

## HOLISTIC EDUCATION: THE KEY TO BETTER LIVING IN THE FACE OF A DELUDED SOCIETY

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### Abstract

The result-oriented education practised over the years in Nigeria has produced young people who rely completely on office work. Sad enough, even those who offered practical courses cannot contribute meaningfully to the development of Nigerian society. Nigerian educational system has thus produced graduates who see jobs as means of living rather than means of societal development. This has led to the overpopulation of job seekers, complicating the insecurity situation in the country. The Nigerian government has made some attempts to reform its education system to prepare learners to manage and develop the country for the middle industrialization economy. Such effort has failed to improve the quality of education in the country. Poverty continues to hold a grip on the country, graduates from universities have no access to jobs, and cannot create jobs themselves. Consequentially, the crime rate soars high each year. These indices suggest the effectiveness of the type of education provided by Nigerian schools. This paper advocates the need for holistic education in Nigeria, which is a functional tool for empowering youth for industrial development while at the same time developing the minds of the student for their societies. This paper adopts a qualitative study design, where information is gotten from journals, books, and internet sources. The paper, therefore, highlights some advantages of holistic education over the rote learning method that detaches students from their society. It shows that if education must be useful, then students must be trained for their respective societies rather than having one syllabus for the whole nation with different environments.

**Keywords:** *Holistic, Education, Better Living, and Deluded society*

### Introduction

Over the years, the Nigerian traditional system of education has focused on results and certificates, where success is defined by the number of credits and the class of degree a student obtained at the end of his/her study, rather than what an individual can do practically. This system of education has produced more job seekers than people who can create jobs. An average student from a Nigerian university at the end of his/her NYSC program must know how to write a job application, especially if he/she is from a poor background. This has led to a high number of unemployment in Nigeria. Today, Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest number of

unemployed youths, with millions of Nigerians living below the poverty line even though we have more universities and polytechnic institutions than many countries in Africa. The present educational system, which is more of a memory verse education (rote learning) in practice, considers successful students as ones who can recall all that the teacher taught word for word, that is why successful secondary schools are those with the highest number of credits in SSCE and NECO. Thus, Nigerian universities produce graduates who see jobs as means of survival, not as contributions to the development of society. This mentality has not only increased the level of poverty but has also contributed greatly to the high level of corruption experienced across all sectors of

Nigerian societies. Any system of education that does not cause the graduates to contribute to the community is a mere formality. In the words of Bhutan's first democratically elected Prime Minister, "...true development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each other" (Hayward, Pannozzo, and Colman, 14). It is in view of this that informed societies have realized that learners need more than just a strong foundation in a core curriculum, they also need to be supported by a community and to develop a compassionate understanding of the world around them.

The concept of whole-child development was advocated for all-over the world as a result of its impacts not only on the child but on society at large (Liew and McTigue 2). Nigeria adopted this in principle but still practices a rote learning system even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Almost all the socio-political and economic challenges faced by Nigerian society these days can be traced to the neglect or non-scientific way of handling some developmental domains of the education given to the citizenry in the past and even in the present. Social skills, according to P. Broadhead was expected to educate the child about friendship, care for others, selfless services, a sense of belonging and patriotism. But its neglect has produced Nigerians that are militants, yahoo boys, Boko haramists, kidnappers, ritualists, child traffickers, non-patriotic individuals, etc. The aim of this paper is to highlight the need for holistic education in Nigeria as the key to improved living conditions.

In Nigeria, education is viewed as a veritable yeast that ferments effective social, economic, political, cultural, and aesthetic development. Education was to produce citizens with the right skills and attitudes to move the country forward. Certainly, most leaders in Nigeria so far had acquired their leadership skills through

the educational process, even though many failed in their leadership positions (Sule,1). The Nigerian Government has made various attempts to reform its education system to prepare learners to manage and develop the country for the middle industrialization economy. Various major policies in the interest of schooling have been made such as the free Universal Primary Education of 1976 and the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The situation of Nigerian education is still in a sorry state. Surprisingly enough, some rich government officials prefer to send their children to study abroad. It is no longer news that Nigeria is arguably one of the growing countries in Africa, in terms of human and raw materials, major petroleum producers, this is to mention some. Paradoxically, most Nigerians live below the poverty line of one dollar per day. The rate of unemployment has reached unprecedented levels, and Nigerian youths are practically everywhere in the world in search of jobs thus being humiliated even in African countries. It is in this light that this paper advocates for holistic education as a means of ensuring better living in the face of the deluded Nigerian society.

### **What is Education?**

According to Plato, education is the process that urges a person to eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship and teaches him how rightly to rule and how obey, and that those who are rightly educated generally become good people (Ekeh, 414). It means those who were educated properly were expected to be good citizens. To this, we can assess how successful the Nigerian system of education has been in view of the current insecurity and corruption plaguing the country. This raises serious questions about where our leaders were educated, and whether they were properly educated. Let me also mention that every education has a purpose. Where the purpose of education is not clear, then abuse of the process

is possible. Well, what is the purpose of our educational system?

For Fafunwa, "Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives." This definition by Fafunwa links education with society. It sees education as a social institution for the transmission of worthwhile values (Ekeh 415). This implies that no educational system should overlook the norms and values of the society, but instead endeavour to inculcate them in the learners. Beautifully said as it is, how true is our system faithful to this?

O. Otite and O. Ogionwo conceive education as the process of acquiring knowledge and skills required to adapt to and exploit the social and physical environment in the process of development. Development here refers to human development in all aspects: morally, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. In this sense, education becomes a veritable instrument of individual and social empowerment and emancipation. For J. C. Aggarwal, education is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place. He is of the view that education brings about a balanced experience in society (169).

According to Hayward, most Western education initiatives today are driven by the belief that improvements in economic performance will lead to the enhancement of societal well-being. The key role of education, therefore, is to prepare students for their role and function in the economy.

### **What is Holistic Education?**

In this age of information technology and mass media, education's role is to upgrade the technical skills and proficiencies of the workforce to meet the new challenges of competition and technological innovations (Gyeltshen, 7). The focus of education now

across the world is the proper integration of affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains so that a child is prepared for everyday life. Holistic education, therefore, is a comprehensive approach to learning where educators seek to address the emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs of students in an integrated learning format. Emphasis is placed on positive school environments and providing whole-child support to students. It is an approach to education that involves educating a child so that he/she will become a well-rounded and confident adult who contributes productively to their community. Students are taught to reflect on their actions and how they impact the global and local community, as well as how to learn from the community around them. Teachers often engage students in projects that apply critical-thinking skills toward solving real-world problems. Holistic education aims for the fullest possible human development enabling a person to become the very best or finest that they can be and develop fully 'those capacities that together make up a human being' (Forbes, 2003).

A main element of holistic education is its focus on the *interconnectedness* of experience and reality. Holistic education attempts to develop a pedagogy that is interconnected and dynamic and thus is in harmony with the cosmos (Jafari, Nasrabadi, and Liaghatdar 179).

Holistic education focuses on the relationship between the whole and the part and suggests that teaching and learning approaches need to be rooted in a larger vision (Byrnes 23). It focuses on developing care for others and respect for the environment. It pays equal respect to the emotional, social and cognitive well-being of the learner. The current traditional system of result-oriented education only produces job seekers, and this has led us to where we are today.

Holistic education is a kind of learning which provides value education. This has been worldwide appreciated as an answer to the challenges of strengthening the moral and social fabric of nations (Mkulu 178). World Learners are guided for self-development, and self-reliance so that values become a part of their character. Holistic education is generally designed to bring about industrial development which in turn is a key player in economic development (John 350). In this case, graduates see themselves as employers rather than employees.

Holistic Education is a technique which focuses on preparing learners to meet any challenges they may face in life and their academic career (Mkulu 178). The most crucial theories behind holistic education are learning about oneself, developing healthy relationships and positive social behaviours. Holistic Education provides information and skills to the youths, as well as influences the personality of the youth of a nation to be critical and productive.

The most important theories behind holistic education are learning about oneself, developing healthy relationships and positive social behaviours, social and emotional development, resilience, and the ability to view beauty, and experience transcendence and truth (Mkulu 178). Holistic education notes that youths need not only to develop mentally, but also progress in skills as capability to endure in the contemporary world and to transform their society, or where ever they will be after graduating from their studies.

John examined holistic education focusing mainly on the principles of a holistic approach to education in the USA (246). The findings demonstrated that the characteristics of holistic education; nurture the development of the whole person, It revolves around relationships. It is concerned with life experiences (instead of “basic skills”), It “recognizes that cultures are

created by people and can be changed by people” (instead of conforming and replicating an established culture), it is founded upon a “deep reverence for life and for the unknown (and never fully knowable) source of life.

In Nigeria, Kaigama and Audu consider holistic education as a needful system of education in conflict-affected places (25). The study findings show that in holistic education, the teacher is seen less as a person of authority who leads and controls but rather is seen as an acquaintance, an adviser, a spur, or an experienced travelling companion. These findings contradicted the findings of (Hagedoorn and Mpehongwa, 2094) who asserted that holistic education would create the youth to become the core of a nation. Youths are a crucial tool that would boost the transformation of the national economy. Universities stand at the top of the education system as a place for the pursuit and dissemination of information, skills, good behaviour, and values. Education is the pillar of national growth (Neamtu, 119). No nation can attain sustainable industrial development without investing heavily in human capital that is the youth (Ankeli, 25).

Holistic education is the schooling that focused on moulding the whole person by imparting knowledge, and skills, changing the learner to become a critical thinker, problem solver, and job creator and not a job seeker. Holistic Education is the learning which provides knowledge, and information, and builds the character of human beings by having a set of philosophies and ideals (Mkulu 178). It provides value education which has been worldwide apparent as an answer to the challenge of strengthening the moral and social fabric of nations which is missing (UNESCO). Learners are guided for self-development and self-reliance so that values become a part of their character, (Ahmad, Krogh, Gjotterud, 6).

## **How Holistic Education Can Help Young People to Live Better Life in Nigeria**

Young people are energetic consciences of the dynamic globe, drivers of social change, and harmony in any progressive nation, for this reason, youths ought to be flexible and tolerant enough to be well knowledgeable, equipped and mentored by victorious professionals with adequate learning (Mkulu 177). Holistic education is based on a learning philosophy that brings several benefits to students, teachers, schools, and communities. Learners should be empowered to improve their educational outcomes and gain the life skills necessary to take on a successful professional career. Every learner is unique. He or she has unique personality traits, interests, preferences, values, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses (Sarkar 1). The educational curriculum must be able to help every child find his or her unique place in the world in alignment with the uniqueness that he or she has. To achieve this, the holistic development of a child is of utmost importance.

**Improved Academic Achievement:** Holistic education can improve the academic achievements of all learners, regardless of background and circumstances, by catering to individual learning styles and providing a supportive learning environment. Children's brain capacities are increased when they feel physically and emotionally safe and connected to others. Attention is given to the development of abstract thinking abilities, understanding and thinking about concepts, ideas, principles, and objects which are non-verbal or not physically present. Learners become critical thinkers, and problem solvers rather than dependent on others. Learners consider new ways of handling challenges rather than living a life of complaining.

**Enhanced Mental and Emotional Well-Being:** In a supportive environment, where social and emotional learning is emphasized

along with academics, students have a better chance of emerging with self-awareness, confidence, and a sense of social responsibility. Attention is given to the development of intra-personal abilities, which involves self-understanding (understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses, one's capabilities, etc.) and self-belief (Sarkar 2).

**Increased Problem-Solving Ability:** Students who are tasked with solving real-world problems that exist in their communities emerge with strong critical-thinking skills. These hands-on projects give students skills that will apply to their adult careers, such as how to gather, analyze, and report data and how to collaborate with others. Such training makes children see themselves as game players in the society they live. They become vanguards of the development and security of public properties.

**Reduced Impact of Inequities:** By emphasizing integrated learning concepts, the whole-child approach to education has been shown to reduce the psychological impact of issues such as violence, abuse, or poverty on academic achievement, according to the Learning Policy Institute.

**Reduction of dependence on office work:** Since the total person is developed in this system, every child will realize that he/she can do something for himself, which will in turn develop society. **Educators and counsellors in holistic growth aim to help develop every child's capabilities.** A comparative analysis and its results along with relevant readings are used to explain how the traits of the child and aspects of his/her environment may interact to influence his/her growth and development.

Holistic education is an alternative way of both teaching and learning. It looks at the whole student and their life experiences. It connects the different school subjects to teach them in



the context of each other. The student takes more responsibility for their learning in this type of education. Supporters say such a method of education rejects rote learning to help the student build critical thinking and teamwork skills while developing greater self-confidence.

## Conclusion

I recommended that holistic education should start from the lower level of education and parents and teachers being the first teachers should assist the pupils to learn and recognize how to be able to do what they want in life. For us to be able to provide education that addresses society's needs, we must consider holistic education, where the domains of learning are effectively developed, and learners are tasked with improving their societies. We will then become critical thinkers and problem solvers.

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