EXPLORING THE ROLE OF REAL-LIFE EDUCATION IN ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: It is pertinent to reconsider the structure of our educational system for real life solutions. The study investigated the influence of real-life education on real life problems in Nigeria. Two purposes, research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2024/2025 final year students of Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria 10,438. The sample size for the study consisted of 133 students drawn from six faculties in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria. Multi stage sampling was used to draw six faculties from the entire faculties in the university. Real Life Education Questionnaire (RLEQ) was the instrument used for data collection. Combat alfa formula was used to determine the reliability of the instruments which yielded a reliability estimate of 0.85. Mean, and standard deviations were used to analyze the research questions and t-test was used to analyze the hypotheses raised for the study. The results revealed that real life education can serve as solutions to human real-life problems in Nigeria and recommended the introduction of real-life education into Nigerian educational system.

Keywords: Real Life education, Real Life Problems, Mental Health and Nigerian Education.

Introduction

Education is one of the main forces behind social, economic, and political advancement is education, which is also a fundamental human right. It includes the process by which people pick up the values, attitudes, abilities, and information necessary to successfully navigate and contribute to society. UNESCO (2015) asserts that education helps people overcome the cycle of poverty and inequality by promoting creativity, critical thinking, and personal growth. Every type of education has a distinct function and together they help to build human capital, which is crucial for both sustainable development and national growth (Becker, 1994).

Most people agree that education is a powerful tool for empowering people and advancing society. Its effects are multifaceted, encompassing the following domains: Innovation, entrepreneurship, and worker productivity are all

improved by education. In his human capital theory, Schultz (1961) noted that by enhancing people's skill sets, educational inputs result in larger economic returns.

Finland and Japan, two nations with high literacy rates, are examples of how education and economic performance are positively correlated (World Bank, 2019).

Education promotes equality by giving people the chance to overcome socioeconomic obstacles. Education has been demonstrated to increase access to resources and decision-making authority for marginalized groups, including women and rural communities (UNESCO, 2021). People with higher levels of education are more likely to obtain better healthcare and have healthier lifestyles. For instance, a 2014 UNESCO analysis found that a significant decrease in child death rates is associated with every extra year of education for women. Critical thinking and active engagement in government are fostered by education. Freire's 1970 book Pedagogy of the Oppressed emphasizes how education can enable people to oppose repressive systems and support democratic processes.

A practical answer to many of Nigeria's urgent problems is real-life education. RLE can enable a generation to tackle socio-economic issues like unemployment and instability by giving students real-world experience, entrepreneurial expertise, and civic duty. To fully fulfill RLE's potential in changing Nigeria's educational landscape and promoting sustainable development, educators, legislators, and stakeholders must work together. Recognizing that many of the issues we confront today are not isolated, RLE also promotes interdisciplinary learning. For instance, understanding the problem of climate change necessitates expertise in disciplines like political science, economics, sociology, and science. In order to assist students comprehend how global issues are interconnected and create comprehensive, long-lasting solutions, RLE encourages the integration of various disciplines.

Rapid technological development, a globalized economy, and urgent social and environmental challenges are characteristics of the twenty-first century. To prepare people for the problems of the real world, education in this environment needs to go beyond standard academic learning. The goal of Real-Life Education (RLE) is to provide students the experiences, information, and abilities they need to prosper in a world that is becoming more linked and complex by the day. Critical thinking, problem-solving, practical learning, and the development of skills that are immediately transferable to real-world situations are the main objectives of RLE (Collins & Halverson, 2018). RLE's emphasis on solving real-world issues that affect people, communities, and civilizations is one of its main characteristics. The focus on standardized testing and rote learning in traditional educational systems has frequently drawn criticism since it might be divorced from the reality of daily living (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). RLE, on the other hand, places a higher priority on education that is pertinent, meaningful, and applicable to the difficulties that students will face in the workplace and in society at large.

Additionally, RLE fosters the growth of abilities like communication, teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking—all of which are crucial for negotiating the complexity of today's environment. These abilities are critical for tackling group issues like creating a sustainable future and promoting social justice, in addition to being significant for individual achievement (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

Globally, the idea of Real-Life, Practical, and Entrepreneurial Skills Education (RLE) has drawn a lot of interest, especially in developing nations like Nigeria where traditional education has frequently been divorced from the demands of the labor market. Earlier studies have indicated a number of ways that RLE can help with important issues. Nigeria's youth unemployment rate is higher than 40%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021). Technical skill development, entrepreneurship education, and vocational training are examples of RLE programs that are essential for preparing youth for the workforce. In addition to giving young people the skills

they need to launch enterprises, Omolayo & Olorunsola (2018) contend that entrepreneurship education cultivates a mindset that enables them to spot chances in a challenging environment. Giving Nigerians entrepreneurial and vocational skills can be crucial to reducing poverty, according to a 2019 study by Adekunle. Particularly in rural places where opportunities are few, these skills give people the means to establish jobs and earn money. In Nigeria, women's access to education and economic opportunities is restricted by gender inequality. Through a focus on entrepreneurship and skills-based education, RLE can empower women by providing them with the chance to work for themselves and actively participate in the economy. UNESCO (2017) states that entrepreneurship-focused educational initiatives have proven especially successful in advancing women's economic independence in Nigeria.

In order to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application, the National Policy on Education (2014) recognizes the significance of incorporating practical skills into the curriculum. By focusing on experiential learning and giving access to skill-development programs that are more responsive to regional and community needs, RLE helps close these educational gaps. Problems in the real world are rarely limited to a single field of study. By combining information from other disciplines, RLE promotes integrative thinking (Beane, 1997).

Learners can apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios through experiential learning, internships, and community initiatives (Kolb, 1984). Students gain resilience and analytical abilities by addressing real-world problems (Brookfield, 2012). Values and a sense of duty to local and global communities are ingrained by RLE (Noddings, 2005).

Even though mental health is essential to personal wellbeing, it is still one of the areas of global health policy that receives the least attention. A significant portion of the worldwide disease burden is caused by mental health conditions. Around 1 in 8 individuals worldwide suffer from a mental health illness, which can range from mild diseases like anxiety and depression to more serious ones like schizophrenia, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022). Mental health is still stigmatized and underfunded despite its prevalence, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

A person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being are all considered aspects of their mental health. It influences people's thoughts, emotions, and actions in day-to-day living. Decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and stress management are all impacted by mental health. Every stage of life, from birth to adulthood, depends on it. Positive functioning in many facets of life, such as interpersonal relationships, productivity at work, and the capacity to adjust to change and overcome adversity, are all components of good mental health, which goes beyond the mere absence of mental disease. A "state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community" is how the World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health (WHO, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

For many years, education has been seen as the key to both individual and society progress. However, the strong dependence on standardized testing and rote memorization in traditional educational systems has drawn criticism because these methods frequently fall short in providing students with real-world skills. Emphasizing the application of information to real-world situations, real-life education has become a revolutionary method of instruction. This study looks at how real-life education overcomes the drawbacks of conventional approaches and offers useful suggestions for educators and decision-makers.

It has long been believed that education is essential to both individual and societal progress. Traditional educational systems, on the other hand, have come under fire for their excessive dependence on standardized

testing and rote memorization, which frequently leaves students lacking in useful abilities. Applying knowledge to real-world situations is the focus of real-life education, which has become a revolutionary method of instruction. Examining how real-life education overcomes the drawbacks of conventional approaches, this study offers educators and legislators practical suggestions.

Purpose of the Study

The following purposes have been generated for this study:

1.   To find out the relationship between real life education and real life problems in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria.

2.   To investigate the relationship between real life education and mental health challenges in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions have been raised for this study:

1.   What is the significant relationship between real life education and real life problems in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria

2.   What is the significant relationship between real life education and mental health challenges in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria

Methodology

The research employs a correlation research design as a type of descriptive research design. The correlation research design is employed when the researcher does not directly alter the independent variables, either because those alterations have already occurred or because they cannot be manipulated at all. The study's population includes all secondary school students located in Abuja Metropolis, Abuja FCT, Nigeria. A multi-step sampling method was used to select participants for the study. Initially, the state was segmented into strata based on LGAs employing the stratified random sampling method. Secondly, the Gwagwalada area council within the FCT was selected using a straightforward random sampling method.

Thirdly, eighteen students from every secondary school were selected randomly from the area council. A total of one hundred eighty-one (181) students from public secondary schools participated in the study. The content validity method utilized cross-examination and validation to evaluate the instrument's effectiveness in achieving its objectives. The study employed the test-retest reliability coefficient. Following the pre-test, the tools were reviewed, and any required adjustments were implemented prior to the final implementation. The tool was considered sufficiently reliable for the investigation due to its computed reliability coefficient, which was 0.72. The information gathered for this research was examined with the statistical techniques of simple percentage and Pearson moment correlation coefficient (PPMC).

Results

Research Question One: What is the significant relationship between real life education and real life problems in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria?

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Real life education will help us to solve practical problems	3.10	0.85	Accepted
It will help me to solve some of my personal problems.	3.15	0.80	Accepted
I can develop some solutions to probing questions in my life	3.00	0.75	Accepted
Real life education assist us in our interpersonal relationship	3.18	0.78	Accepted

I can develop new business strategies with real life education	3.09	0.77	Accepted
Management of finance is a skill learnt in real life education	3.00	0.75	Accepted
Resource generation knowledge helps business management skill	3.10	0.85	Accepted
Real life knowledge assist us to behave well in line with societal rules	3.05	0.76	Accepted
Real life knowledge helps us to avoid abnormal behaviours	3.11	0.86	Accepted
Climate change problem can be understood with real life knowledge	3.01	0.75	Accepted
Real life education helps in the understanding of artificial intelligence	3.04	0.76	Accepted

Result in table one, indicated that real life education help us to solve practical problems, help me to solve some of my personal problems, develop some solutions to probing questions in my life, assist us in our interpersonal relationship, develop new business strategies, help with the financial management skills, helps with business management skills, assist us to behave well in line with societal rules, help us to avoid abnormal behaviours, assist us with the understanding of climate change problem, and real life education helps in the understanding of artificial intelligence. The mean ratings fall between 2.20 and 3.49 which is the range of criteria for accepting an item.

Research Question Two: What is the significant relationship between real life education and mental health challenges in Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba Kogi State Nigeria.

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Real life education helps me to manage my temper.	3.02	0.62	Accepted
It helps me to reduce the level of fear in all I do	3.15	0.85	Accepted
Stress is greatly managed through real life education	3.20	0.87	Accepted
Real life education assists us in management of anxiety	3.12	0.79	Accepted
Decision making is facilitated through real life education	3.04	0.65	Accepted
Our mental reasoning is assisted by real life education	3.10	0.76	Accepted
Our social wellbeing is assisted by real life education	3.08	0.74	Accepted
My work productivity skills is enhanced by real life education	3.11	0.77	Accepted
I can adapt to changes in the environment easily through real life education	3.05	0.63	Accepted
I can manage diversity through real life education	3.16	0.85	Accepted

Results in table two, revealed that real life education helps in the management of temper, helps to reduce the level of fear and stress, assist in management of anxiety, enhance decision making, facilitates positive mental reasoning, help our social wellbeing, work productivity skills, helps one to adapt to changes in the environment, and to manage diversity. The mean ratings fall between 2.20 and 3.49 which is the range of criteria for accepting an item.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the research questions one indicated that real life education and real-life problem are correlated. The results of this study are in line with the reported results of the research work of Hart Research Associates, (2015) which indicated that "real-life education bridges this gap by providing students with hands-on experience and industry-relevant skills". The results of this study are also in line with Trilling & Fadel, (2009) which reported that "real-life education fosters skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability, which are essential

for success in the 21st century". The results of this study are also in line with Prince, (2004) which noted that "real life studies show that students are more engaged and retain information better when they see its practical relevance. For example, project-based learning initiatives often result in higher levels of student interest and participation. The results of this study are also in line with the research work of Lusardi & Mitchell (2014) who opined that "teaching students how to manage personal finances, understand credit, and plan for future financial goals reduces stress associated with financial uncertainty led to solutions to real life problems" Durlak et al. The results of this study are also in line with the research work of, (2011) which reported that "effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork are critical for navigating personal and professional environments".

The results of this study are also in line with the research work of Zenner et al., (2014) who posited that "implementing mindfulness programs has been linked to reduced anxiety and increased focus among students" and Goleman, (1995) who reported that "programs focusing on self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation have shown to improve mental health outcomes and interpersonal relationships".

Conclusion

Real-life education represents a transformative approach to addressing the mental health crisis in education. By equipping students with practical skills and fostering emotional resilience, educational systems can better prepare individuals for the complexities of modern life. Collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals are essential to bring this vision to fruition. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impacts of integrating real-life education on mental health outcomes

Recommendations

The following recommendations were raised based on the findings of this study:

1. Governments should mandate the inclusion of life skills and mental health education in school curricula.

2. Professional development programs should equip teachers with the tools to address students' emotional and practical needs.

3. Schools should partner with mental health professionals, parents, and community organizations to create a supportive ecosystem.

4. Digital platforms can provide scalable solutions for delivering real-life education and mental health resources.

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