

**IS EDUCATION REALLY A SCAM?
RECALIBRATING NIGERIAN YOUTHS' ATTITUDES TO LEARNING**

A REPORT

DATE: SATURDAY, 6 APRIL 2024

TIME: 4:00 PM WAT

PREPARED BY THE LITERARY RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION (LRF)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is widely regarded as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of individual and societal development. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities necessary for personal and professional success, as well as for active participation in civic life. Moreover, education can break cycles of poverty, accelerate social mobility, and foster economic development.

In Nigeria, however, the youths have begun to form a negative attitude to education believing that schools no longer teach them what they would need or use at the workplace. They cite examples of contemporary wealthy individuals who are not scholarly inclined while graduates of Nigerian institutions struggle for employment. The slang *School Na Scam* has been used to assert that education is not the foundation for an accomplished future.

The Literary Renaissance Foundation organised sixth edition of its civic engagement and public participation dialogue, tagged the Reading Culture Dialogue, which focused on the negative attitude of Nigerian youth to education and diverse ways to tackle it. Parents, lecturers, and students from different parts of Nigeria were among those who gathered to discuss the issue and suggest solutions.

The prevailing question in the Dialogue was: **How can we recalibrate the attitudes of Nigerian youths to learning and help them see the importance of formal education?**

FORMAT OF THE PROGRAMME

This is the second edition of the quarterly Dialogue in the year 2024. The panel included students from various universities and polytechnics in the nation, concerned parents, teachers, lecturers, educational officials, and other individuals with a keen interest in the topic,

Programme date: Saturday, April 6, 2024

Programme venue: Zoom

Facilitators: Babatunde Oladele (host), Mary Ogundipe (timekeeper), Oluwafunmilayo Makinde (notetaker). **Participants:** Chukwuma Adekunle (Enugu), Olasupo Olabisi (Ibadan), Amos Akande (Abuja), Chinyere Nwokike (Ibadan), Dr. Barth Akpah (Liberia), Mr Sola Lebile (Akure), Dr. Kemisola Adesina (Ibadan), Halimat Adewunmi, Olusade Adediran, Nadirat Okegbenro, Julius Topohozin, Prisca Okorie, Oyebanke Ilelaboye and Halimah Abdulazeez.

The Dialogue kicked off at 4 p.m. WAT and ran until 7 p.m. At the beginning, the moderator opened the floor by introducing himself, and then allowed participants the opportunity to do the same. Each participant took turns introducing themselves, and sharing their name, location, and occupation. Thereafter, the moderator outlined the purpose of the Dialogue, discussed its achievements thus far, and clarified its objectives, structure, and conduct.

The discussion was inclusive, with the moderator frequently inviting participants to read different sections of the programme slides, following the standard procedures set by the National Issues Forum (NIF) of the United States. Before diving into the discussions, specific ground rules were established and agreed upon by all participants.

Ground Rules:

- ❖ Focus on the options and actions we can take nationally and in our communities.
- ❖ Consider all options fairly.
- ❖ Listening is just as important as speaking.
- ❖ No one or two individuals should dominate.
- ❖ Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
- ❖ Everyone is encouraged to participate.

Discussion Structure

The discussion was on the methods to recalibrate Nigerian youth's attitude to learning, and various options were mentioned to help them see the importance of formal education. This topic was approached from three aspects:

- ❖ Option One: Reforms Should be Implemented at all Levels of Education
- ❖ Option Two: Teach Employability Skills to Undergraduates
- ❖ Option Three: Career Guidance and Counseling Services Should be Strengthened in Universities

During the discussion, each option outlined in the issue guide was thoroughly examined, and different strategies to address the problem were carefully analysed. For every proposed action, a drawback was presented to anticipate potential challenges in implementation. Everyone actively engaged in the debate, offering their insights and attentively listening to others' perspectives. Speakers who followed often evaluated the ideas and inputs of previous speakers, resulting in enriching debates and valuable insights.

The resulting details from each policy option are presented below:

Option One: Reforms Should be Implemented at all Levels of Education

The first option held that reforms should be implemented in the education sector to bridge the gap between academic qualifications and practical skills.

The following actions were considered:

- 1) The government should revise the national curriculum and include practical and employability skills alongside core academic courses.
- 2) Invest in improving existing infrastructure and developing new ones, including classrooms, laboratories and technology.
- 3) Implement rigorous teacher training programs to ensure educators are equipped with modern-day teaching skills.
- 4) The government should formulate policies to promote robust public-private partnerships between educational institutions and industries to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application.

The possible obstacles to implementing these action points were identified, with each drawback representing a barrier to the action described in the corresponding number.

- 1) It takes a long time to implement as it requires planning, coordination, and sometimes the creation of new laws or policies.
- 2) Financial constraints may limit the government's ability to fund widespread reforms.
- 3) Overhauling curricula and teacher training programs may take time and resources, delaying immediate impact.
- 4) Resistance to change, logistic challenges, and potential conflicts of interest could derail this.

These points were discussed at length by the participants. Some emphasized the importance of implementing the actions. Another noted that practical skills have been included in the national curriculum; however, the facilities to ensure that these skills are projected are not available. In addition, adequate manpower to educate students on these skills is not available.

Option Two: Teach Employability Skills to Undergraduates

This option held that undergraduates in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should also be taught practical and job-specific skills that would serve them in the workplace while in school.

The following actions were considered:

- 1) School authorities should incorporate vocational training programmes into the curriculum to equip students with practical skills in agriculture, technology, entrepreneurship, and other critical areas.
- 2) Internship training programmes should be incorporated into all academic curricula to avail the students of the opportunity to get hands-on training and on-the-job experience.
- 3) The public-private partnership programme should also be structured to encourage continuous development among the current workforce.

The drawbacks to these propositions were also presented for discussion:

- 1) Schools may contend with limited resources and capacity to integrate vocational training into their curricula.
- 2) This will take a very long time to accomplish, and some courses may not be so easily compliant with internship training.
- 3) There is a likelihood that this programme may be abused or circumvented by those who do not want to be bothered again with schoolwork beyond their first degree.

Option Three: Career Guidance and Counselling Services Should be Strengthened in Universities

This last option stated that regular career guidance and counselling consultations should be made compulsory for undergraduates in institutions of higher learning.

Below are the action points:

- 1) Regular career guidance and counselling sessions should be mandatory as part of the curriculum requirements for all students in institutions of higher learning.
- 2) Universities should leverage technology platforms and online resources to provide career guidance services to students. This could include virtual career fairs, online career assessments, and access to informational interviews with professionals.
- 3) The government should expand the scope and capacity of current career guidance and counselling services in the nation so that operators are better placed to offer contemporary solutions and advise to students in their career planning.

Their respective drawbacks include:

- 1) Additional curriculum requirements may strain already overloaded schedules and resources.
- 2) Access to technology and internet connectivity may be limited which hinders equal participation and engagement.
- 3) This may lead to similar demands from other institutional players who feel they are also making big contributions to education development and should be accorded similar if not more resources.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The dialogue primarily focused on the attitudes of Nigerian youths to education, discussing associated problems, effects, and potential solutions. Participants extensively deliberated on the listed options, providing each individual with an opportunity to express personal opinions on the topic. Every contribution was carefully recorded. After each speaker had spoken, their views were

summarized by the note taker to be certain that their points were well understood.

Adherence to the ground rules set for the Dialogue ensured that discussions were conducted in an orderly and constructive manner. Overall, the Dialogue was successful, with active participation from all attendees who offered valuable insights and suggestions throughout the deliberations.

Recurring points among the speakers include the following:

- ❖ Poor educational funding
- ❖ Vocational skills should also be taught in tertiary institutions and not only in secondary schools.
- ❖ Career guidance and counselling services should be implemented from the secondary schools.
- ❖ Incessant corruption in the nation has made youths believe that school is a scam.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were discussed:

- 1) The government should adequately fund education. Those in the educational sectors should be made accountable for the money given and the amount spent.
- 2) Lecturers should ensure that both practical and theoretical aspects of education are balanced in the tertiary institutions.
- 3) The government should make more provisions for counsellors in secondary schools.
- 4) The agencies involved in curbing corruption should ensure that the laws are followed strictly to counter corruption.

About the LRF

The Literary Renaissance Foundation (LRF) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations, which focuses on providing inclusive and equitable for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

Established in response to the rising levels of illiteracy and declining interest in reading and learning in Nigeria, the foundation obtained official recognition from the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria on 23 March, 2018.