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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOLISTIC EDUCATION A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION ON UNIVERSITY GRADUATES FUNCTIONALITY IN OUR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined holistic education for sustainable education on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society. Two research questions guided the study. The population comprised of 6,000 lecturers in two universities in Abia State namely; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAU) and Abia State University Uтуру (ABSU). The sample size of 600 lecturers was selected through the stratified proportionate randomly sampling technique. The researchers developed a well-structured questionnaire titled holistic education for sustainable education on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society (HEPSEGFCQS) to obtain data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 14 item statements. Mean was used in analyzing the data for the study. The findings from this study identified the approaches of holistic education for sustainable education which are Academic discipline-based education, Civic education, Environmental education, Entrepreneurship education and so on. It also revealed the influences of such approaches for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society, thus, Academic discipline-based education is the departmentalization of knowledge within a unique profession (occupation). Civic education helps graduates with moral values (ethics); Citizenship education (politics) and contemporary issues help in good political practice; Entrepreneurship education equips graduates with entrepreneurial skills development and management competencies needed to excel optimally in all academic discipline-based education and so on. The paper recommended among others that; holistic education nurtures the broad development of the students and focuses on their intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative or intuitive, aesthetic and spiritual potentials. Implementing holistic education in schools requires the development of a shared vision, goals and objectives of the government, educationists and students.

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INTRODUCTION

Holistic education is a dynamic pedagogy that is interconnected in harmony with the cosmos. Holistic education is a fairly new movement, which began to take form as a recognizable field of study and practice in the mid-1980s in North America (Miller, 2001). Holistic education cuts across a wide range of philosophical orientations and pedagogical practices. This education seeks to create a society where we live in harmony with our surrounding environment rather than the fragmented and reductionist culture assumptions of mainstream education. Proponents of this movement advocate an education that is rooted in the fundamental realities of nature and existence. Holistic education calls on us to restore our vision of wholeness and connectedness which is the

primordial goal of Education for sustainability (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012). Holistic education is defined as striving to teach the whole person as a human soul which includes mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Preston (2012) defines holistic education as "dominant lessons learned from experiencing life". The aim of holistic education according to John (2010) is to prepare students for a fulfilling and productive life in which their skills and attributes are constantly challenged, developed and applied as part of their lifelong learning. Holistic education reflects the education of the whole child. It is an educational journey of personal discovery starting within formal education and then continuing throughout life. The learning and life experiences are continuous with individuals gaining in different ways from the various situations and demands that they are presented with. Holistic education is without a doubt, education for twenty-first century which gears at training students with a global conscience, a vision of peace, love, and intelligence. Holistic education criticizes the traditional approach to education as

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being centered on standardized tests (discipline-based knowledge) for workplace at the expense of neglecting the value-based knowledge required for progressive training of an individual in our dynamic society. It rejects consumerism as the dominant mode of being in modern society. Schreiner (2005) asserted that the debate about holistic education takes place in a world where knowledge and ways of knowing become increasingly fragmented. Life opportunities, seen from an economic perspective, are created by knowing a lot about a small area of knowledge. Holistic education addresses the body, mind and spirit. It has a humanizing importance in people's lives that informs and forms them in how to think critically, act responsibly and create imaginatively. This whole child education is effectively acquired when individual parts of knowledge are synergistically connected to each other (Miller, 2007 & 2010). It seeks to connect the part with the whole. Connectedness is one of the principles of Holistic education; it embraces a curriculum of connections for an authentic integration of students to be functional and relevant to themselves and to their society. Hence, everything exists in relationship, in a context of connection and meaning. For Palmer (1998) teaching and learning require a community that can help renew and express the capacity for connectedness at the heart of authentic education. To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced. Teaching can be said to be the art, practice or profession of giving instruction or doctrine to an audience or a group of learners for intellectual development. The relationship between education and society is multi-leveled and multifaceted. Buttressing this point Abba (2006) reasoned that if education is understood to be the process by which we prepare children to enter adult life and to shoulder the responsibilities that it entails, then this process becomes one of the core pre-occupations of any society as it sets down the conditions of its survival and success. While it is true that many societies have been very successful in preparing individuals to be professionally, economically and technologically competent to face the increasingly competitive conditions prevalent in industrialized societies, it is nevertheless equally true that most education systems have tended to limit themselves to a very narrow definition of what education is purported to achieve. Integration is a vital force of holistic education because it is only when the relationships between ideas are recognized that they become meaningful, otherwise ideas become static and is not meaningful. Integration is the melding of content area concepts when real-life situations provide for such melding. Integration can only be justified when students' understanding of the content is enhanced. To be productive and efficient, students must not only demonstrate knowledge of how to integrate content or concepts within a particular discipline, but they must justify that this method is having a positive effect in their life experience as evidenced. Holistic learning focuses on integration and connection which is facilitated by linear thinking and intuition, relationship between mind and body, relationship among subjects, relationship among self and community, earth connections and self-connections. It addresses the very broadest development of the whole person at the cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels. It concentrates in enabling students to become the very best or finest that they can be, assuring the fullest possible development of the person not only in reaching one's goal but living in harmony with one's experiential life (Forbes, 2004). Today's university graduates are facing higher challenges to succeed in the labour market, modern companies in our society do not employ them much due to the fact that they are not

exposed holistically to the knowledge of sustainable information, skills and competencies require to excel in our 21st century work force. This study therefore seeks to bring some clarity to: What is meant by holistic education. What are the approaches of holistic education? What are the influences of such approaches on university graduates' functionality in our contemporary society?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine holistic education as a panacea for sustainable education for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society. Specifically, this study was designed to:

1. Identify the approaches of integrating holistic education for sustainable education.
2. Find out the influence of such approaches of holistic education for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the approaches of holistic education for sustainable education?
2. What are the influences of such approaches for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive research design is aimed at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2006). The survey design was used because; the data was collected from the sample to show lecturers perception on the role of holistic education for university graduates' functionality in our contemporary society. The population comprised of 6,000 lecturers in the two universities in Abia State (Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike and Abia State University, Uturu). 600 respondents from eight faculties from each of the universities were selected through the stratified proportionate random sampling technique for proper representation. Data was collected using a researcher made questionnaire titled holistic education for sustainable education on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society (HEPSEGFCQSQ). The questionnaire consisted of 14 item statements. Mean was used in analyzing the data for the study. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Data collected were analyzed using the mean scores. The decision rule was that any mean rating of 2.5 and above indicated agreement to the questionnaire item while a mean rating below 2.5 as an indication of disagreement by respondents respectively. The researchers developed a well-structured questionnaire titled holistic education for sustainable education on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society (HEPSEGFCQSQ). The questionnaire consisted of fourteen (14) items which were structured on a four (4) point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by three experts (lecturers) from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture

Umudike (MOUAU), Abia State. The instrument was administered personally by the researchers with the aid of 4 assistants. This resulted in 100% retrieval.

RESULTS

The result of the data analysis was presented on tables according to the research questions. Table 1 reveals the approaches of integrating holistic education for sustainable education. All the responses to the item statements in the table are above the mean cut off score of 2.5. This implies that lecturers agreed in all of the item statements. The pooled mean 3.25 is equally higher than the mean cut off; this showed that the identified approaches of integrating holistic education for sustainable education is highly valued for the sustainability of graduates in this 21st century.

Table 2 showed that the mean responses of lecturers showed that they all agreed on the influence of these approaches on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society. Mean cut-off score of 2.50 was accepted in all the item statements. Thus all the item statements were accepted. Also, the pooled mean of 2.83 was equally above the cut-off score, this affirms the agreement that all the items statements are the roles of these approaches for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society.

DISCUSSION

The results on table one revealed the approaches of integrating holistic education for sustainable education through Academic discipline-based education, Socio-emotional education, Civic education, Physical and health education, Environmental

Research Question 1. What are the approaches of holistic education for sustainable education?

Table 1. Mean responses on the approaches of holistic education for sustainable education

Approaches of holistic education for sustainable Education	Mean	Decision
1. Academic discipline-based education	2.97	Accepted
2. Socio-emotional education	2.70	Accepted
3. Civic education	2.86	Accepted
4. Physical and health education	2.87	Accepted
5. Environmental education	2.74	Accepted
6. Entrepreneurship education	2.87	Accepted
7. Information and technology education	2.95	Accepted
Pooled mean	3.25	Accepted

Research Question 2. What are the influences of such approaches for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society?

Table 2. Mean responses on the influence of such approaches on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society

Influence of these Approaches on graduates' functionality in our contemporary society	Mean	Decision
8. Academic discipline-based education is the departmentalization of knowledge within a unique profession (occupation).	2.77	Accepted
9. Socio-emotional education helps graduates with self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making and relationship skills	2.51	Accepted
10. Civic education helps graduates with moral values (ethics), citizenship education (politics) and contemporary issues.	2.83	Accepted
11. Environmental education helps graduates achieve environmental literacy; which has attitude, behavior and knowledge components.	2.69	Accepted
12. Physical education helps graduates with physical competence, health-related fitness, self-responsibility and enjoyment of physical activity so that they can be physically active for a lifetime.	3.52	Accepted
13. Entrepreneurship education equips graduates with entrepreneurial skills development and management competencies needed to excel optimally in all academic discipline-based education.	2.87	Accepted
14. Information and Communication Technology education helps graduates to acquire computer literacy needed to function effectively in the labour market.	2.63	Accepted
Pooled mean	2.83	Accepted

education, Entrepreneurship education and Information and technology education. The results in table 1 showed also that the mean responses of lecturers on the approaches of integrating holistic education for sustainable education are all above the mean cut-off score of 2.50 and the pooled mean which is 3.25 is equally higher than the mean cut off indicated their agreement in all the item statements. The results on table 2 showed that there are influences of such approaches for graduates' functionality in our contemporary society. They are as follow; Academic discipline-based education is the departmentalization of knowledge within a unique profession (occupation). Socio-emotional education helps graduates with self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making and relationship skills. Civic education helps graduates with moral values (ethics), citizenship education (politics) and contemporary issues. Environmental education helps graduates achieve environmental literacy; which has attitude, behavior and knowledge components. Physical education helps graduates with physical competence, health-related fitness, self-responsibility and enjoyment of physical activity so that they can be physically active for a lifetime. Entrepreneurship education equips graduates with entrepreneurial skills development and management competencies needed to excel optimally in all academic discipline-based education. Information and Communication Technology education helps graduates to acquire computer literacy needed to function effectively in the labour market. Data analyzed in Table 2 showed further that the mean responses in all the items are above the mean cut-off score of 2.50 indicating their agreement to those item statements. The pooled mean is 2:83 which is also above the mean cut-off score of 2.50 indicated that lecturers agreed that the aforementioned approaches of holistic education are essential in equipping graduates with functional competencies to excel in our contemporary society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, holistic education stands as a panacea for sustainable education on university graduates functionality in our contemporary society in the 21st century. Therefore the government, stake-holders, curriculum planners and university administrators should:

1. Provide financial support for universities to practice holistic education which has the capacity to empower students to think differently, to think creatively and reflect on their own values.
2. Include the identified aspects of holistic education in the university programme and see to its implementation because it fosters the development of shared visions, goals and objectives of the government, educationists and students.

3. Sensitize leaders and teachers in universities to imbibe new ideas for holistic education because it nurtures the broad development of the students and focuses on their intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative or intuitive, aesthetic and spiritual potentials.
4. Accept the integration of holistic education in universities for its powers to develop graduates actively beyond academic excellence.
5. Supervise and coordinate holistic education because it seeks to develop students into well-educated, informed and participating members of society.
6. Support holistic education fully for it is the education for twenty- first century which gears at training students with a global conscience, vision of peace, love, and intelligence.

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