

RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA'S THEORY-BASED TERTIARY EDUCATION: AN APPRAISAL OF JOHN DEWEY'S PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Executive Summary

In 2022 World University Ranking, University of Ibadan ranked 1172nd and number one tertiary institution in Nigeria with an overall score of 69.3 points. Similarly, in 2021, among top 200 best universities in Africa, University of Lagos was ranked 42nd followed by University of Nigeria Nsukka at 43rd position. These records are not encouraging as they are consolidated in the quality of Nigerian university graduates. As a problem, this study roots the cause of the international performance on theory-based learning style of Nigeria tertiary education, modelled in Platonic credo, to know Good is to do Good. However, Socratic dialectical education projected conditions of non-connection between what one knows and what one does. Hence, 'education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel'. Using hermeneutics as methodology in thematic content analysis, the study aims at critically examining the challenges of Nigeria's tertiary theory-based learning through the pragmatic lens of John Dewey's model of education. The objectives involve establishing the limitedness of theory-based learning, identifying aspects of Dewey's pragmatism needed in restructuring Nigeria's tertiary education system and establishing mechanics for private sector collaboration towards practical learning. Feasible private-public partnership in tertiary education is the significant recommendation made by the study. Based on Dewey's educational progressivism, the study concludes that institutionalizing practice-centered learning in Nigeria's tertiary education remains tenable means in producing qualified and employable graduates.

Introduction

Plato's credo, *to know Good is to do Good*, has remained controversial in its experiential possibilities, where knowing a thing does not necessarily assure doing the thing. Some scholars agree with Plato's stance that the ability to know is tantamount to ability to do, particularly from axiological viewpoints. But Socratic proposition on examination of life entails a possible non-connection between what one knows and what one does. To this possibility Socrates affirmed that the process of examination through dialectics brings about enlightenment of what is thought to be known and orderliness of what is thought to be done. This process entails education, and for him, 'Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel' (470BC-399BC). This definition throws a much greater light on the possible assumption of Plato in his credo, where it informs knowing as an activity that is not latent. Here, what is known can only manifest for it to be known that it is known by an agent. To know (learning) then, involves manifestation of the contents of knowledge through action from which the nature of what is known can be assessed. In this view Plato assessed knowledge as the manifestation of virtues of goodness for the common good of the state. Thus, for him, '[e]ducation is the constraining and directing of youth towards that right reason, which the law affirms, and which the experience of the best of our elders has agreed to be truly right.'

The concern in resonating the classical definitions and approaches to education is to explore the context of education from utility point of view. The emphasis lies on the need for the manifestation of education in human life activities, where education becomes an instrument in reviving the human world. As Edwards (1951) puts it; "As a matter of fact, education is never an autonomous process, separate and apart from the society it serves. It always develops within a particular social context; it is anchored in the civilization of which it is a part; in a very real sense, it is the child of historic circumstance"

However, the Nigeria education system seems not to be undertaking the revival function of the social environment. Nigeria practices British 9-3-4 system of education. This study assesses how last part which is tertiary education indulges the social revival educational demand with its teaching and learning process. The tertiary education fully qualifies a candidate as a fortified embodiment of knowledge with which to tackle the environmental challenges and revive the society. In other words, a graduate of tertiary institution is one who manifests knowledge through expertise action in particular sectors of the society. However, available data in Nigeria proves otherwise that education entails manifestation of knowledge through action. The data records are summarized in two-fold performance assessment; employability and international rating

Employability: Although there are limited number of available jobs in comparison to the number of university graduates in Nigeria, reports indicate that many of the graduates are unemployable, given ability and capacity. Fola Ogunsola Foundation (FOF) in May 4th 2015 submits that ‘Nigerian graduates are not fit for the working place because they lack skills, the right attitude and exhibit a lot of pride... many of these graduates cannot complete simple tasks like writing basic letters or to do follow up projects’ (Oyeleke, 2015).

International Rating: Centre for World University Ranking in its 2022 report ranked University of Ibadan 1172nd in the world and number one tertiary institution in Nigeria with an overall score of 69.3 points (Akintade, 2022). University of Nigeria Nsukka followed as it was ranked 1775 worldwide and second in the nation with 66.6 points. And then University of Lagos at 1924 globally, 3rd in the country with 66.0 points. Similarly, in 2021 top 200 best universities in Africa, University of Lagos was ranked 42nd followed by University of Nigeria Nsukka at 43rd position (Uni Rank 2021), in a continent where Nigeria is acclaimed as the giant of Africa. An important comment was attached to the Nigeria situation as follows; “The ranking comes as Nigerian public universities dally in endless shutdown occasioned by longstanding industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

This comment shows that this study is not oblivious of other factors that contribute to poor performance of tertiary education in Nigeria. The political destabilization of the system, handicapped infrastructure, gross shortage of educational funds, series of malpractices and many more are multifaceted quagmire that Nigeria tertiary education is trapped in. Be that as it may, this study focuses on what teaching and learning ought to be as education *qua tale*. It seeks to establish that amidst these compounding problems, improper educating pattern accounts for the churning out of unqualified graduates in Nigeria. The study contends that what is obtainable in Nigeria tertiary education is theory-based learning, where the belief is that to know about theories ensures the ability to utilize them, a form of abused Plato’s credo.

Aim of Study

The study therefore, examines the challenges of this type of learning through the lens of John Dewey pragmatic education system. Through the examination of what knowing ought to be from utility point of view, it argues for the restructuring of the system of teaching and learning in Nigeria tertiary institution, as a panacea to availability of qualified graduates.

Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

- i. To establish the limitedness of theory-based learning.
- ii. To identify areas of Dewey's pragmatism needed for restructure of Nigerian tertiary education.
- iii. To establish possible private sector collaboration for practical learning.

From the above objectives the following research questions were raised;

- i. How does theory-based learning affect Nigerian education?
- ii. What areas of Dewey's pragmatism can make Nigeria tertiary education productive?
- iii. How can private organizations and industries assist in practical learning?

Literature Review

The literature review will be done under two approaches, namely; education as utility based and scholarly critiques of John Dewey pragmatism. The reason for these two approaches is to ascertain scholarly views on the impacts of theory based and practice learning in education.

Education as utility-base practical learning

Vyjko (2022) expresses the effect of practical learning as; "acquired by addressing real problems and practice, it relates to experience, deals, intuition, values, creative thinking, emotions, skills and attitudes". In this view, knowledge involves a complement of 'know what' with 'know how', where 'know how' is the materialization of knowledge and a lee way to innovation. Towards realizing a synergy between 'know-what' and 'know how' she advocates for an inter-relationship/ interaction that will, 'enhance academic-industry partnerships and engagement through the involvement of students in professional work, and encourage teachers to conduct research, publish papers and participate in different projects. Although, her concern is closely on the development on non-formal education, the emphasis on the cultural, economic and societal changes which are most times peculiar to a people or region demand practical approaches to education, for generation of new knowledge, new opportunities and globally, international independence. To this demand, therefore, quality education entail's ability of the student to effect a viable change to the environment from what is learnt. As such, for Vyjko; "Assessment must not only measure the effects of learning of individual students but also the sum of student experiences defined in a meaningful system of 'performance indicators'.

However, practical learning is not exclusively for utility performance. It in itself consolidates what is learnt and becomes a reactor to increase the further knowledge.

SIA (2018) contends that 'practical learning allows you to learn quick adaptations needed for daily challenges and scenarios and allows you to get a better understanding of your course topic. This tend to assure adaption and retention of knowledge, as there is interaction between theoretical and practical learning. Explaining the interactive nature. SIA 92018);

Interactive education-in the form of practical learning-strengthens understanding and comprehension on a subject. While theoretical education utilizes textbooks and research papers, practical learning allow you to learn things first hand. This learning is a fundamental part of education and works incredibly well to improve a student's learning level and understanding".

Thus, practical education makes formidable the required relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge. Mandimika (2021) opines that this relationship is a combination of development of competency (theoretical), and improvement of skill and ability (practical experience). The adaptability of the two substantiates knowledge as it reflects in deliberate development actions on the environment. For Mandimika, thus;

Practical education imparts students with the knowledge to analyze theoretical knowledge and translate them into practice. Without theoretical knowledge, students cannot know what is good for them to do, and what is bad for them to do, and what they should and shouldn't do. By having a clear understanding of theoretical aspects, the student is able to create an action plan by which they can effectively use their theoretical knowledge in real life situations. And by having action plan in mind, they are able to apply the practical knowledge in the workplace, school, or college.

Mandimika's (2021) position on action plan as a kind of synergy between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge evinces are clearer notion of utility of knowledge In any case, educating, entails equipping an individual mentally and physically with the tools to attend the vagaries of human life and world. That is to say, education is a problem-solving instrument in human experience, mentally, intellectually, and experientially, and in view of attending to natural environment. A better understanding of this view is shown by Aristotle in one of his expressions about education as, 'an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity'. Prosperity and adversity which are two extremes of human phenomenal experience are by implication, products of expressions from education. In other words, it is taken that utility of proper education by nations or people brings about prosperity and also saves nations from adversity, all things being equal. The truth-values of this claim is not in question, in this write-up given contemporary multiplicity of challenges, but the concern is to establish the direct impart of education towards solving human problems.

Affirming education as an instrument of solving human problems, Summer (2019) opined that ‘education is about learning, but in fact it’s ultimately about utility’, where, ‘learning is just a means to an end, and not the most important role of our education system’. For him, the misdirection on this essence of education makes educators to in most case, focus on assessment of their expectations on students from teaching curriculum and the productivity of the students. Such situation makes, ‘students lose the best of their lives endlessly cramming for exams with information that will be of little value to them in their later life, in a zero-sum game of trying to be more successful than their classmates’. This claim occurs in life condition where best students are not always the best in overcoming life challenges. To such situation Pavel and Isak (2021) assert that; ‘education does not “automatically” produce more well-being (at least, if conventionally measured through income or gross domestic product) either for the individual or for society.’ This puts the consideration about educations ‘utility’ in occupational perspective. This perspective considers how education ought and have to be purposeful as regards solving human problems both at present and in future. Thus, Al-Shuaibu (2014) avers:

[E]ducation is the process of acquiring knowledge and information that leads to a successful future, such as having a good career, having a good status in society and having self-confidence. Education makes us view obstacles as challenges to overcome with no fear; facing new things. It is the main factor behind successful people and the merit of developed countries. Therefore, education is deemed a real success behind any future success.

The above position may be seen as overgeneralization of the essence of education, where utility exclusively qualifies education. It is certain that some individuals acquire education for its own sake and that does not deny their qualification as educated persons. However, the concern remains the impact of education on human society, which considers overcoming the challenges of human society as the essence of education. This idea reflects in the Latin perfect active of the word education which is *educare*- to train or to mold, which literally implies that education involves training or molding the mind towards a particular human need or challenges. This need was the turning point of modern philosophers that question the essence of learning. English philosopher Francis Bacon describes education that has no input in solving human problems as vanity (disease) in his *Distempers of Learning*. For him, such learning (Fantastical, Contentious and Delicate) are not only ‘prodigal ingenuity’ to human society, but also have ‘sterile results’. Hence, his assertion, ‘knowledge is power’ in his work the *Advancement of Learning* (1605). Towards education, according to him; ‘read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted... but to weight and consider’. Contradicting and confuting are aspects of learning and developing further knowledge, but Bacon’s emphasis was on ability of the mind to learn through weighing and considering human experience. Thus, science and scientific knowledge

which asserts knowledge through testing and verification remains what learning and education system should entail (*Novum Organum*, 1620). One can understand Bacon's approach to utility of education from his description of what learning seeks to achieve through environmental experience;

Those experiments be not only esteemed which have an immediate and present use, but those principally which are of most universal consequences for invention of other experiments and those which give more light to the invention of causes.

The concern here is not discredit knowledge from Arts in favor of scientific knowledge, but to establish the utility end point of education, thereby advocating for restructure of the process of learning to execute this demand. Qadir and Mengal (2018) explained the end-point demand as follows;

An important feature of utilitarian education is specialization which arises because of enormous progress and explosion of knowledge. Specialized knowledge is different from broad-based or all-round knowledge. Specialized knowledge necessitates in depth knowledge; i.e. to know more and more about less and less. On the other hand, generalist or broad-based knowledge can cover the face of the subjects which may not be useful.

In this description of utility of education and the expected process of achieving it, as well as the reviewed views of the above scholars, the central point is identifying education with its usefulness. Although the contemporary technology driven world may appreciate this apprehension of education, limiting education to utility can be weighed to have a short-term merit. However, the argument of the write-up is not towards attaining short term need of education but realizing its expected structure, which is pragmatism.

Critiques on Dewey's Pragmatism

Pragmatism as a philosophy and as an education model have been criticized from objectivist position as reductionist approach to truth, chiefly argued by Santayana (1925). Blake (2002) argued that approach to truth about life as expedient is not only unrealistic but also limiting truth to particularity of existential problems, 'which gives license to a kind of make-believe, where virtually every idea is warranted, or every expedient idea is warranted.' For him, identifying truth exclusively from expediency perspective is an outright condemnation of universal truths, upon which conservatives, religious and objective conditions of truth about human experience are found. Furthermore, from ethical perspective 'pragmatism opened the door to moral nihilism of the sort that James has identified with Nietzsche, to a kind of relativism, to a deeply dangerous, "anything goes" approach to the world'

From educational perspective, Bulle (2018) contends that being influenced by ‘research current’ in education, Dewey’s theory ‘focused on the way individuals construct their knowledge through experience, thereby subject epistemology and issues of meaning to operationalization.’ For her, the operationalization approach to meaning reflected in Dewey’s experiential descriptions in expressions like; situated cognition, radical constructivism, discovery learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning and others, which inspired reforms in Western education. In Bulle’s view, this approach to knowing (learning) brings about ‘functional separation, in the understanding of meaning, between observed or experienced phenomena and theoretical constructs’. In her view, not all concepts should undergo instrumental theory in defining experiential knowledge. In particular, not all theoretical knowledge can be descriptive, as to be assigned meaning, as expected by Dewey operationalization. As such functional separation in enquiry between observational and conceptual materials is improper. Thus, she opined that; “Knowledge develops on the reference plane, source of meaning, which is constituted by conceptual system and not by existential situations. It is thus on this plane that all scientific concepts must be defined” (p. 597).

The above critiques as well as others on the limitedness of Dewey’s pragmatism reflect assessment of knowledge from perspectives of culture, society, education and human learning. The different approaches seem to undermine the realization of objective knowledge which transcends particularities of experiences. Although these views are not in themselves holistic, this research seeks to approach Dewey’s pragmatism from its aversion to contents of determinism in knowledge and its attending barriers to contingent approach to learning. This concern is reflected in one of his quotes about learning and education; “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s we, rob them of tomorrow”. The precariousness of events and environment requires constant interrogation of experiences of what is claimed to have been known without dogmatic intervention from already established experience. Thus, for Dewey, reflection (How we Think, 1910) on experiences remains learning approach to the empirical world of experiences. Similarly, Maddox and Donnett (2015) stressed;

Reflection as a way of learning necessarily entails an instrument mode of interrogation of existing scheme of thoughts. It does not lead to new knowledge without first causing us to interrogate the strength and weakness of our preset intellectual habits. Reflection arises as a result of a perplexing situation and as such one of its dominant characteristics is that it is disconcerting.... Where old thoughts are either put to rest or rehabilitated and where certain quality of inductiveness in our experience- a sense that what we encounter in uncertain moments of existence implies more than bare perception- allows us to examine what is both sound and unsound in our current knowledge (p. 64).

The above narrative not only throws light on Dewey's pragmatic learning approach to education in a scientific world of experiences, but also hints on the required approach of practical learning in Nigerian universities as this research seeks to project. As a matter of fact, it does not deject theoretical learning, which every education process must incorporate as expressed by SIA (2018), it phenomenological interprets the expected impact of practical learning in Nigeria higher institution through the lens of Dewey's educational pragmatism.

Methodology

The research applied qualitative methodology of study. Through interpretative description (Burdine, Thorne & Sandhu, 2020) it espoused the phenomenon and impact of theory-based learning in Nigeria high institutions. Through content analysis approach, it explores John Dewey pragmatism as a philosophy of education system that can situate Nigerian tertiary students in proper learning system in the contemporary globalizing world of practical education and experience.

Educational Pragmatism Philosophy as Theoretical Framework

Analysis on Dewey's pragmatism and philosophy of education is done from his work *Democracy and Education*. Dewey clearly expressed education as necessarily useful (utilitarian), as an instrument with which humans renews their existence. For him; "while the living thing may easily be crushed by superior force; it none the less tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence. If it cannot do so, it does not just split into smaller pieces (at least in the higher forms of life), but loses its identity as a living thing". Similar to Heidegger's presentation on *Dasein*, where human is a being thrown into the world like object which its structure is disclosed to variegated experiences and which it cannot but utilize it within time. Disclosure becomes the contact point (learning) of being and its timely environment and awareness grasped from the contact ought to be used to define its existence. Similarly, Dewey presents humanity as a being which must draw the energies (learning) from experiences of the environmental world for 'continual re-adaptation of the environment to the needs of living organisms. And this for him accounts for the growth of human civilization.

In the above perception about learning, Dewey set out to critically address his philosophy on education. The on-going nature of human experience and the constant changing of human knowledge questions the philosophic approach to knowledge in terms of permanence of reality. Scientific knowledge which deals with fact about reality attends to knowledge as progressive in unravelling the changing facts about the world and developing them towards human advantage, as a goal of education. The philosophy behind education, therefore, should project progressive approach to learning on changing things. As such, 'the wholeness characteristics of philosophy is a

power to learn, or to extract meaning, from even the unpleasant vicissitudes of experience and to embody what is learned in an ability to go on learning'. (p. 178). Philosophy, etymologically is a quest/love for wisdom, and this character ought to be exemplified not in upholding of 'generalizations', 'intimateness' and 'totality', but; "thinking what the known demands of us- what responsive attitude it exacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a records of accomplished fact". Education, therefore encompasses philosophy and science in their hypothetical response attitude to particular events of human world in all ramification, a similar approach of Khun's *Paradigm Shift* to generation of knowledge in philosophy and science. In Dewey's expression; "the educational point of view enables one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice. If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, towards nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education" (p. 179). Synthesizing Dewey's philosophy on education, it will be established that education has three basic progressive functions, namely cultivation of thought (intellect), critical reflection (intelligence), and social engagement (culture). That is to say, education begins with the development of the individual and translates to the development of the society.

Cultivation of Thought: Chapter twelve of Dewey work on *Democracy and Education* deals with *Thinking in Education*. For Dewey, learning begins from practical development of good habits of thinking, and that ought to be the concern and focus of formal education. Acquisition of theoretical knowledge and even skills can be achieved without development of the ability to think, therefore making such skills and knowledge not having sense of purpose, becoming habitual actions and at worst instruments of control. For him, 'acquiring knowledge, information or skill that are severed from thoughtful action of the learner 'is dead, a mind-crushing load'. Education therefore, must be mind engaging and engagement of the mind involves promotion, improvement and testing of thinking capabilities towards a subject matter.

Thinking ability itself begins from experience, and the limitation of experience arouses thinking. This means; "that it should be suggesting something to do which is not either routine or capricious... something, in other words, presenting what is new (and hence uncertain or problematic) and yet sufficiently connected with existing habits to call out an effective response" (p. 90). That is to say thinking links the mind from what is known (facts, events, actions) to what is to be known, which inform learning as an active process of 'trying to do something and having the thing perceptibly do something to one in return.' Thus, the difficulty in clarifying the relations between the known and unknown stimulates thinking. Teaching/ instructing, then, 'lies in making the difficulty

of new problems large enough to challenge thought, and small enough so that, in addition to the confusion naturally attending the novel elements, there shall be luminous, familiar spots from which helpful suggestions may spring.' (p 91). This section espouses the leading part of thinking in the process of acquiring mind involved active learning and its dispositions towards education. The next involves the process of knowing itself.

Critical Reflection: Education is not just a cramming or memorization of theories. As it begins with identifying the limitation of particular experience which cultivates thought, the process of learning about the limitation and new knowledge, about the experience involves critical reflection. In chapter eleven, Dewey explained the relationship between experience and thinking. In education, what is experienced in learning makes a two-way movement – it does something in the learner and the learner at the same time does something with it. The example he proffered in explaining the situation is unique; “it is not experience when a child merely sticks his finger into a flame; it is experience when the movement is connected with the pain which he undergoes in consequence. Henceforth the sticking of the finger into flame means a burn. Being burned is a mere physical change, like the burning of a stick of wood, it is not perceived as a consequence of some other action.” (p. 82).

This example informs that experience without reflection on its consequences is merely an occurrence. Experience or learning evokes reflection on the nature and consequences of what is learnt (experienced). The reflection manifests in experimentation of the experience with the world to find out/ discover through instructions the connection of things. Thus, he contends that; “Two conclusions important for education follow (1) Experience is primarily an active- passive affair; it is not primarily cognitive. But (2) the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up. It includes cognition in the degree in which it is cumulative or amounts to something, or has meaning” (p. 82). In other words, critical reflection on experience brings about cognition of connections about the real world of experiences within which knowledge is gained. For Dewey, although ‘reflection is the discernment of the relation between what we try to do and what happens in consequence’ (p. 85), it is in the processes of reflection (thought/discernment) that the quality of our experience (learning) changes and ‘deliberate cultivation of this phase of thought constitutes thinking as a distinctive experience’. These features are what reflective activity demands in education and learning.

Social Engagement: Since cultivation of thought and critical reflection are not separated from experience in the process of education, social experience is inexorably not excluded from the concern of education. Hence, education is posited as a social

function. Society itself undergoes continuous change just as education is required. Education transforms individuals that make up the society into a form desirable and impactful on the social environment, where environment ‘consists of those conditions that promote or hinder, stimulate or inhibit, the characteristic activities of a living being’ (p. 11). Social environment thereby involves activities of individuals as they are dependent or affect one another as members of a group. Since social environment involves activities, actions and characters of individual, it requires a standard which can contain human differences. Established standards seeks to modify or nurture the actions of people towards proper interrelations. Education prompts the individual to question and reflectively assess conditions of human actions beyond habits. Here, there is a conscious move towards understanding and interpreting the social environment. Education, thus, seeks to simplify the complex nature of the social environment in the different school stages. The reflective process in education further seeks ‘to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon mental habitudes (p. 15). That is to say, education weeds out the trivial, undesirable and unproductive social characters for a better society, a society of reflective individuals and not that mentally ruled by conserved social limitations.

Analytical Interpretation of the Framework on the Research Questions.

Theoretical Learning in Nigerian Universities

It will be unfair to categorically state that the Nigerian tertiary institutions do not apply practical learning. However, this study’s assessment is based on global employability and ranking results noted at the introduction on the condition that contemporary global learning is critically practical oriented. Assessment is gauged on performance, and not just certificates. Thus, many Nigerian graduates come out with good results and certificates but their performance indicates a theory-based learning undergone not necessarily for and through practical utility and experience, but for certificates. This can be accessed through the teaching aid and process.

Towards teaching aid, although many institutions have banned the use of handouts in teaching, teaching materials have not visibly exceeded the use of text books and written materials. Factually, learning is organized in theories and documented in written materials but it is only a beginning of the learning process. Students are bombarded with textbooks to read and prepare for examinations with little or no engagements. They are encouraged to increase their reading culture for passing of examination (Samphina, 2022). This gesture, as a matter of fact is encouraging but the unavailability of practical learning aids limits comprehensibility, memorability and even the disposition of the students towards reading. In any case, laboratories and practical studies are majorly programmed for science students in Nigeria with little or no consideration of Arts and other specialties. Even at that, the National Association of Academic Technologists

reports devastating poor standard of laboratories in Nigerian universities (John, 2014). Not just in universities, but also in senior secondary schools (Dike & Salisu, 2015; Adeyemi, 2008) study situation which leaves the student battling to comprehend theories loaded on them from textbooks and class reading materials. Riyad et al (2020) contend that; “These sorts of learning [are] helpful for less than 1-2 months, someday you mechanically forget all the items that you learn within the past. Students don’t seem to be taking their studies seriously and finally time suggests that some day before final exams they start their studies in theoretical method”. Thus, theories are memorized for examination purposes where the contents of the theories could be meaningless to them.

Dewey suggests that learning theory is not wrong, but only must involve the cultivation of thought and subsequent experimentation. Assessing from the cultivation of thought approach to education, it is correct to be said that the Nigeria theory-based learning does not assure education and as such accounts for poor performance of graduates in the real world. Thus, the process of teaching cannot be effective when the teaching aid is inadequate. This explains why lecturers in Nigerian universities only appear to teach textbooks and not engaging the thought process of the students towards their self-cultivation of meanings, points of view and difference to established approach. In such situation, examination entails given the lecturer what his/her textbook says.

Making Nigerian Tertiary Education Productive

Here considers the nature of the teaching process on Nigerian tertiary students. It majorly demands of university board, directors and lecturers on the nature of the lecturing system. There is need for constant examination and further training of lecturers on what lecturing is required of in education. *Garbage-in-garbage-out* formula is highly unproductive in the contemporary changing and challenging world. As Al Mubarak (2022) notes; “In the face of such tremendous change, our students will need to have different skills. Hence, education will no longer just be about ‘knowing’, but will require us to focus on the development of soft skills like collaboration, communication, creative thinking, IT and flexibility”. This is needed to be initiated by lecturers even at the practical provisional lack of the government. Education and lecturing must be engaging. Columbia Centre for Teaching and learning (2022) proposed five steps that can make lecturing engaging;

- i. Begin with the end in mind; starting lectures with learning objectives.
- ii. Consider your learners and their learning (identifying what students already know and connect with them).
- iii. Break up a lecture (and take breaks), (considering the disposition of students and allowing for physical adaptability of the mental activity).

- iv. Pause for active learning (allowing for critical analysis, reflection, and recalling of what is taught).
- v. Plan for delivery (utilizing tools that will make learning practical).

Similarly, Cullen (2022) summarized eight effective ways lecturers can artfully engage the students for proper learning to take place. They include; make presentation interactive; encourage smartphone use; focus on “why”; Add in some humor; take student interest into account; work on your public speaking skills; Evaluate; Gather feedback.

What is important in these approaches is the effort to engage the mind and body of the students towards effective learning and proper education. These approaches circle around Dewey’s contentions towards education that must involve cultivation of thought, critical reflection and social engagement. Lecturers in applying these approaches evokes active thoughts of students on the subject matter, guides them through thorough reflections on the conditions and contents of the subject matter and relates such reflections on social environment. It is through such judgment of connections that educations can take place.

Industries and Private Sector Involvement

Industrial training has been in the Nigerian university curriculum and still practiced within the end of second or third year of the student’s study. However, the practice and choice of places have been at the discretion of the students, with little exception on students who study education and who must do their teaching practice in school environments. Others are left to search, canvass, solicit for and in some cases abandoned to have their industrial training anywhere within and outside their discipline. In worst case scenario, it is a time of rest for some students. The effect of these situations is more denial of practical experience of education to Nigerian students and consequently production of certified but unqualified graduates.

For Dewey education has vocational impact. The demand of education in social engagement averts any form of dualism between education and vocation. Vocation, for him, ‘means nothing but such a direction of life activities as renders them perceptibly significant to a person, because of the consequences they accomplish, and also useful to his associates’ (p. 168). In other words, the process of vocational education makes clearer to a student the end of what he/she pursues, situates him/her in the required environment, and acquaints him/her with people within the vocation. In this view, an occupation is not just a job but a continuity from the practical training ground to full practice of what has been learnt. Thus, vocational studies is not necessarily particular

kinds of courses, but it is an educational process that leads a student from the university study to the social environmental demands of his/her discipline of choice.

When education is understood from the above perspective, industries and companies becomes not just places of work but part of teaching aid to students. Thus, the Nigerian tertiary education system must establish ways of incorporating private and public establishments as part of educational process.

Increased Funding for Tertiary Institutions

Government and private sector need to scale-up the funding of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The major problem of Nigeria's tertiary education is not the curriculum but essentially funding of the institutions and building the human resource capacities that will drive the mission and vision of the institution. Therefore, adequate funding should be budgeted for education so that laboratory and other equipment will be available for hands-on learning by students.

Conclusion

Academic productivity in reshaping humanity and the environment remains the essence of education. The remarkable unemployable situation of many Nigerian graduates defies this essence in Nigeria tertiary education. Theory based education system has done Nigeria and Nigerian students little contemporary good. This study remains an expose of Dewey pragmatism as a contemporary required philosophy of education; a system where education is a direction of an individual mind and body towards renewal of the social environment. Thus, education is not limited to dogmas, theories and findings, but a continuous active engagement of mind on experiences towards exerting them to practical experience. This is what is required of education in the Nigerian tertiary institution for Nigerian students to find place in the contemporary globalized competitive world of developments.

Recommendations

- i. Education involves critical thinking. Logic and philosophical studies should be extended beyond first year general studies in Nigeria tertiary education.
- ii. There is urgent need for evaluation and further training of university lecturers in 21st century teaching methodologies and competencies.
- iii. The government needs to involve private companies and industries to support practical learning in Nigeria educational system.
- iv. There should be improved funding for research and equipment in the tertiary institutions.

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