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NIGERIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION - AN INSTRUMENT OF FREEDOM FROM PAULO FREIRE'S PERSPECTIVE: MYTH OR REALITY?

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Abstract

The study was based on the examination of Nigetrian secondary education as an instrument of freedom, from Paulo Freire's perspective. A descriptive survey was adopted as the design to investigate whether secondary education system in Nigeria can really serve as an instrument of freedom. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 597 respondents. A self-designed questionnaire by the researcher was used and entitled Secondary Education an Instrument of Freedom (SEINF), with 0.71 validity and 0.82 obtained as reliability index for the instrument used. Descriptive and inferential statistical tool was used to answer the question and hypothesis raised. The findings revealed that secondary education failed to serve as an instrument of freedom to its graduates. Thus, it was recommended that secondary education should be designed to be problem-solving in nature and curriculum to avoid bank deposition of knowledge by the teachers.

Keywords: Secondary Education, Freedom, Paulo Freire, Myth, Reality, Teacher and Parents

Introduction

Secondary education is of six-year duration and given in two stages, junior and senior levels of three years each. Secondary education completes the provision of basic education that began at the primary level and aims at laying the foundations for lifelong learning and human development, by offering more subject- or skill-oriented instruction. Unlike many former British colonies, Nigeria began to make significant changes to its educational system in the 1980s, especially at the secondary school level. In the old system, mirroring the British model, students received a Junior Secondary School Certificate after completion of nine years of education. Students continued to senior secondary school where they sat for an external examination leading to a School Certificate (sometimes referred to as the West African School Certificate) or the National Examinations Council is an examination body in Nigeria that conducts the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination and the General Certificate in Education in June/July and November/December respectively after completing 11 years of education.

According to Fafunwa (2004) education as 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 value to the society in which he lives. An analysis of definitions of education has revealed that education is a process that intentionally transmits what is considered by society to be valuable intelligently and voluntarily. It is to this end that secondary education in Nigeria, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004) is geared towards Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and appreciate those values specified under our broad national aims, and live as good citizens among others. Thus, leading to the production of *freedom* the Nigerian.

Freedom is a concept reflecting the belief that all individuals have the right to direct their own lives. Students who have self-determination skills have a stronger chance of being successful in making the transition to adulthood, including employment and independence (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). In Nigeria today secondary education is failing in its mandate of training the students for *freedom*, rather students are considered as bank deposits (that is a dumping center) where the teacher only dump information and student must take to it dogmatically. This is due to the pedagogy adopted by the education system itself.

According to Freire, pedagogy is not a method or an a priori technique to be imposed on all students but a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enable students to explore the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy. Critical thinking for Freire was not an object lesson in test-taking, but a tool for self-determination and civic engagement. For Freire, critical

thinking was not about the task of simply reproducing the past and understanding the present. On the contrary, it was about offering a way of thinking beyond the present, soaring beyond the immediate confines of one's experiences, entering into a critical dialogue with history, and imagining a future that would not merely reproduce the present. Thus, he rejects the teacher-student dichotomy, suggesting that a deep reciprocity be inserted into an individual notion of teacher-student and student-teacher relationships. Educational freedom in an ideal world, every child would have access to the education that's right for him or her. All parents would be able to choose from a diversity of high-quality options regardless of their means. Parents and educators would harmoniously spend their time and energy on providing the best possible education. Educators would be responsive to parents and employ sound pedagogical practices.

Moreover, teaching a prescribed "core knowledge" instills a culture of conformity, boring and passive absorption of carefully selected knowledge among young people. It doesn't encourage students to think critically about society – nor does it fire a desire to challenge the views they are taught. Schools that adopt this method become nothing more than pipelines producing robotic citizens, perpetuating the vision of capitalist society and consequently preventing social mobility.

Social stagnation through education is epitomized by the recent influx of Teach First practitioners. The narcissistic notion that we can help underprivileged students by providing them with teachers who are privileged young graduates from elite institutions is a mistake. This outlook pays no attention to – and fails to value – the backgrounds and identities of the students it intends to save. Rather it continues the problem by trying to inflict the values and beliefs of the dominant social class on others. Students need the freedom and encouragement to determine and discover who they are and to understand that the system shouldn't define them – but rather give them the freedom of skills, knowledge, career, beliefs, and so on to understand that they can set the agenda for themselves after secondary education.

Theoretical Framework

Banking Model of Nigerian Secondary Education according to Freire

Freire was one of the most radical insistent educational thinkers of his time. Freire believed education could not be divorced from politics; the act of teaching and learning are considered political acts in and of themselves. Freire defined this connection as the main tenet of critical pedagogy. Teachers and students must be made aware of the politics that surround education. He proposed his educational theory for society. His argument was for an educational system that focused on creative learning and Freedom. Freire's method was known as "the problem-posing" concept. This would allow students and teachers to communicate through dialogue while both are equally responsible in the learning process. Freire's assessment of education did not support a system that mechanically deposited and reproduced pre-selected information with no communication or dialogue from the student. He feared this would manage and oppress society. This method was known as the "banking" concept.

Freire is indeed correct that the banking model is demoralizing to both the teacher and the student, and does a tremendous disservice in the task of getting the student prepared to engage in the world. "The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to 'fill' the students with the content of his narration contents which are detached from reality thus, denying them access to freedom, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance.

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level (secondary education inclusive) in Nigeria, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. The relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). Narration with the teacher in Nigerian secondary schools as the narrator leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse still, it

turns secondary school students into 'containers', into receptacles to be filled by their teachers. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. Education through the school and secondary level in Nigeria becomes an act of depositing facts and figures, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and 'makes deposits' which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat. This is the 'banking' concept of education existing in Nigerian secondary school, in which the scope of action allowed to the students only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, and have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who have filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, [people] cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

Statement of the Problem

Freedom as seen by Freire has been far from the students and to date, it seems the process has not eluded the teacher's mind as he always sees the student as the tabula rasa. To the teacher as opined by Freire, the student is a bank where teaching is been deposited and withdrawn on demand by either test or examination. An individual needs no researcher to tell him/her that several secondary school leavers in Nigerian society today are not qualified for any meaning job in the labour market. Again, coupled with overconcentration on the issue of a certificate in Nigeria, the populist is left with no choice than to oblige with the trend by going to school against their wishes to meet up with the trend. Waking the children early to go to school or taking them to go and stay in boarding schools is an oppression, giving some of them admission against the courses of their choice is another way of oppressing them and since the country cannot allow them to do what pleases or interests them, they comply with the moving trend and many other things.

According to Osokoya (1987), the findings of different educational commissions in Nigeria, together with the contributions of several Nigerian academics and educationists highlighted the weaknesses of the old educational system as being too academic, theoretical, inadequate and unsuitable for providing an overall development of Nigerians. Hence, there was agitation for a re-evaluation of the old system and a desire or dire need for a national policy on education.

It was an attempt to meet this demand and the 1979 Constitution which brought presidential systems of government that gave birth to the 1981 revised edition of the National Policy on Education. The five main objectives of the philosophy of Nigerian education, as stated in the policy document (1981:7) revised edition are the building of:

- i. A free and democratic society;
- ii. A just and egalitarian society;
- iii. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- iv. A great and dynamic economy
- v. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

The above objectives seem to have a symbiotic relationship in the light of contemporary socio-economic and political trends in Nigeria. However, till date, these objectives are not or have not been achieved as we have many jobless graduates who cannot provide jobs for themselves, roaming the street, riding *okadas*, serving as sales boys/girls in shops, hawking on the streets, etcetera and not been able to provide for themselves not to talk of providing for others hence the need for this study secondary education as an instrument of freedom: upper basic and senior teachers' assessment

Purpose of the Study

The study examined teachers' assessment of Nigeria secondary education as an agent of freedom to the students following Paulo Freire's perspective. Specifically, the study:

- Investigated teachers' assessment of secondary education as an instrument of *freedom* for students in society.
- Whether both the upper basic and senior school teachers differ in their assessment of secondary education as an instrument of *freedom* for students in society.

Research Question

- What is the assessment of upper basic and senior school teachers on secondary education as an instrument of freedom in society?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the assessment of upper basic and senior school teachers' of secondary education as an instrument of *freedom*.

Methodology

This research was a descriptive research method of survey type. The population of the study comprised of all the teachers in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state while the target population was only upper basic and senior secondary public school teachers in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state. There are 192 public middle basic and senior secondary school in Ilorin metropolis with a total teacher population of 11,271 teachers, out of which 47 public upper basic and senior secondary school was purposively sampled for the study. Teachers in these sample schools are 2820 teachers, out of which 597 school teachers were randomly selected. This is in line with the Research Advisors (2006) who maintained that the best sample selection for a population of 2500 – 3500 at the margin of error 3.5% is 597. A 9-items two-scale researcher designed a questionnaire entitled "*Secondary Education an instrument of self-determination*" with psychometric properties of content validity of 0.71 and a reliability index of 0.82 after test-retest reliability was adopted to elicit the needed data in the study. Mean rating, percentage, and t-test were the statistical tools used to answer the research questions raised and test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level respectively.

Result

Research Question One: What is the assessment of upper basic and senior school teachers on secondary education as an instrument of freedom in society?

Table 1: Teachers Assessment of Secondary Education as An Agent of Freedom

S/ N	Items	Yes	%	No	%	Remarks
1	Secondary education is capable of developing in learners the creative skills needed for freedom	141	46	456	76	5 th
2	Is secondary education in Nigerian society adequately preparing students for <i>freedom</i> to be able to fit into society?	201	34	396	66	7 th
3	Do you see the curriculum contents of secondary education in Nigeria had the capacity to instill the skills needed to develop <i>freedom</i> ?	186	31	411	69	6 th
4	Does secondary education rightly place its' graduates in society?	215	36	382	64	8 th
5	Are secondary schools adopting appropriate teaching strategies that students need to be <i>freedom</i> ?	107	18	490	82	1 st

6	Does secondary education in Nigeria today truly make students employers of labour?	114	19	483	81	3 rd
7	Does secondary education really teach the students what they want to learn?	110	18	487	82	1 st
8	Does secondary education allow the students to choose what they want to learn?	218	37	379	63	9 th
9	Do you see secondary education in Nigeria today emphasizing the only certificate over knowledge and skills?	128	21	469	79	4 th

Not an Instrument of Freedom = 00 – 49%,

Instrument of Freedom = 50 – 100%

Table 1 revealed that secondary education in Nigerian public schools today failed in its function of training students for the development of freedom needed to survive in society.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the assessment of upper basic and senior school teachers' of secondary education as an instrument of freedom.

Table 2: Independent t-Test on Difference in Teachers' assessment

<i>School type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Upper Basic	203	14.88	3.58	0.29	595	0.78	NS
Senior school	394	12.89	1.59				

Results in Table 2 revealed that t-value of 0.29 and p-value of 0.78 which is greater than 0.05 ($0.78 > 0.05$). Since 0.78 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not accepted. This implies that both the teachers at the upper basic as well as those at the senior school do not differ in their assessment of secondary education as an instrument of freedom.

Discussion of Findings

It was revealed from the findings of the study that secondary education has not been able to set students free to be able to develop or discover themselves in society. thus, allowing them to be roaming streets with nothing to do after school, still depending on their parents for everything in life even food to eat and clothing is evident among these deficient issues that make the researcher see school as a not providing freedom for students. This is in tandem with Freire's perspective in his book (pedagogy of the oppressed) where he sees education as an instrument of oppression of the poor and not an instrument of freedom where he stated that the teacher sees the students as depositories while they (teachers) are depositors and forced them to learn what they taught them whether it is convenient for them or not. He reiterated that teachers (oppressors/depositors) uses different approaches and concepts like conquest, manipulation, divide and rule and cultural invasion (banking education) to ensure the students are conquered and Freire suggested that problem-posing education as the best way and since they (students) don't have vocational skill, cannot be self-employed and cannot do things on their own except they depend on their parents schooling is not freedom for education.

The result of this study also showed that there was no significant difference in teachers' assessment towards the use of education as an instrument of freedom based on the school. This means that upper basic and senior school teachers have the same assessment that schooling cannot be used as an instrument of freedom. This result is possible where the teachers, irrespective of school, are knowledgeable about the extent education can go in liberating students. This result supported the earlier finding of Edu, Edu and Kalu (2012) who found that there was no significant influence of gender on teachers' perceptions about educational issues and concepts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study and the dictums of Paulo Freire in his book, it can be concluded that the secondary education in Nigeria context has not been able to prepare its graduates for freedom after school. Also, the teachers' assessment of secondary education as an instrument of freedom does not depend on school types (upper basic or senior school). Thus, Freire wants the individual to form himself or be involved in his formation process rather than been formed. In essence, secondary education in Nigeria is as an instrument of freedom is a myth rather than reality.

Recommendations

In light of the findings in this study, it was recommended that secondary education should be designed to be creative and problem-solving in nature so as to avoid bank deposition of knowledge by the teachers.

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'BOKO HARAM' AND PERCEIVED EVILS IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: A STIMULUS FOR ETHICAL REFORMS

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Abstract

The philosophy of the Boko Haram sect has monumentally distorted educational activities in North-Eastern Nigeria and other parts of the Lake Chad region. However, it is generally accepted that aside the use of military weaponry, the war against the sect can also be tackled from other non-confrontational approaches. As an approach to resolving the social and educational crises created by