

THE "EDUCATION IS A SCAM" DEBATE IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Education is intrinsically a virtue and the educated are elites in virtually all societies. This is not just a claim; it is a fact. Likewise, Nigeria had a fine history of education which was once believed to be a necessity for material progress, human development, and social emancipation. However, the recent slogan in the Nigerian popular culture is: "education is a scam." This sounds like turning logic on its head and a distortion of history. How can education be a scam? If it is a scam, how and when did it become a scam? How can education be seen as a virtue that it has always been and reorient the youth not to see it as a scam? To answer these questions, this paper argues for the urgent need to restore education in Nigeria to its former hallowed position. Its findings reveal that the falling standard of education and the unrealized dream of gainful employment by graduates—after being educated—fuel the notion that "education is a scam". This paper concludes that education is not a scam but contextually seems so, due to government's disarticulated educational policies. It recommends that Nigerian governments at all levels should massively invest in education and reorient the youth on the virtues of education.

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Introduction

Education is highly valued in Nigeria as a treasure. Many people aspire to be educated and the educated ones are respected in every community. It is believed that education is not only an antidote to ignorance which is very obvious, it is also a route to escape from poverty. This explains why parents invest heavily in their wards' education at all costs. Before Nigerian independence and even after independence, there were many instances where families sold their farms and other inheritances just to get their wards educated. The prospect of prosperity which was woven around education—and the educated—was then the motivating force. However, in recent years, education that was hitherto synonymous with prosperity has become an antithesis to success to many Nigerian graduates due to unemployment. If this notion has been held and promoted by those who do not have the opportunity to go to school especially to the tertiary level, it could be interpreted as a display of envy by the uneducated towards the educated class. But

the (mis)characterization of education in Nigeria as a scam is not a case of an envious uneducated class against the envied educated class. Rather, "education is a scam" is an unpleasant song being sung by both those who did not go to school and those who actually went to school but felt education has made them jobless and hopeless.

This study investigates this ugly reality. It traces the history of education in Nigeria to its heydays when it was a sure way to success and to ascendancy to prominence. It acknowledges that things have gone wrong and identifies many wrongs in Nigerian educational system. But how did these things get wrong? When and how? How can we reverse the ugly reality? In other words, how do we correct the notion that education is a scam? How do we convince Nigerian youth that education is inherently good, beneficial, and a sure (if not the surest) way to success? Although, this is a herculean task but it can be accomplished. In what follows, this paper identifies the causes of failure of education in Nigeria and proffers solutions.

Theoretical Framework

This paper makes its critique from the perspective of Capability Theory which is often attributed to Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, etc. The theory posits that education expands individuals' capabilities and freedoms which in turns leads to human development and individual well-being. On this premise, it is argued that education which makes individuals capable and free should enable them to participate fully and proficiently in their country's social and economic development. This capability is obviously lacking in many Nigerian graduates in recent time. Those who have the capability do not have the freedom. Those who have the freedom do not have the capability. It is rare to find capability and freedom as mutually complementing traits in individual graduate due to the state of the nation and the economy. This gives wings to the notion that "education is a scam" to which many Nigerian youth find too convincing to repudiate.

From the perspective of capability theory, education has the potential to improve a country's human development indices (HDI). This improvement should not only be seen in the reduction of poverty and unemployment but also in job security, sound healthcare, and overall standards of living. Though capability theory has been criticized for being subjective in defining capabilities; notwithstanding the criticism, it is employed in this study to explain how incapability to make sense of education and put it to productive uses has made it (education) to be seen as a scam.

Literature Review on Education in Nigeria: History, Trends and Patterns

There are various forms and processes of education in Nigeria right from history till the present time. Knowledge was/is acquired formally and informally and could be secular in form or religious. Prior to colonial era, traditional system of education existed with

focus on oral traditions, community based learning, and apprenticeship. As informal as education was in the traditional milieu where certificates were not awarded, its emphasis included social responsibility, political participation, moral values, and job creation through agricultural training, trades and crafts, weaving, and other vocational trainings (Fafunwa, 1974). Since education in the Nigerian traditional society focuses on job creation and actually created jobs, it was not seen as scam. So, which form of education is characterized or mischaracterized as scam? It is important to note that the education referred to in this paper is secular education which is often called Western education because it was introduced by missionary and colonialists from the West. It is the education that leads to the award of different categories of degree and diploma certificates as the case may be. Although certificates are awarded in religious studies in most of Nigerian higher institutions, yet the emphasis of the notion that education is a scam is not on any specific discipline but on the general process that leads to the award of certificates which usefulness is now in dispute.

Historically, the formal form of education (now characterized as a scam) was first introduced by Christian missionary. Its beginning in the modern sense was traced, in the work of Fafunwa (1974), to between 1882 and 1929. Then it was basic education which focuses on literacy (ability to read and write) with missionary aiming at converting the populace to the Christian faith. In the account of Ozigi and Ocho (1981, pp. 15) "Education, for many missionary bodies, was the most important tool for conversion and expansion of the faith." In addition to literacy which Fafunwa (1974, pp. 92) refers to as "book learning," vocational training was included in the educational program. Up to 1882, the field of education was entirely left to the missionary as the colonial government in

Nigeria paid little or no attention to it. Thereafter, in 1882, the colonial administration began to pay attention to education and the focus shifted to administrative literacy and English language as the colonialists needed helpful hands in the day to day running of colonial administration.

Not many were willing to go to school due to fear of conversion as stated above. This is not only limited to the Muslim North. Thus, the few who chose to attend school automatically secured teaching or administrative jobs after completion of their programs. These trends and patterns of schooling with the view of prospering and actual prosperity after completion of study continued till Nigeria's independence. Even after independence, there are still higher demands not only for graduates but also for holders of other lower certificates.

In the 1970s through some periods in the 1980s, it is very common for family members to sell family inherited property like lands and farms to sponsor their wards to school. Expectation of material prosperity was so high that there is no fear of disappointment after huge investments. In addition, then, standard of education was top notch—very commendable—as graduates were able to distinguish themselves because they were very capable. In addition, they possess freedom—they are free to choose due to array of job opportunities to choose from. In fact, one would be considered a sociopath to say education is a scam in those glorious days because it was evident that education is a pathway to success. Because education was valued and imbued with standards, it was not free for all. One must possess a certain threshold of knowledge and exhibit some degree of intelligence to gain admission into higher institution. It was a sort of “the survival of the fittest.” In other words, the admission bar was high such that many dreamt of going to higher institution but only few could make it. It takes serious commitment to learning and

dedication to study to pass qualifying exams since examination malpractice was not pronounced, if it ever existed, let alone a menace which it has now become. The implication of all of this is that the supply of graduates was lower than the demand for them. Joblessness was not an issue; the issue was having to choose among many job options.

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, investment in education became a key focus of development. This trend continued in the 1970s after the Nigerian civil war as there was significant investment in education up to the 1980s. Due to the deserved focus given to education in this period, standards were not compromised and education was promising. However, education started to witness underfunding gradually in the 1990s largely due to neglect, corruption, and mismanagement. This pattern—funding challenge—continued up to the 2000s till the present time (Adetunji, 2016; Monday and Mallo, 2021). This led to brain drain as many Nigerian academics started leaving the country in droves. The Nigerian educational system was suddenly orphaned due to neglect; and this gradually impacted (negatively) on education standards as examination malpractice became a menace. This fall in standards resulted in lowering the entering bar to a ridiculous level not only into Nigerian tertiary institutions but also into the country's secondary schools (Salaudeen, 2024). Acute shortage of infrastructure, dilapidation of the existing ones, and lack of teaching and learning facilities in our various institution of learning led to incessant strike often embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). These frequent industrial actions that invariably put Nigerian universities constantly under lock and key contributed to the haphazard and uncoordinated rise of private universities. Private primary and secondary schools have long become the norm such that parents who send their wards to public schools are seen as unserious and irresponsible. This is

because public primary and secondary schools are more or less playgrounds where nothing or little is taught and learnt. Thus, private schools began to attract huge investments by individuals whose main motive is profit-making; not academic excellence. This, rather than compensate for the deficiencies in public schools, adds more to their falling standards

Gap in Literature

Although there is a recent debate on skill versus degree certificate (and it is ongoing), one can hardly find literature on education being discussed as a scam in Nigeria. Education is unthought-of as a scam. Thus, researchers in the field of education rather focus on the falling standard of education as evident in the review of literature above. Having come to this realization—dearth of academic writings on education as a scam—this paper sets to fill the gap.

Conceptual Clarifications

This paper concentrates on three major concepts viz. education, capability, and freedom. While education is the primary concept, it argues that the real fruits or outcomes of education are capability and freedom. It is observed, and the observation is indisputably obvious, that education in Nigeria has failed to bear both freedom and capability. The duo of freedom and capability is basic requirement for development. The failure of education in Nigeria, which results from the country's unfriendly socio-economic and political environment, has led many to say that education is a scam. In this paper, education is conceptualized from different traditions and schools of thought. To clarify the two other concepts (capability and freedom), this paper heavily relies on the works of Sen and Nussbaum.

Education as a Virtue

Education is intrinsically a virtue. Its direct product is knowledge which is the opposite of ignorance. Knowledge is indisputably a praiseworthy attribute unless it

is sought for some despicable ends. Even as such, knowledge and the process of acquiring it which is education might not be blamed but the one who abuses its acquisition for ignoble ends. Hence, education is defined, according to United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2024) as “a basic human right that works to raise men and women out of poverty, level inequalities and ensure sustainable development... Education is one of the most powerful tools in lifting excluded children and adults out of poverty and is a stepping stone to other fundamental human rights.” Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024) centres its definition on functionality of education in the society. It defines education as “the foundation for better jobs and better lives and the cornerstone for more inclusive and resilient economies and societies.” Education is empowering. From empowerment perspective, Freire (1970) defines education as a political act, a means of empowering individuals to critically analyse and transform their social realities. Sen (1999) emphasizes capability and freedom, as explained in the theory above, as the essence of education. To him, education is a key capability that enhances individual freedom and agency.

From philosophical and moral perspectives, a renowned thinker, Al-Ghazali (2015), posits that education is a means of acquiring knowledge, wisdom, and virtue, leading to the perfection of the soul. To Ibn Khaldun (1958), education is a legacy. He views education as the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. A leading philosopher, Aristotle (1999), defines education as the process of training man to fulfil his aim, which is to achieve happiness and virtue. For Locke (1989), education should aim at fostering virtue, wisdom, and useful skills. In terse words but with profound meaning, Dewey (1966)

asserts that education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. Kant (1960) sees education as the process of developing the moral character.

What can be gathered from the above definitions is that education is the very antithesis of scam and every word that is allied to, synonymous with, or derived from scam. In a simple word, education is virtuous and liberating. The word “scam” as used in this study contextually connotes deception and fake promise. If with the comprehensive definitions of education given above, it is said to be a scam in Nigeria by those who are considerably enlightened, it means there is need to discuss education contextually. Our context in this study is Nigeria where education promises a better life but turns out to be a scam in the view of some supposedly educated Nigerians.

Capability as Control and Freedom

To start with a quote from Nussbaum (2000, pp. 73), a person’s capability “is what Marx called “truly human,” that is, worthy of a human being.” An incapable human is not worthy of being called a being. To be a being is to be capable. To ensure and advance man’s general capability, Sen identifies the following as requirements: political freedoms, social opportunity, economic facilities, social opportunities, protective security, and transparency guarantees. Furthermore, capability includes the ability to live long and live a good life while alive. Do the current crop of educated class in Nigeria enjoy the fruits of education which are freedom and capability? Apparently, they do not.

Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-80) gives a list of what could be called ten central capabilities. According to her, to be capable, there must be:

- Guarantee of life—ability to live; not dying prematurely;
- Bodily health—being able to have good health and adequately nourished;

- Bodily Integrity—being able to move freely from place to place without threat or assault;
- Senses, imagination, and thought—being able to use one’s sense to imagine, think, and reason which include freedom of political, artistic, and religious expression;
- Emotions—being able to love those we are attached to and grieve at their absence;
- Practical reason. This is what Nussbaum refers to as protection for the liberty of conscience about the planning of one’s life.
- Affiliation—being able to live with and toward others and engage in various forms of social interaction without discrimination
- Other species—being able to live with and show concern for animals, plants, and the world of nature.
- Play—being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
- Control over One’s Environment—being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life and being able to hold property (both land and movable goods) in terms of real opportunity.

One can conclude from Nussbaum’s list that capabilities are the ability to perform basic human functions such as living a life of truly human in good health and to freely and effectively participate in social and political activities. Sartre (1956) sees human capability as the freedom to choose and create one’s own projects. It is evident from the above that control over one’s environment is key to capability. Also, at the heart of human capability lies the concept of freedom, which assumes paramount importance in our clarification endeavours, underscoring its essential role in shaping human potential.

Freedom as Development

Freedom is inexorably linked to development. This is why Sen (1999) views development as freedom or the true measure of the freedom people enjoy. While growth of gross national product, per capita incomes, and advancement in technology and industrialization are means of expanding freedom, Sen (1999, pp. 1) argues that “freedoms depend also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements (for example, facilities for education and health care) as well as political and civil rights (for example, the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny).” To this extent, are Nigerians free despite their education? If freedom has to do with the opportunity to choose and to express one’s capability or the ability to do what one is capable of doing, Nigerians could not be said to be free. On the other hand, unfreedom arises when there is violation of civil and other political rights like inability to freely elect representatives in a democratic system because the electoral system and process are fundamentally flawed. Sen (1999) adds that unfreedom can arise due to inadequate processes or inadequate opportunities which will prevent people from achieving what they ought to achieve with little efforts. Rather than freedom, unfreedom best describes many degree-certificate-carrying Nigerians today.

Methodology

This paper relies on secondary source of data by reviewing relevant literature—journals, books, newspaper reports, opinion articles etc. Its approach is multi-faced which makes it historical, descriptive, and analytical research. In its historical approach, it traces education in Nigeria to the epoch when demand for graduates was way higher than available graduates—supply of graduates. Employing descriptive methods, it seeks to accurately describe the state of education in Nigeria. It gives account of the admission

process into high schools and tertiary institutions to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the quality and psyche of students being admitted and graduated from schools, year in, year out. Rather than accept or repudiate (without serious thought) the notion that education is a scam, it critiques, through analytical lens, the present (mis)characterization of education in Nigeria as a scam to arrive at conclusion.

When and why did Education become a Scam in Nigeria?

After a historical excursion into the trends and patterns of education in Nigeria, this paper turns to the real issue—its real objective—which is addressing the question of (mis)characterization of education in Nigeria as a scam. It should be noted that a case has been made for the desirability of education which is said to be intrinsically virtuous as shown in concept clarifications above. Universally speaking, this is what education is. However, education and its connotations have begun to take exemption in Nigeria. When did that begin and why? While many known factors contributed to the “why,” it is challenging to pinpoint the “when.” Put differently, it is difficult to state exactly when the notion of “education is a scam” began to gain acceptance among Nigerian youth. Without being too time specific, it is safe to say it started less than a decade ago and it is becoming more pronounced as Nigerian graduates continue to roam the streets—haplessly and hopelessly—in the search for non-existing jobs like aimless wanderers.

Before discussing the actual reason why education is increasingly being perceived as a scam in Nigeria, this study highlights some of the general challenges that led to the falling standards of education in the country. They are as follows: a) acute shortage in government budgetary allocation, b) non adherence to quality assurance, c) lack of qualified teachers, d) poor welfare package

and low incentives for teachers, e) examination mal practice, f) poor and inadequate infrastructure, g) poor supervision, h) corruption, etc. (Victor, Shallah, and Ibrahim 2014; Nansak, 2019; Jacob and Josiah, 2021). The factors listed above are the untreated symptoms that later degenerated into the sickening and pathological characterization of education as a scam. Some of the factors that problematize education in Nigeria in the understanding of many of its youth are as follows:

1. **Unemployment:** As the rate of unemployment keeps rising in Nigeria while many graduates who had invested time and resources in acquiring degree certificates could not secure job even as under-employed, the notion that education leads to success comes under serious scrutiny and ceases to make any appeal to many Nigerian youth. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2024) shows that unemployment rate among the youth was 8.4% in the Q1 2024. The statistics for NEET (those not pursuing education, not engaged in employment or training) are scary. It stands at 14.4%.
2. **False Pride and Thought of Prosperity in University Certificates:** Many homes and families inordinately think acquiring university degree is the only means to material prosperity. More than a few parents go out of their way to compromise the system and get their wards into the university without the necessary requirements just for the sake of certificate and the pride that comes with it. Many of those who get to the university without any mental preparation for it but just to boost their egos, end up as graduates bereft of capability and freedom which are the twin outcomes of real education as discussed above. Confronted with disappointments after getting into the real world as graduates without the capabilities to justify the degree(s) they have acquired,

they end up with the thought that going to school is a scam.

Lowering the Admission Bar: This is a very dangerous trend. Policy makers in the education sector are to be blamed for this. It is always argued that mass failure in qualifying examination into various higher institutions of learning prompted the lowering of UTME scores. This is tantamount to assisting failure when it deserves to be punished. Lowering admission bar is not limited only to admission into higher institutions, the ugly and mediocre act of rewarding failure is also the practice at the entry point into post primary schools as Salaudeen (2024) establishes in his critique of admission process in Nigeria. Thus, many academically weak candidates who are incapable of going through the rigor which advance learning requires ended up in the system and messed it up. This category of candidates would graduate to become liabilities for lack of capabilities to eke out a living especially as the economy nosedives. Education becomes a scam to them.

Enrolment Explosion: It is ironical to note that the more Nigerian students perform woefully in the nation's qualifying exams (SSCE and UTME) into higher institutions, the more they gain admission. Salaudeen (2024) expresses this irony when he laments that the more Nigerians fail, the more universities are established. This development has a deleterious impact on the quality of education in these higher institutions of learning (Adetunji, 2016). The cause for this is that the philosophy behind university education has drastically changed. Generally speaking, post-secondary school education is not meant for all; it should be for those that display the aptitude for the rigor involves in higher learning. Secondary school education should ideally be the highest qualification for those who do not exhibit serious passion for learning or possess great capability for scholarship. As if

the enrolment explosion is not enough, the Federal Government, through its Nigerian Student Loan (Access to Higher Education) Act, has further widened access to tertiary education. While this should be applauded as a good policy, one of its major drawbacks is that it is being implemented without any discrimination to screen out those who really need it from those who do not. Thus, the loan scheme would be abused. In addition, no serious effort is made to create jobs for these future graduates to facilitate the repayment of the loans taken for their studies (Salaudeen and Muhammad, 2024). Injecting more graduates without jobs into the already saturated labor market will further give wings to “education is a scam” narrative by disappointed jobless graduates.

Nigerian policy makers on education in the 1960s recognized this reality. As far back as 1969, among the objectives of education in Nigeria is the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies of both mental and physical nature as an equipment for the individual to live in his society. Highlighting the objectives of secondary school for instance, one of the recommendations of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference is very instructive. It reads: “Secondary schools will play a dual role of preparing the majority of students for a terminal education that equips them for living in society while, for the minority group of well-motivated youngsters, the secondary school will provide facilities for them to go into higher education” (Fafunwa, 1974, pp. 234-235). Higher institutions, as can be seen from the above recommendation, are meant for young well-motivated youngsters which are minority group. The latest National Policy on Education (2013) also highlights the similar functions of secondary schools, expectations that our schools have unfortunately failed to meet

To corroborate the philosophy that advanced education is meant for the minority group, the serving Registrar of the Joint

Admissions and Matriculation Board, Professor Ishaq Oloyede, criticizes the emphasis Nigerians lay on university education at the expense of skills acquisition and talent development. Making a comparison between Nigeria and the UK and the US, he asks: how many percentage of their youth acquired university education? He laments that the entire youth population in Nigeria does not have to acquire university degree for the country to develop. He concludes that Nigerians are over educated (Abdulraheem, 2022, Salaudeen, 2022). Therefore, the shifting philosophy of university education whereby every Nigerian thinks it is a must to acquire degree certificate and the government perception that all admission seekers must gain admission is one of the reasons why education suddenly became a scam. The implication is that hoards of graduates who are in superfluous supply saturate the Nigerian labor market that only demands few graduates.

Japa and the Experience of Educated Nigerians in Diaspora: “Japa” is a Nigerian colloquial used to refer to “economic migration” or “running away” from Nigeria to seek greener pasture in other countries. Having concluded that degree certificates are worthless in Nigerians, many disappointed job seekers (graduates) left the country in search of greener pastures. Outside the shore of Nigeria, many of these graduates were circumstantially compelled to do menial jobs in their various countries of destination. On reaching these countries, it dawned on them that their certificates are useless both at home and abroad. This is especially the case for those who having acquired all the degrees in Nigeria ended up doing undignified jobs that do not require literacy. This class of Nigerians migrated to foreign countries only to realize that their degree certificates do not confer on them the needed capabilities and freedom to choose. This fuels the notion that education is a scam.

The Scourge of Yahoo-Yahoo Guys:

Yahoo-Yahoo is another Nigerian colloquialism, a term that is used to describe individuals that engage in various forms of cybercrime like money laundering, fake investment schemes, email scams, romance scam, identity scam, etc. It does not require any qualification. The ability to use the computer and browse the internet to defraud and scam people is the main qualification for Yahoo-Yahoo criminal activities. The rate at which the Yahoo guys flaunt wealth—filthy lucre—as if to make mockery of those who go to school but could not make both ends meet contributes to “education is a scam” narrative. The get rich quick syndrome associated with these criminal activities is temptingly alluring to the youth who now believe going to school is a waste of time. Suleiman (2019) claims that more than 40% undergraduates and up to 60% graduates without reasonable job are recruited into the Yahoo industry. Although Suleiman did not state how he arrived at that percentage, the reality is that Nigerian youth are entranced by these fraudulent activities. Consequently, they despise and relegate education.

Nigerian Political Factors: Many Nigerian graduates who had studied hard during their sojourn in the university in order to graduate with outstanding results and prepare for the challenge of labor market got disappointed—at the end—due to Nigerian political factors. Although only few jobs are available, yet they are given to those who have connection and not necessarily on merit. It is demoralizing to see graduates with fake or poor results being given jobs because of their relationship with some highly placed individuals in government while those that actually merit them are denied. Job racketeering is also a serious challenge. It is common to find job seekers being asked to pay huge sum of money to secure jobs despite having outstanding results. Are outstanding results and excellent academic performances still relevant anymore in Nigeria? These are

some of the reasons stated by one History and International Studies graduate of Ajayi Crowther University who burnt his university certificate in a viral video in 2023. After being fed up of searching for jobs without getting any, he said without any feeling of guilt: “I burnt the educational certificates that are useless in the country” (Hamid, 2023, para 3). Nigerian education does not give the educated ones the needed capability and freedom. In a situation where graduates are indeed capable, the labor market pays no attention to their capability as attention is shifted to the ability to pay or the ability to be connected. To get meaningful jobs in Nigeria after graduation, there is need for what, in local parlance, is referred to as godfathers. All the aforementioned explains why education is seen as a scam.

Mobile Phone-Based Mining: this is also known as mobile crypto mining or crypto tapping. It involves using smartphones to mine crypto currencies. This has gained a wide popularity among Nigerian youth due to some economic opportunities it allegedly provides (Babate, Abubakar, and Ishola, 2024). In addition, no serious education, which is now being ridiculed as a scam, is required to mine. The youth are so crazy about this coin-tapping-craze so much that it consumes most of their time. Hence, Olaoluwa (2024, para 1) aptly describes it as “money making scheme in town, which idle youths and quick money seekers have grabbed with such zeal as if their life depends on it.” This tap-to-earn crypto is demeaning the need for education by the youth who should be busy learning within the four walls of our schools. To this youth, education is a scam. The mined crypto currencies come in different categories such as Bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash, Ethereum, Litecoin, Memecoin, Notcoin, TapSwap etc.

Conclusion

This paper critiques the notion that education is a scam. It investigates if the characterization of education as a scam is

appropriate or it (education) is a victim of mischaracterization. It finds that over the ages, education has been a virtue and will always be a virtue because it is intrinsically virtuous. Education is conceptualized from pedagogical, moral, philosophical, and even developmental perspectives. There is uniformity of thoughts from all these perspectives that education is a cherished legacy that bears good fruits. Thus, in principle, it is mischaracterization to say education is a scam. However, when education could not bear good fruits in terms of capability and freedom (social emancipation) which should ideally come with it, it loses its value. Yet education is not to be blamed but its custodians who mismanaged it and disoriented people about its ideals. This is the situation in Nigeria. Are the disoriented youths to be blamed for thinking that education is a scam? In this critique, though we refute the notion that education is a scam, the youths are not to be blamed entirely for falling victims of such a belief. This is due to the lived reality of graduate unemployment and the existential failure of education in Nigeria to make life better and promising. These are the discomfoting factors that birthed the mischaracterization of education as a scam.

Therefore, this paper concludes that education is not a scam. However, within the Nigerian context, one will be arguing against reality to say education is not a scam due to government's disarticulated policies on education on the one hand and non-implementation of laudable educational policies on the other hand. This in turn makes education ridiculous and a ridiculed pathway to success.

Recommendations

There is no gainsaying the fact that education in Nigeria is critically ill; it needs life-sustaining treatment. The youth that are direct beneficiaries of education—and need it most—have now begun to mischaracterize it

as a scam. To disabuse the youth of this misconceived thought about education, all stakeholders—governments, school administrators, parents/guardians, religious and opinion leaders—must come together. All hands must be on deck. Government should work hard with determination to salvage this ugly trend. Below are some recommendations:

- Government at all levels should massively invest in education, standardize it, and modify it to fit into modern knowledge-driven economy. The country's investment in education is still far below UNESCO threshold (26% budgetary allocation) for developing countries.
- Teachers' welfare should be prioritized so that they will not be tempted to compromise standards by aiding and abetting examination mal-practice and other fraudulent practices that are rife in Nigerian educational system.
- There should be discipline and quality assurance at all levels of our educational system to ensure that students are taught what they ought to be taught and actually merit the credits and distinctions recorded in their results.
- The bar for admission requirements should be raised to screen out candidates who are not academically sound enough to be admitted into higher institutions. A situation whereby candidates score 140 out of 400 (which is F9) and still gain admission into our tertiary institutions further destroys the system.
- Students should be given orientation, right from the basic level of education, to know that tertiary education is not for all. It is for the few who display appreciable ability for scholarship.
- The concept of dignity of labor should be promoted. Every lawful job and profession should be dignified. Nigerians with practical and technical training and those whose jobs do not require any

training should be respected and their status in the society should be raised through a better wage structure. This will help in attitudinal change towards, and blur the difference between, the so-called white-collar and blue-collar jobs.

- To put enrollment explosion in our higher institution under check, technical, commercial and comprehensive school should, in co-operation with businesses, industries and government (as the case may be), tailor their curriculum in line with the available jobs in the labor markets. This will equip Nigerian secondary school-leavers with the necessary skills, values and understandings to sustain them on whichever job/career they ultimately choose.
- Job creation should be prioritized through massive industrialization and revitalization of moribund industries to absorb teeming graduates and restore the value education. If government is successful in creating jobs, merit and competency should be made the only criteria in job recruitment process.

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