

UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.6;
https://unijerps.org
2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. January-June, 2021
Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363

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DEWEY'S PRAGMATIC EDUCATION AND NIGERIA'S EDUCATION PRACTICE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of Dewey's pragmatic and Nigeria's education practice; it summerised that Dewey's pragmatic education of the 20th century which has liberated men and introduced educators to a workability of educational ideas against the Nigerian practice which places so much emphasis on certification that has made the educational sector to produce half-baked graduate until the recent shift in the paradigm where recession forced the average Nigerian to do a reflective thinking on how to apply what been taught to practical situation.The paper employs multidimensional approaches, such as; analysis, critique and reconstruction to explore the Dewey's pragmatic education and Nigeria's educational practice: shortcoming and challenges.The paper discovered that a proper understanding of John Dewey's pragmatic is required in the implementation of Nigeria's educational practice in these ongoing technological innovations. The paper identified some of the challenges to include frequent strikes staged by students, faculty and teachers. Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded. These results in shortages of material and human resources for education: lack of qualified teachers; a brain drain from the public sector; few instructional inputs, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems and its prospect lie in the fact that recession has provoked the mind of the average Nigerian to be reflective in his or her thought; making the average Nigerian pragmatic. This paper recommends that the first step to make the Nigerian educational practice work is to base it on what the child can do and not what the policy demanded.

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Keywords*: Dewey, Pragmatic Education, Education Practice, and Innovations*

Introduction

Dewey's pragmatic education of the 20th century has liberated men and introduced educators to a workability of educational ideas just like the assertion of Ekefre, Ekanem & Esien (2014) that biblically, it is established that the people perished for lack of knowledge, but Socrates in order to help humanity escape this calamity, inspires men to strive for knowledge, since according to him,'knowledge is a virtue, while ignorance is a vice'. It is on the basis of this that education can be seen as a veritable tool towards curbing the menace of ignorance in the Nigerian educational philosophy. By implication, it is a good knowledge of a given phenomenon that enables one to be proficient in handling a task. As such; a proper understanding of John Dewey's pragmatic is required in the implementation of Nigeria's educational practice in these ongoing technological innovations.

It is a well-articulated fact in the argument of Udoighwomen and Ihuah (2011) that reality according to pragmatism, is the sum total of what one experiences, hence the maxim, man is the measure of all things. Here, knowledge is essentially direct, concrete, and whatever 'works best'. The main thrust of this theory is to emphasize the workability of educational ideas and philosophy in the ever-changing world of science and technology especially in our present epochwhere the world has become a global village through various networks. By implication, pragmatism is the school of philosophy which held that the meaning and value of ideas could be found only in the practical results of these ideas. The first question that comes to the mind of the typical Nigerian in discussion of John Dewey's pragmatic and Nigeria's education practice are: what is actually Dewey's pragmatic education? What type of education does Nigeria practice in her educational system? What is the relevance of Dewey's pragmatic education to the Nigeria's education practice and Nigerian society? What are the challenges and prospects of Dewey's pragmatic in the Nigeria educational system and the society at large? The answers to these questions form the aim of this paper which is presented below.

Statement of Problem

Though Dewey's pragmatic education of the 20th century has liberated men and introduced educators to a workability of educational ideas, yet its application has not been seen in the Nigerian educational system. Nigeria as a nation right from its inception that is, amalgamation of 1914 to till the time of her independence in 1960 had tailored her educational system around paper achievement and not the child could offer the society. This paper is therefore an examination of Dewey's pragmatic education and it could be applied and manage its shortcomings in the Nigerian society.

Purpose of the Study

The main thrust of this paper is to examine Dewey's pragmatic education and Nigeria's educational practice: prospects and challenges. It seeks to criticize and reconstruct areas in which the Nigerian educational system has not applied the knowledge of Dewey's pragmatic education to the problem of the average graduate seeking for white collar jobs.

Basic Assumptions

1. This paper would redirect the course of education in Nigeria from emphasis on paper to what the child could offer in the Nigerian society.
2. This would disabuse the mindset of the average Nigerian graduate of white collar jobs to think more of pragmatic that is applying educational ideas to create job for him/herself in the society.

Methodology

The paper employs multidimensional approaches, such as; analysis, critique and reconstruction to explore the Dewey's pragmatic education and Nigeria's educational practice: shortcoming and challenges. Analysis was adopted to break down the concept of education and Dewey's pragmatic education, critique was adopted to criticize Nigeria's educational practice, and reconstruction was employed to bring together aspects of Dewey's pragmatic education and relevant aspects of Nigeria's educational practice to make it work.

An Overview of John Dewey's Pragmatic Education

Antecedents of pragmatism show that the word was derived from the Greek word 'pragma' which means action. Udoighwomen and Ihuah (2011)

submitted that the words 'practice and practical' were derived from pragma. It is believed that Charles Peirce was the first to coin and introduced it into philosophy in 1878. Pragmatism is known by various names, such as; instrumentalism, functionalism and experimentalism. The basic principle of pragmatism according to Pierce is to designate a theory, idea or method of ascertaining the meaning of hard words and abstract conceptions. The implication of this is that pragmatism maintains that for a theory or an idea to be true or meaningful, it should have 'cash value' and practical relevance, which are useful in solving problems of human experience with beneficial consequences. It is also a theory of meaning and truth. Akinsanya (2015) shares this view when he argued that the word 'pragmatism' was coined from the works of Charles Sander Peirce (1839-1914) which means workability. Pragmatism is way of life meant to achieve a practical application of received knowledge. It is a rule for determining the meaning of ideas. Peirce maintained that in order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception, one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception, and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception. It could be deduced from this assertion that a given idea or theory is only useful as far as it would be able to solve identified problem in the human society because humanity is synonymous with problems.

The understanding of the above stated fact raises the question: what then is Dewey's pragmatic in education? Dewey who was born in 1859 Burlington, Vermont, was revered for his works which received wide acceptance across the globe in the twentieth century. He was regarded as a genius. Before his death in 1952, he had written over forty books and seven hundred articles on education, philosophy, politics, ethics, psychology, biology, theology, and virtually, all aspects of life. The fire that kindled this interest in his bone rests on the fact that Dewey operated with the conviction that philosophy makes no meaning outside education. For him, philosophy and education are two sides of the same coin; they are intertwined to the extent that education becomes philosophy, while philosophy is taken as education (Akinsanya, 2014). Education in Dewey's thought is a way of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual

and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men . . .It is a process of gaining or constructing or constituting some experiences; it is also a process of reconstructing or reconstituting such experiences as time passes by. This suggests that education is the process by which a child cultivates and develops positive attitudes which are essential for living toward and man, and how these cultivated positive attitudes could be manipulated to better his life and the society which man finds himself in the process of time.

McCaffrey (2012) argued that Dewey is often described as a pragmatist or as an instrumentalist, depending upon whom you ask. Dewey believes that knowledge is ultimately worthless in and of itself, and that its value is derived from its ability to empower one over their environment, i.e. in lived experience. The philosopher Sidney Hook succinctly explains that pragmatism is primarily an extension of the logic and ethics of scientific inquiry; suggesting that experience comes before theory, and that the latter is based on the former. But while experience must come first, it alone does not provide answers. Rather, experience must be critically examined in order to be fruitful. Dewey describes himself as an instrumentalist instead of a pragmatist in order to emphasize his belief that theory, and thought in general, is only of instrumental use and therefore should not be valued in its own right. He asserts that the function of theorization and knowledge is to effectively bridge the gap that exists between professed theory and actual practices. As an instrumentalist, Dewey is also a pragmatist by definition, but as was mentioned, there are various, sometimes conflicting, formulations of pragmatism. However, most of these models share a handful of commitments, and we will now examine several of them.

First among these similarities, pragmatists tend to place great emphasis upon action and experience. But despite the emphasis on action, pragmatists are not necessarily committed to hold a sharp dichotomy between theory and practice. So love elaborate on the way in which pragmatists tend to conceptualize the theory/practice dichotomy: Under the traditional model of the theory/practice relationship, philosophical theory is seen as a foundation for practice. One should learn the theory and then put it into practice. But pragmatists, such as Dewey, never expected theory to guide

practice in this way and never pretended that practice was independent of theory. Rather than embrace this dualism, the classical pragmatists sought to make practice more intelligent and more critical, in part by recognizing its theoretical dimension. Theory influences practice, so it should not be considered in total isolation. However, it is wrong to say that theory came first because theories are formed by reflecting on experience. Critically formed theories help people to act more intelligently in the future, increasing the odds that their goals will be actualized. While pragmatists such as John Dewey do not entirely distinguish theory from practice, they tend to draw a distinction between intelligent and unintelligent actions. Intelligent action is obviously superior to unintelligent/uninformed actions, but it is only possible when theory is allowed to influence practice (McCaffrey, 2012). It could be adduced from this submission that Dewey's pragmatic is rooted in workability of any educational idea in a given society to solve problem. Therefore, theory and practice in education is seen in Dewey's thought as a whole process of education which works hand-in-hand.

The Nigerian Educational System and Its Practices

Education is a veritable tool for the growth and development of any country; hence there is a need for a country's education system to be given that undivided attention. Education is a concept that is conceived in diverse ways thus we shall be examining a few. From a formal perspective, Uduigwomen (2011) opined that we usually think of education and the educative process in terms of schools and institutions devoted to learning and acquiring worthwhile skills and techniques of life. Education is also considered as a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude. This portrays an individual as civilized, refined, cultured and educated. For a civilized and socialized society, education is the only means. This is why every society gives importance to education because it is a remedy or cure for all evils. It is the key to solve the various problems of life. Education as the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitude in its cultural setting and heritage in order to continuously foster

the well-being of mankind. This implies that education serves as a provision of equipping an individual with the tools (awareness, knowledge and skills) in improving oneself and that of his society.Education is the all-round development of a person physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually; in essence, this definition describes education from a holistic angle which means that the individual is encouraged to participate in the activities of the social group, however, this individual is expected to have a guide that can direct the kind of education as explained above in order to be able to achieve an all-round development of the individual. From the foregoing, education can simply be defined as a life-long process through which individuals acquire the relevant skills and knowledge which enable them to be useful to themselves and the society. Uduigwomen (2011) argues that education is the development of man in all spheres or dimensions of life. This means that for one to be considered advanced, there is a need to acquire education so as to be able to withstand individual and societal challenges.

In order to achieve the goal of the development of the total man in the Nigerian society, the responsibility for educational institutions is shared between the Federal, State, the local government, communities, and private organizations.The educational policy in Nigeria is based on the National Policy on Education (NPE) hence; the National Policy on Education in Nigeria was launched in 1977. The aim of this policy is geared towards self-realization, individual and national efficiency, national unity etc. and achieving social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological development. In 1985, the objectives of the policy were broadened to include free primary education among others. The National education policy in Nigeria is aimed at using education as a vehicle in achieving national development and education is viewed as an instrument of change. In Nigeria educational policy has been a product of evolution through series of historical developments. As noted by Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (2006), this policy has been reviewed from time to time.Until 1984, the structure of Nigeria education system was six years of primary school, five to seven years of post-primary schools (Secondary, Teacher Training College and sixth form) and four to six years of tertiary education (College of education,

polytechnics, College of Technology and University education). From 1985, the structure that emanated can be classified thus, pre-primary or kindergarten education, for the children of ages 3 to5 years the primary school which is of six years period for children of ages 6 to 11 years, the post primary education which is of 6 years duration but divided into two halves (3 years of Junior Secondary School and 3 years of Senior Secondary School) and the 4 to 6 of tertiary education level. This is called the 6-3-3-4 system. Since the inception of the Obasanjo administration in 1999, a Universal Basic Education Scheme was launched in 1999. The specific targets of the scheme are; total eradication of illiteracy by the year 2010 and increase in adult literacy rate from 57% to 70% by 2003 (FRN, 2000).

It is quite evident that over the years, there has been a persistent decline in the Nigerian education system. Oyebamiji and Omordu (2011) noted that every nation should have some development strategies. These strategies are what should be reflected in the education system through its curriculum. However, the development of any nation is tied to the educational system in place, not of natural resources but first and foremost of human resources of the nation. Thus, education is inseparable from the needs and development of every nation. Oyebamiji and Omordu (2011) gave a vivid instance about the Nigerian system of education being divorced from the needs of the Nigerian society. The courses offered in the nation's universities in most cases are irrelevant to societal needs, while the more relevant ones are not taken seriously. A situation where a country is faced with the problem of food security and yet, the number of students admitted to study agriculture and agro-allied courses are on yearly basis far less than the number required shows the lack of planning for manpower requirement in that economy.

Another dimension of this problem reveals the lack of interest or inability of the graduates to use the knowledge acquired from school to solve the immediate problem of the society. They rather prefer executive offices to field work. The manpower requirement of the Nigerian society is in every respect divorced from the choice of university courses available and offered. Consequently, Nigeria still looks up to the developed countries for her manpower needs. There are a lot of ideologies on how to improve effective

teaching and learning process hence, if the Nigerian educational system can be pragmatic in nature, there is no doubt that the rate of effective teaching and learning would be greatly improved upon. According to World Bank (1999), successful development entails more than investing in physical capital, or closing the gap in capital. It also entails acquiring and using knowledge as well as closing the gaps in knowledge. This is why pragmatists are more preoccupied with results rather than the means. They are of the view that anything that can be seen, felt and touched provides a memorable experience on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the learner. For instance, in a situation where a teacher is passing an instruction related to the concept of national symbols, he can simply bring some of those symbols like the national maze, national passport, coat of arms etc. to the classroom or organize an excursion to a national museum where they can see, touch and feel these symbols. This would go a long way to having a formative image on their cognitive domain compared to if they are being taught verbally without pictures or going on excursions. Thus,Nigerian education should be tailored towards meeting societal needs, learning by doing, it should be a life-long education and teaching should be related to learners' interests.

Challenges and Prospects of Dewey's Pragmatic in the Nigeria Educational System

We have argued above that the Nigerian educational practice is not tailored toward the application of what has been studied or learnt in the classroom especially the higher education which supposed to be the producer of manpower needed for the development and growth of a given nation. As a result the average Nigerian graduate only have the picture of already furnished executive office where him or her could be just signing documents at the end of the month receive fat salary, and at the end of the day if he does not find such a job, him or she is handicap because he cannot put what has be learnt into work to generate income for him or herself, not to talk of solving societal problems. The challenge here is that the Nigerian educational practice places so much emphasis on certification and therefore make several subjects compulsory, such educational practice would not be able to produce graduate that can be useful to his or herself not to talk of the society because the educational system is not

tailored toward what the child can do but what the government wants in order to put the masses under perpetual bondage, and as such; the average Nigerian can go any length to acquire the certificate instead of aiming at acquiring the knowledge that would make him or her a useful citizen that would be able to solve his or her problem and the one of the society.

The challenges of Dewey's pragmatism in Nigerian educational practice could be seen in the submission put forward by Moja (2000) that over the past decade, Nigeria has been plagued by frequent political unrest. This political instability has generated negative effects on the education system. Although education had been in crisis for many years, the situation has recently been made worse by frequent strikes staged by students, faculty and teachers. Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded. These results in shortages of material and human resources for education: lack of qualified teachers; a brain drain from the public sector; few instructional inputs, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems. These difficulties have been most pronounced at the foundation levels of education. Both primary and secondary school levels have been negatively affected. In 1997 the Federal Minister of Education, following a nation-wide tour of the schools, stated that the basic infrastructure in schools such as classrooms, laboratories, workshops, sporting facilities, equipment, libraries were in a state of total decay. The physical condition of most schools was reported to be pathetic. A critical examination of this submission revealed that there is poor funding of the educational system; it is because up till now government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been unable to meet the benchmark of 26 per cent of total budget allocation to education as recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), but rather use 25 percent to finance the legislative which wrecking this nation; this is strongly associated with corruption. Nigerians are very at learning but incapable of putting into practice what has been learnt.

Another vital thing in the submission above is the movement of our intellectuals toward greener pasture which is called brain drain. This is applicable in every sector as Suleiman (2015) asserts that brain drain is a very serious issue in Nigeria. The reasons

why some Nigerian academia run overseas have a lot to do with inadequate incentives for research and other conditions of service. The research agenda of advanced countries dominate world research. Many scientists and scholars from the developing countries are educated in the advanced industrialized nations and maintain ties with their metropolitan centers. These factors necessarily tie Third World nations into the international knowledge system and make them dependent, to a significant extent, on what is referred to as 'imported knowledge'. Research and Development is useful only to the extent that the product has sufficient local contents that make it beneficial to the immediate society. For Research and Development (R&D) to flourish, human resource is a very fundamental requirement. Many researchers in the diaspora sometimes serve as consultants in their home countries, since they constantly visit their homes. Therefore, plans on R&D must consider the interest of the scientists in the diaspora. Industrialized countries are in the habit of relaxing their immigration rules for the diaspora scientists, especially those that possess skills and qualifications that are in high demands in the countries where they have chosen to reside. These peripatetic professionals are an increasingly important part of the international flow of knowledge. Factors that determine the decisions of scientists to remain abroad include among others, professional opportunities, family ties, chances for high incomes, availability of scientific equipment and laboratories, political tensions and immigration rules. The relevance of the discussions on these factors as they affect research and development is that it is capable of generating both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the context of reasoning. The positive side is realized from those who still keep touch with their colleagues at home and giving them the benefits of being in touch with latest happenings in global R&D, and contributing articles to local journals. It becomes very clear that Nigerian practice of education has little or no touch of Dewey's pragmatic which has made the educational sector to produce graduates that are unemployable that created a gap between the gown and the crown in the Nigerian society.

On the other hand, one may ask, what are the prospects of Dewey's pragmatic in the Nigerian educational practice? The here is: can Dewey's pragmatic actually survive in Nigeria education

system? Considering the myriad of problems besetting the Nigerian society, a casual reasoned fellow would simply say that it is impossible for Dewey's pragmatic to survive in Nigeria, but a critical examination would reveal that Dewey's pragmatic can survive especially with the recent paradigm shift in our economy necessitated by the recession with the emergence of President Buhari; a situation where men are now forced to think and apply what they have been taught to survive in the recess economy. One of such ways for Dewey's pragmatic would survive which is already necessitated by the recession is reflective thinking as Odiba and Baba (2013) noticed that Reflective thinking according to Dewey is an active, persistent and careful consideration of a brief or supposed form of knowledge, of the grounds that support that knowledge and the further conclusions to which that knowledge leads. By this therefore, one can adduce that Reflective Thinking (RT) refers to the process of analyzing and making judgments about what happened. The major activity in RT is Reflection. Reflection is the key that unlocks the door to understanding oneself in relation to core ethical values. Reflection can occur in response to academic work and as a follow up to a cooperative activity when Learners are asked to reflect upon how well their group did or did not work together. It can also be used to review the day's activity, a as a follow up to class meetings as part of goal setting and as part of a service learning activity. RT as mentioned earlier is most important in prompting learning at the time of complex - solving situations due to the fact that it avail the Learners the opportunity to go backwards and think about how they actually solve problems and how a particular set of problem solving strategies is appreciated for achieving their goals. By implication, recession has provoked the mind of the average Nigerian to be reflective in his or her thought; such as; Nigerians have becoming very pragmatic in whatever they do, if this is adopted in the educational system, no doubt, Dewey's pragmatic would survive in the Nigerian educational practice which would as well impart the larger society positively.

Conclusion

On the basis of forgoing analysis of Dewey's pragmatic and Nigeria's educational practice, it could be seen that Dewey's pragmatic education of the 20th century has liberated men and introduced educators to a workability of

educational ideas against the Nigerian practice which places so much emphasis on certification that has made the educational sector to produce half-baked graduate until the recent shift in the paradigm where recession forced the average Nigerian to do a reflective thinking on how to apply what is taught to practical situation. It is seen in the discussion that though there are many challenges of Dewey's pragmatic education in the Nigerian educational practice, there remains the truth that it is Dewey's pragmatic education that is capable of liberating the Nigerian society as already been triggered by the recession. The prospects lie on the people's ability at the moment to put to work some of the things already learnt such as farming which initially the average Nigerian youth run away from. It could be concluded that recession has provoked the mind of the average Nigerian to be reflective in his or her thought, and as such; the average Nigerian is now pragmatic.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion reached, this paper recommends that the first step to make the Nigerian educational practice works, is to based it on what the child can do and not what the policy demanded. By implication, no subject should be made compulsory; for instance, a student who did not credit English and Mathematics should be allow to study what she or him is capable of doing in the university or other institutions of higher learning in the country. This will demystified the phobia for these two subjects in the Nigerian educational system. This will in the long-run tailor the Nigeria's educational practice towards Dewey's pragmatic especially now that every Nigerian has waken from a deep slumber.

In addition, there should be a pragmatic movement towards reforming our educational policies and implementation especially 25 percent of the annual budget should be allocated to education. This equally would affect the huge amount of money being used to the legislative arm. As such; let their allowances be cut down to increase the one of lecturers to avoid strike actions every two to three years. A situation where a child cannot gain admission and the parents would predict when the child would graduate. Our grading format should be reformed and lecturers duly punished for misconduct or breech of code of professional ethics; it appears in

our status quo that these people are gods in our institutions of higher learning that determine the destinies of our children career. As such; they have the power to determine the class of degree which the students come out with.

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