in response to emerging situations and circumstances.

With this few insight, it becomes obvious that creativity is of great importance in Nigeria because the world is dynamic and man is part of its dynamism and so Nigerians need to queue in every positive change. Creativity is necessary because it lays the foundation for any meaningful development in any society.

Self-reliance

The term “self-reliance” is no longer new but common in the lips of most scholars; though it is easier to be pronounced than to be applied. The word formed a strong hold in the entire philosophy of Nigerian education. In a very simple way, self-reliance can be linked to mental, financial and economic independence of an individual. Udida (2010) viewed self-reliance as that which has the cultural, economic and political implication, which connotes that an individual should develop without total dependence on another person. Nwigwe (2014) posited that self-reliance is more of a process than an ideology which is committed to the transformation of one’s economic, social and intellectual growth and development. This means that self-reliance brings positive and durable change in an individual such that it will help him function independently and effectively anywhere he may find himself. Nyerere as cited in Ogundowole. (2010) argued that self-reliance is the only genuine form of development because for him, no one can give another person self-pride and self-realization except oneself. In other words, man is his own ‘architect’ capable of molding himself into either a great and wealthy man or a pauper. In his opinion, Akinpelu (2005) noted that self-reliance entails self-measure of sacrifice and self-denial; some tolerance of temporary hardship, inconveniences in view of greater benefits which a person will reap later in life. Ogundowole (2010) is of the opinion that, self-reliance entails autonomy of decision making and full mobilization of a society’s own resources which can earn one the self-confidence and the capacity for autonomous goal setting. Self-reliance demands competence, inventiveness, dedication, confidence and national awareness. Above all, it calls for originality and creativity which are necessary for self-respect and self-realization. On this note, the call for education for creativity and self-reliance in this paper is apt for the education system to continuously make individual Nigerians to be abreast with modern development and growth in all fields of human endeavour. It should be accepted as a necessity and a sure way to economic empowerment.

Critical and Reflective thinking

These two concepts are of paramount importance in any discourse on education for creativity and self-reliance. It is quite unrealizable for one to be creative without being critical and reflective in his or her thinking. This is because reflection is some sort of imagination which is always helpful in building a creative environment. Critical thinking is simply an in-depth intellectual exercise of reflecting on issues, raising hypothesis in search of possible solution(s) to problems around man or answers to questions on issues of concern. Both terms suggest conscious step by step analysis of posed problems or challenges with the view to finding lasting solution to them. Critical and reflective thinking as Archambault (2009) noted arises more in problematic situations and environments because as long as man's interaction with his environment is smooth, he may think of nothing but when there are troubled states of affair, problems must be solved before the untroubled state can be restored. That is to say that reflection is a key to problem solving that holds several ideas together and linking each idea with its predecessor in order to resolve an issue. It is from the reflective thinking on identified problems that hypotheses are formed, data is collected and hypotheses are tested to arrive at solutions. On the contrary, this new way of thinking is yet to form part and parcel of Nigerian education. Thus, there is the need to reawaken the philosophy and practice of education system towards the new order.

Crux of the matter

Every nation's education, especially in this contemporary world ought to pursue the inculcation of the habit of work and prepare individual recipients with necessary skills that will enable them to contribute their quota to the growth of the society rather than constituting nuisance to the society. In recent times, the level of unemployment in Nigeria has risen to a frightening dimension with particular reference to the youths. It must be stressed here also that wastage of the productive workforce results to low national income per capital, over-dependence on government, general increase in poverty rate, poor industrial productivity and overall dwindling of national economy. There is therefore the need for the education system to facilitate the development of the instincts to creativity and self-reliance among Nigerians.

The recent increase in unemployment in Nigeria simply depicts poor quality, lack of functionality and sheer negligence in critical areas of value which a viable education system should pursue. It equally suggests that the stakeholders in Nigerian education system have either lost conscious of the philosophy of education, or do not regularly review the societal needs and aspirations in line with the current realities in the global community.

Nigeria had earlier adopted the 6-3-3-4 and now the 9-3-4 system of education which was considerably more comprehensive in nature, scope and direction than the old system inherited from the former colonial government. Had the 6-3-3-4 policy been effectively implemented, by now the nation would have been boasting of many creative and self-reliant citizens as products of a functional education system. Consequently, the nation would have been smoothly coping with the challenges of globalization. Unfortunately, the usual problem of poor implementation could not allow the policy and programme of the 6-3-3-4 system to yield expected result. The same challenges are still facing the 9-3-4 system. In this regard, Odo (2014) stressed the fact that,

without effective implementation of educational policies, education for self-reliance will continue to be a mere wishful thinking in Nigeria. Of course, it can never be easy to attain educational goals if the philosophy and practice are not clearly and rightly directed.

Educating the citizens towards creativity and self-reliance as emphasized in this paper would involve the development of knowledge, power, talent as well as the feeling of responsibility in an individual. This suggests that the philosophy and practice of Nigerian education must henceforth re-emphasize and encourage intellectual freedom, independence and development of creative abilities. The teaching and learning environment should be programmed to expose the recipients of education to critical and reflective thinking through practical transformative activities that can guarantee self-reliance.

Educating for creativity was once an innovation in education carried out in the mid-fifties by a renowned Nigerian educator and philosopher Tai Solarin when he established the May-Flower secondary school in Ogun State in the Western region of Nigeria. In that school (which is still in existence till date), “the philosophy is based on “do it yourself”, yes! “You can do it” and the school allowed students some freedom to experiment in various practical ways (Solarin, 1970:12). As a result of that philosophy and practice, the products (graduates) of the May flower school were reported to be creative, imaginative and consequently self-reliant. It is believed also that if the present day Nigerian is made to center on the philosophy and practice of “do it yourself”, “you can do it”, self-reliance will certainly be achieved in Nigeria.

Efforts may have been made towards promoting creativity and self-reliance through education in Nigeria over the years but one may not be making an overstatement to say that the efforts have not yet yielded commensurate results hence; more and continual effort would be needed until maximum positive result is achieved. A situation where majority of Nigerian youths still rely on the government to provide them with job opportunities coupled with a situation where virtually everything producible in Nigeria is being imported, raises the fear that Nigerian educational system in general is not yet positioned to produce creative individuals. That means that the goal of attaining “a united, strong and self-reliant nation” obtainable through functional and creativity oriented education is still more of a wish and a mere policy statement that lacks adequate pragmatic approach to its realization.

There are indications that the needed conducive environment in terms of infrastructure, instructional delivery, and funding have not been adequately provided to facilitate creativity and self-reliance through education, Akinfolarin, Ajayi, and Oloruntegbe (2012). It is worrisome that Nigerian education system has placed more emphasis on preparing young Nigerians to pass examinations and make good grades. There is less emphasis on making the recipients of education to utilize the acquired knowledge in creating ideas that could meaningfully facilitate national development as well as provide them (the school leavers) with means of livelihood.

Similarly, much gap is still noticeable between the education sector and other sectors of Nigerian economy in terms of middle and high level manpower needs and problem

solving oriented researches. It is expected that with the number of school graduates from Nigeria secondary and higher institutions of learning, the continual quest for foreign expertise and foreign goods as it is evident in the contemporary Nigeria would have significantly minimized. In the light of the above, this writer submits that the Nigerian educational system still have much to do in terms of instilling in the young Nigerians, the needed creative abilities that will enable them to initiate basic problem solving ideas that will aid the nation in surmounting the increasing man- made and environmentally-posed problems as well as guarantee individual and national self-reliance.

Conclusion

If Nigeria intends to stand tall in the scheme of things among the League of Nations in such a highly globalized world, reawakening the philosophy and practice of her education towards creativity and self-reliance is not negotiable. Whatever effort that has been made in the past towards repositioning Nigerian education system is appreciated but not good enough as the commensurate impact on national development is yet to be felt. There is therefore need to reposition and strengthen the education sector and all its institutions to the task of producing creative Nigerians whose skills, knowledge and competences would foster the attainment of self-reliance in Nigeria. Effort must be made to review what is taught in Nigerian schools while enabling environment in all ramifications should be provided for effective teaching and learning, research and administration in Nigerian schools.

Way Forward

In other to reawaken the philosophy and practice of Nigerian education towards creativity and self-reliance, the following steps are considered necessary:

1. Educational institutions at all levels should place more emphasis on development of creative skills and competences in addition to award of certificates.
2. Technical, Vocational as well as Science Education in Nigeria should be repositioned through improved and adequate infrastructural development and proactive administration for the business of training creative young Nigerians.
3. Nigerian government at all levels should sponsor and also encourage spirited individual Nigerians to support research and discovery learning especially at the higher education level.
4. Beginning from primary level of education, adequate follow up of each Nigerian child by the teacher should be encouraged, so as to discover the child's area of interest and abilities and by so doing direct his physical, mental and emotional development accordingly.
5. Government should with all sincerity and seriousness implement in totality, all educational policies that would promote creativity and self-reliance in Nigeria.

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