

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines education and social change in our society. Its importance and conceptual definitions were explained or highlighted. Education is an instrument for promoting social stability and continuity; it increasingly became a tool for promoting and controlling changes and transmitting new values and skills. It is the key that unlocks the door to modernization. Education promotes social change in our society today in every ramification. Social change is the changes that take place in the institutions of the society at a particular point in time. In conclusion, there can be no meaningful social change in our society without education. Government and well meaningful individuals should encourage people to go to school and this will enhance positive development in our society.

Keywords: Education, Social Change.

Introduction

Education is a process of training and instruction, especially of children and young people in schools and of colleges, which is designed to give knowledge and develop skills. Okoh (2004) sees education as a process of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another. It is a learning acquired through formal and informal processes. Education may be seen as growth - the cumulative effect of changes in behaviour resulting from experience both planned and unplanned. The educational processes of society reflect its nature and its needs, and as these change, so its educational processes may have to change. Thompson in Alapiki, (2004) in Dienye (2004) explains this process when he analyzed the functionality of education in traditional and modern societies. In simple small scale, isolated and self-sufficient societies, where the security and survival of the group; educational practice tend to stress the transfer to new members of the cultural symbols, values, beliefs and sanctions upon which personal relationships, patterns of conduct and customs were based.

Formerly, education was seen as an instrument for promoting social stability and continuity, it increasingly became a tool for promoting and controlling changes and transmitting new national values and skills. "Education is the key that unlocks the door to modernisation". Harbison and Myer in Oranusi (2002) in Okeke (2002), Durkheim in Oranusi

(2002) sees education as "an instrument through which society perpetuates itself". He believes that educational change is not only an important reflection of the underlying structural and cultural changes but also an agent in that process. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know, rather, it means teaching them to act, think and to behave as they were not accustomed to act, think or behave before. Also, it is worth noting that the aims of education are strongly related to the social economic and political structure of a country, Uchendu (1995) in Oranusi (2002).

Social change can be defined as the transformation that occurs in the various levels of human interaction in a social environment. These transformations per se could be negative or positive depending on the moral conditions present or absent in the said transformation process. That is the transformation of the 'raw material of the society into full membership. The raw material in this context refers to a newly admitted into a school system for production (training and patterning) of the individual. The finished product of the individual that has acquired knowledge, experienced changed could now be discharged for societal consumption.

In general, it may be said that the education a society provides, at a given time, is determined by the dominant social forces at work in that society. Social change happens everywhere; however, the rate of change varies from place to place. Dienye, (2004) sees social change as "changes in the social institutions of a society at a given point in time". Social change most times involves both time and space. For instance, the Christian religion in Nigeria has experienced significant changes from being either Catholics or Protestants. Nigeria is witnessing a new wave of Christianity which is more militant and aggressive, the Pentecostal born again.

Education and Social Change

Education helps the individual to bring about change in the society without education there is no society. The education one gets in the educational institution or system helps to fit the individual properly into his society. The individual through the curricular and extra-curricular activities learnt in school, comes in contact with social changes in the school and society at large. For example, the individual learns how to speak well, read well and even dress more appropriately and sit properly in case of the ladies in school which is an embodiment of educational system. Education helps people or individuals to occupy different juicy positions in the society, thereby performing the crucial function of choosing future leaders for society and exposing students or individuals to self-government and other activities which prepares them for future leadership roles.

Education is an instrument of social change. The education of any society must be developed, before any successful development can take place within other institution of education in any society. Education promotes social change and social discontent. The social change needed for society to survive under modern condition must be initiated through education. Therefore, it is better to say that other societal institutions and education cause changes in one another. As people are being educated, this education occurs in the social institutions of the society. These institutions are made up of individuals from different ethnic groups in the society, they meet to exchange ideas, these knowledge, values and each other culture from these exchange of ideas, values and culture, people now learn from each other and these brings about change in the life style of an educated person.

Odetola and Ademola, (1985) sees, social change as the alteration, rearrangement or total replacement of a phenomenon, activity, value or process through a succession of events.

Agada, (1991) in Elekwa (2013), defines social change as the change which takes place in the social institution of society when the current state of society is compared with the previous state of society. For example in the educational institutions, there have been a lot of changes from the colonial era in the Nigerian Educational system when much emphasis was placed on reading and writing till this present time when science and technology is emphasised. Christopher, (1997) sees social change as modification in culture, social organisation and social behaviour. To him social change is as well the alteration that takes place within the society. Diebey (1984) defines social change as the passing of a society from one state to another, marked sometimes by a radically different make up, character or operation.

Social mobility could be seen at this point as a vehicle of social change both on the individual life and the society he belongs. Permit me to state that the coming of school education during the colonial period ushered in social change in Nigeria as a society.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Education is one of the major instruments that brought change in the society, for instance, looking at age of marriage people now have the view that they must attain certain educational level such as completing post-primary education level or post-graduate degree before marrying. This educational ambition leads to delay in marriage and in turn affects population growth rate, Elekwa (2013). Apart from the above, it is also acknowledged that most of the educated families do not bear many children. This is because they have knowledge and consciousness of the financial involvement of training them. Education is nurturing of personal growth. It enhances social change in our society which brings about development generally in the society.

Without education, there can be no meaningful social change in our society. Government, well-meaning Nigerians, NGOs and even the oil companies in our states and communities should strive hard to encourage people or sponsor individual through scholarships, etc. to bring about positive societal changes since education enhances social change.

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