

Creativity and Innovation in Open and Distance Education: A Paradigm for Human Development in the 21st Century for Nation-Building in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on creativity and innovation in open and distance education as a paradigm for human development in the twenty first century for nation-building in Nigeria. The paper looks at the open/distance education programme and its unconventional method of delivery in educating the educationally less privileged. The paper is of the opinion that given the fact that despite its method of delivery, majority of the Nigerian populace is still behind the iron curtain of illiteracy. In Nigeria, there are lots of challenges to nation-building and national integration which need to be surmounted. One of such problems is human development for a quality population. The paper is of the opinion that if the Nigerian economy must be transformed to meet the global challenge in this 21st century, she must invest in her human capital and this must take place not only in the formal and informal way of education but must be backed with innovations and creativity that makes learning very interesting and as a fun, thereby making greater percentage of the population to acquire numeracy in order to improve their contribution to the Nigerian economy for nation-building in this 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been defined severally by different scholars and schools of thought right from the earliest philosophers to the contemporary psychologist. However, the purpose of education has been the same – the transmission and inculcation of culture and general socialization of the citizenry for the overall good of the society.

Connor in Kosemani (1995:1) defined education as “an elaborate social mechanism designed by society to bring about in those submitted to it, certain skills and attributes that are judged desirable in that society.

Right from the pre-historic era down to the modern scientific era, education generally has been informed by the environment and the need of the society. This also determines the technology and the skills that are judged desirable.

Udoh (2010), maintains that at any point in time, the necessary skills that are judged desirable are transmitted through the educational process to the citizens to achieve cohesion, continuity, stability for the maintenance of the status quo and necessary changes in the society if need be.

Functionalism and social responsibility was emphasized in the African traditional education to meet the need of the time, (Fafunwa, 1984). While during the medieval era, education was other wordly as specified by the church (Boyd and Kind 1983:100). In this 21st century, globalization, the shrinkage of the globe and the need for mass literacy has placed a new demand and method of delivery on the education industry to meet the transformation imperative of the global economy for today. This new demand calls for a new method of delivery of educational good to improve human development for responsiveness to the technology of the today to improve productivity.

To accomplish this ideal, mass literacy has become imperative. However, despite all the clamor and effort to make education available to all through the formal and non-formal method, much as still left than to be desired in educating the masses. This advocates for a more concerted effort to educate the masses to increase their productivity for the global transformation of the economy. This also calls for creativity and innovation in the open distance method of delivery to make education more available to the masses and easily accessible.

THE CONCEPT OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

There are many definitions of the open distance education. For Raw (2008), distance education is a “form of education that can easily become depersonalized both for staff and students.

It is a learning system where the teaching behaviours are separate from the learning behaviours. The learner works alone or in a group-guided by the study material arranged by the instructor who together with the tutors is in a location apart from the students, who however have the opportunity to communicate with a

tutor/tutors with the aid of one or more media such as correspondence, telephone, television, radio. It may also be combined with various forms of face-to-face meetings. On his own, Peters in Rao (2008), maintains that distance “is a form of indirect instruction that is imparted by technical media such as correspondence, printed materials, teaching and learning aids, audiovisual aids, radio, television and computers.” It is a type of education that is based on industrialized and technological communication (Rao 2008:3).

However, the fact remains that correspondence courses/distance learning share the same goals and the same educational philosophy as the conventional on campus method of instruction. Otto Peters in (Rao 1008), posits that “it is essentially self-educational by the learner based on private study in libraries, audio-visuals carrels and laboratories”. Distance learning is believed to be the most industrialized form of education; this system of education is depersonalized both for staff and students, a form of indirect instruction. Discussing the limitation of the formal education, Sigh (2007), maintains that the open distance learning due to its innovation method of delivery brings about the equalization of educational opportunities while the formal school system serves “the privileged few.”

The programme breaks down all the traditional barriers to teaching such as age, location, availability, scheduling style and cost. In this regard, the masses can be educated and mobilized for national development hence preparing the country to reposition itself to be relevant in the transformation of her economy to meet the global need of the 21st century (Ogeh, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this paper is the structuralism and post modernism paradigms.

The structuralist paradigm views the society in terms of a biological organism with different parts, performing different functions for the survival of the organism.

The structural functionalist poses two related questions in order to highlight the function of education in the society.

1. What are the functions of education for the society as a whole.
2. What are the functional relationships between education and other parts of the social systems.

The two questions are concerned with how education informs the maintenance of value consensus, social solidarity and the relationship between education and other social institutions and how this relationship interprets the society as a whole. Durkheim in Heralabus (2008) posits that “education performs the major function of the transmission of the societal norms and values”. He further argues that education makes for social solidarity by perpetuating and reinforcing societal homogeneity which collective life demands. Education makes one develop a sense of commitment to social group. He further posits that education also makes for social rules, mostly in a complex industrial society that serves a function which cannot be provided by the family or by the peer group.

Pearson (1960) in Ogeh (2012) affirms that the school acts as a bridge between the family and the society as a whole, preparing the children for adult role. The school, he further maintains, establishes universalistic standards in terms of which pupils achieve their status.

This paradigm is relevant to this paper because the paper is of the opinion that the transformation of the global economy in this 21st century, and for human development for nation-building in Nigeria mass literacy is imperative. This mass literacy is not only through the conventional regular education system but through the open distance method with relevant innovation and creativity to make education a very interesting venture.

POST MODERNISM THEORY

The post modernist argues that there is no simple recipe for solving the world’s problem. Foremost in this theory is the French theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard in Ogeh (2010). The post modernist maintains that anything goes in an era where all styles and fashions are possible so long as none is taken seriously. They argue for diversity and deny that there is any single best curriculum that should be followed in schools, therefore, there should be no attempt to impose one set of ideas on all education. Similarly, Ian Bryant and Rennie Johnson (1979), argue that adult education has been encouraged by post modernism theory, manifesting in greater choice and diversity, use of flexibility and distance learning compared to schooling. They argue that to meet individual needs, the tailoring of concept and pace of education is absolutely imperative.

Knowledge is also valued if it is useful and therefore be exchanged for money in the labour market (Usher and Calward, 1997). They further argue that education can play important role in helping oppressed groups because of its openness, it gives chance for education to feature the concerns of the oppressed.

The post modernism theory is relevant to this paper because for the transformation of the global economy in this 21st century, to encourage nation building in Nigeria, education is a key factor. This is not the regular school programme, but the non-formal, the open and distance educational programme with greater creativity and innovations. This method will educate the farmer for greater yield, the drop outs and majority of the illiterate Nigerian populace to contribute their best to the growth of the economy. It will liberate the mind of

the primordial Nigerian to that of a nationalist.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section deals with the review of related literature to this paper under the following headings:

1. Education and human development
2. Education and social development

Gould (1993), argues that the relation between education and human resources cannot be over emphasized.

He holds the view that education makes individuals more productive in economics sense, educated persons are more able to contribute to the development of local and national economy.

He maintains that research has shown that the economic contributions of an educated person are normally greater than that of an uneducated person, likewise the income reward. He further argues that education helps people acquire different types of skills, and the skills of the people enhance the amount and use of resources available to society which are important factor in development.

Marshal (1981), subscribes to the above argument by saying that knowledge is the most powerful engine for production because it enables us to subdue nature and satisfy our wants. Similarly Schuiz in Gould (1993), supports the above argument by saying that the investment in population quality and in knowledge in large part determines the future of mankind, improvement in population quality and advances in knowledge.

Simon et al (1994), maintains that education helps to reduce poverty by mitigating its effects on population, health and nutrition and by increasing the value of efficiency of the labour offered by the poor. They further argue that technological advances and new methods of production in the world today depend on “well trained and intellectually flexible labour force and education is even more significant”. They contended that the future development of the world and of individual nations hinges more than ever on the capacity of individuals and countries to acquire, adapt and advance knowledge. This capacity depends, in turn on the extent to which the population has attained literacy, numeracy, communications and problem solving skills. They insist that to move forward, all developing countries must improve the education and training for their labour force, and this must rest on the solid foundation of good primary education.

Meier (1989), contends that an improved population informs productivity with continuing return in the future. Investment in human beings will eliminate deficient supply of entrepreneurship and customary values and traditional social institutions that minimizes incentives for economic change.

Begg (1991), is of the same view with Meier, that education has direct bearing on human capital. By human capital he means the skills and knowledge embodied in the minds and hands of the population, which is acquired through increasing education, training and experience. He further contends that education training and learning by doing, and management skills are important sources of productivity and growth.

Discussing growth models and underdevelopment, Bruton in Agarwala (1997), posits that besides other variables that are needed for the take off of development, the human resources must be highly innovative. Innovation, he opines increases the capital output ratio.

Meier (1989), supports the above view by maintaining that economic quality of the population remains low when there is little knowledge of the natural resources that are available. He maintained that the improvement in the quality of the “human factor” is, then as essential as investment in physical capital. He further said that an advanced knowledge and diffusion of new ideas and objectives and necessary to remove economic backwardness and instill the human abilities and motivation that are more favourable to economic achievement and development.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In his book, “Improving Primary Education” Lockheed et al (1994) opined that completed primary education helps alleviate poverty enhances economic and social development. In their argument, they maintains that a lot of studies reveal that the adults in developing countries who have higher level of educational attainment have better employment, higher individual earning, greater agricultural productivity, better health and nutrition status and more “modern” attitudes than adults who have lower educational attainment.

This argument is in support of the finding of Schultz in his study across countries which revealed a striking correlation between national investment in education and economic growth.

On a similar study by Benavot (1985), of 110 developed and developing countries from 1930 – 1980, it was also discovered that there is a great bearing with education and economic growth. The same was the findings of Lau et al (1991), in his study of twenty-two East Asian and Latin American countries.

It was also argued that some of the newly industrialized countries (NICs) like Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore witnessed a dramatic growth in the past 30 years and this was said to be connected with the universal primary and secondary enrollment recorded by 1965.

According to World Bank report of 1987 in Lockheed (1994), these countries have a labour force that

was almost universally literate just before rapid and industrial growth began. On her own, Mead (2010), posits that education has the power to change society and as has been shown by the Meiji revolution in Japan in 1867, which transformed in less than, a century an isolated feudal society into competitive industrial and military unit in the world. The transformation of Russia affected by the Bolsheviks regime is another example.

The literature review is relevant to this paper because it highlights the relationship between education and a productivity economy. In this 21st century, if the global economy must be transformed, the starting point must be education for all cannot be possible through the regular school system given the fact that many out of school age persons form the greater percentage of the world population especially in the third world and Nigeria in particular. If this disadvantaged group must make impact in the global transformation of the world economy, education becomes a prerequisite for the acquiring of the relevant skills, and this must be accomplished not only through the open/distance learning method but with a lot of creativity and innovations to make learning not only interesting but a fun to be desired by all concerned.

THE CONCEPT OF NATION BUILDING

Discussing nationalism, internationalism and education, Good and Teller (1969), posits that a nation is a people connected by real or at least accepted racial unity, such unity shown by language, religion customs and apparent destiny, while nationalism in contrast with these concrete terms means devotion to national interest and unity. On the other hand, a state is considered to be a sovereign political body occupying a definite territory and having a central government (Good & Teller 1969).

According to Aristotle in Good and Teller, each of them be it Aristocratic, democratic or monarchial has a particular form of education that is most appropriate to it. Good and Teller posits that modern states have used schools not merely to cultivate loyalty and patriotism, but also to develop chauvinism and aggressive militarism.

On his own, Tilly in Ayoob (1998), posits that national states are those whose people share linguistics, religious and symbolic identity. Similarly, Deutsch in Eleazu (1979), see the nation as a politically mobilized people. On his own Awolowo (1977), maintains that the idea of nationhood presupposes the idea of one nation, one people with a common destiny. However, due to migration, imperialism, colonialism, war and conflict over the centuries, it is not possible to have nations or states which clearly fit into the above definitions in the strict sense of it in Europe in the Afro-Asian world. Rather, what we have are states and nation – states.

Nation –building on the other hand according to Eleazu (1977), is used synonymous with national integration, national development and political development. For Pye (1966), nation-building has to do with transforming traditional societies into states. He maintains that the political aspect of nation-building involves popular participation and the creation of new loyalties to nation symbols.

Ayoob (1988), further posits that the aim of nation-building is to integrate and harmonize socially, regionally or even politically and institutionally divided sections of a people. Similarly, Cohen et al in Ayoob (1977), maintains that nation-building is synonymous with state making and succinctly defined state-making as “primitive central state power accumulation” and must include the following:

1. The expansion and consolidation of the territorial and demographic domain under a political authority.
2. The maintenance of order in the territory.

In summary, we can say that nation-building encapsulate inter-alia to win political independence, sustain the independence, encourage patriotism, encourage national unity instead of primordial unity. Encourage integration and national unity, harness the natural resources and use same for the development of the nation, provide food, shelter and health for all at a relatively minimum cost, fight poverty, ignorance, disease and illiteracy, encourage and enforce unity in diversity, cultivate the process of human development. Pursue technological and infrastructural development, educate the citizens for political socialization and engineering for mass political participation from the grassroots etc. Above all, transiting the nation-state from an under-developed society to a modern industrial state through deliberate and consistent plans and programmes.

Most nations of the world have accomplished the above ideals through education, information dissemination, national orientation programmes, indoctrination, training, mass propaganda and through the regular school programmes with relative amount of coercion as the occasion may demand.

This paper is of the opinion that in this 21st century, if Nigeria must be able to transform her economy to meet the challenge of the global demand, she must be able to develop her human resources to the point of galvanizing same for nation-building to assert her status among the committee of nations. This ideal to my own opinion must be accomplished through education, not education of the regular school type, but of the non-formal open-distance learning with a lot of creativity and innovations that make learning a fun and very interesting.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION TO MAKE LEARNING INTERESTING

While we appreciate the fact that the open and distance education system encourage creativity in its method of

delivery in educating the less privileges and out of school –group the effort at reaching this target group is not innovative enough to achieve the desired ideals. Hence this paper advocates not only for innovations and creativity in the system of delivery of the open and distance learning education, but innovative and creativity enough to make learning very creative and enterprising affair. In this regard, the curriculum and courses in the programme of study should be arranged that the learner on his own, will be enthusiastic to learn. For example the open and distance learning system apart from the e-learning method should make the curriculum of any course of study available in different dialects of the ethnic groups of a nation.

Difficult and uninteresting courses and topics should be redesigned like games and prizes attached to them just like some of the game son our cell phones. Furthermore, the open the distance learning system should be ruralized, in the sense that people should be able to learn anywhere they are located without necessarily going to the city for electronic media. The national ideals, folklore, national symbols, social orientation programs, civic culture, political socialization and other variables that can encourage, improve manpower development in the country should all be designed to be part of the school programme and in form of games that learner plays the game and yet educated at the same time. Certificates should be awarded any time each learner finishes a particular programme in his e-system. This method will allow individuals learn at their pace and also encourage productivity in all spheres of the economy thereby repositioning Nigeria for global economic transformation in this 21st century.

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