

Education as a necessity of life: An exploration on Ugandan Education System Quality with reference to John Dewey's Philosophical Correlates

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Abstract

Every country desires and aspires for an education system that caters for learners' physiological needs, belonging, love, self-esteem, security and self-actualisation at the top, which are rarely provided by a few countries. With a review focus on the Ugandan education system, several challenges related to the *education borrowing suggestions* as proposed by John Dewey have been attributed to creating an environment that has seen most graduates ending up unemployed, and with leadership challenges, inadequate funding, poor teacher perception, low research and innovations in higher institutions of learning, less involvement of the informal sector in development, low literacy levels, political interference among others. Thus this exploratory analytical-qualitative review focuses on John Dewey's teachings in his book *Education and Democracy*—specifically chapter 1, 'Education as Necessity for Life'—with attention on how education as an engine that empowers life, ensures independence through self-reliance, sustenance, freedom, and is syndrome-free to enhance appreciation of the contemporary trends in education—critical aspects that are extremely lacking within the current Ugandan education system and can impact on the future of education to the future of education as recommended in National Development Plan III (NDP III). Thus the review recommends that while reflecting on the state of the Ugandan education system, there is a need to revitalise the research and innovations in higher institutions, especially catering for

an integral-education system with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) from primary school to university, involvement of the informal sector through skills education as proposed by the Ugandan Vision 2040 and NDP III, as well as addressing low literacy levels and providing adequate teaching and learning through quality and balanced funding from all relevant government agencies and development partners.

KEYWORDS

education philosophy, international and comparative education, education policy

Context and implications

Rationale for the study

The UNBS (2016) census report in Uganda under the theme 'Education: A Means of Population Transformation' indicated that the net enrolment across all levels of education in Uganda was low and appalling and exploratory-wise. Based on John Dewey's teaching and emphasis on education as a necessity of life, it is a natural requirement for one to pursue happiness that can change and transform a person to a more useful resource any country would need, especially through attaining skills that can enhance problem-solving in life. The dilapidating quality of education offered as well as the outputs have been centrally attributed to lack of appreciation of the core purpose of education in developing and maximising the complex learning environment and experiences as an opportunity to grow the capacity to solve life skills as clearly proposed by Dewey.

Why the new findings matter

Exploratory findings indicate that, for a country to grow its capacity, especially human education outputs, it should appreciate that learning never ends and thus it is a collective obligation for everyone—teachers, students, parents, local communities including local council's representatives and councillors—and in this way, learners need to grow with an enthusiastic attitude that can support their capacity to outgrow all obstacles that can hinder their lifetime excellence. As emphasised by Dewey, the education attained should enable them to acquire and attain employment opportunities without bias for both boys and girls that can fully build their capacity in decision making as well as building for them a better future through all rigorous and complex stages of education they undergo. For quality learning and development to take place, many students are comfortable, if their experiences and interests are engaged as well as practically shared.

clearly emphasised in this article; realistic education should be emphasised as affirmed by realists and pragmatists. In this regard accumulated skills and knowledge acquired should be applied to real-life situations to fulfil the philosophy of education (education as a necessity for life) by meeting society's needs and inspirations.

A realistic curriculum would invent an education programme that produces graduates who are capable of creating and recreating ideas, as emphasised by the constructivism and progressivism schools of philosophies which emanate from John Dewey's education philosophies. It would aim at producing Ugandan graduates who are job creators as opposed to job seekers as evidenced by the current education system. In this regard it is not serving as a necessity but rather a liability as it has contributed a lot to unemployment and an increase in poverty levels; which turns contrary to John Dewey's goals of a pragmatic education. Higher institutions should emphasise research and innovations to promote further discoveries and solve the problems in question. This is the only end-line to enhance STEM education with the outputs (professionals) attained. The government of Uganda has gone ahead to establish an independent Ministry of Science and Technology outside that of education to bridge such gaps by funding prototyping among the scientists, and innovations like COVID drugs by universities and medical schools among others. Also to attain a quality education system and reaffirm education as a necessity of life with a focus on the role of teachers, the government should strengthen teacher competency, resources, motivation, and accountability, and establish a supportive enabling environment for strengthening teacher competency; offer financial advisory services, technical, and capacity building for various school project implementation, effect learner data management, monitoring and academic performance evaluation; likewise, teacher payroll systems should be improved, and retooling to support capacity development, especially with the drastic technological changes that call focus on the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, whose work cadres are still lacking in most of the developing countries, including Uganda.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of Interest in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The review data source is available.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was based on publicly available secondary data. No ethical issues were involved in the study.

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