FORTY-TWO YEARS OF DIPLOMA DISEASE: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT

BELLO, M.B.
Department of Social Sciences Education
Faculty of Education
University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

Abstract
The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target populations were postgraduate students from public universities in three states of Nigeria (Kwara - University of Ilorin, Sokoto - Usmanu Dan Fordiyo University and Oyo - University of Ibadan). A multistage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the respondents, the first stage; a purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of the three federal universities, Secondly; stratified random sampling method was adopted for selection of faculties in these three sampled universities. Thirdly; proportionate sampling technique was adopted for the selection of 1,275 respondents out of 8,291. A 22 items of three point-Likert scale researchers' designed questionnaire entitled "Postgraduate students Assessment on the Diploma Disease Forty-two Years Questionnaire" with psychometric properties of 0.66 was used for eliciting the needed data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of pie chart, frequency counts, and percentage. The findings revealed that after 42 years of Dore's discovery, diploma disease is still on in the Nigerian education system. Its causes, consequences and ways of combating it which Dore advocated were all in consonance with Dores' analysis. Based on these, therefore, it was recommended among others that, there is a need for the government and private employers to lay more emphasis on capabilities, skills, and ability of job seekers to applied learned knowledge into practice when recruiting for employment.

Keywords: Diploma Disease, Certificate, Qualification and Education

Introduction

Africa has always been a continent of disease, poverty, and hunger. Nigeria has not been spared of these numerous problems. Malaria is still most prominent disease although sometimes, it gets competition from cancer, cholera or even meningitis. However, diseases are not only limited to health but also the education field. And I am not talking about mental health. There is something that education practitioners call the 'diploma disease'. Others referred to it as the certification syndrome.

The diploma disease is not a very old phenomenon since it is related to formal education that was only introduced to Africa by the missionaries and the Arab scholars in the early 1800s. However, of late, this disease has grown from being a disease to an epidemic and is now endemic. This disease is characterised by an unusual craving for certification by learners.

Such learners are more interested in acquiring documentary evidence that they have studied and even passed a certain academic programme or task. The goal of such learners is to finish with evidence on paper as compared to evidence in the head. With this crave, learners religiously attend the lessons, but it gets very tricky when it comes to the end of the course and a certificate is not forthcoming. Certificates of some kind are expected by such people. These may include a certificate of completion or even a certificate of attendance.

Nigerian society is now living in a world of competition and the demand for people to take on additional courses in order to boost the chances of landing a better job are now astronomical. After a university degree, people enrolled in computer classes, language classes, and several small courses like entrepreneurial courses among others. Employers are always demanding several qualifications and skills before giving out a job. This causes scarcity of jobs. A job advert for 20 posts will attract hundreds of desperate job seekers. To address this incursion, employers raise the mark by calling for extra qualifications. Thus, expecting an individual to have a degree, a postgraduate qualification, relevant computer skills, and some other expert abilities.

This leads many Nigerians both youths and adults not to leave school until they accumulate numerous certificates and degrees as expected by employers. Many institutions of high paid salary now expect Nigerian job seekers to have a glib command of English language, French and even any other Nigerian languages, so most Nigerian youths have to keep enrolling in as many courses as possible to be able to fit for the job. Now the downside to this whole issue is that certification is given too much precedence at the expense of mastery of a skill.

For example, many learners are more interested in acquiring a certificate to show that they have completed a three-month course in basic computer applications than learning how to use a computer without a mouse and write the simple formula on excel. The focus is just on the completion of the course instead of serious acquisition of skills being taught. It is for such reasons that you find many people in Nigerian society possessing a pile of certificates even from two-day seminars and workshops.

However, there are other computer wizards who do not even have a certificate in Microsoft word. They simply keep practicing and mastering new things without thinking of certificates. It is really such people who should get the jobs but that does not happen in Nigeria society of today. In Nigeria job interviews today, applicants are no longer asked to demonstrate what they can do but what types of certificate they have been able to accumulate over the years. This call for why in Nigeria and so many African countries, certificates of all kinds can be forged at any price while skills are not easily forged.

The term "Diploma Disease" is referred to as "Paper qualification syndrome" which serves as the basis for seeking employment in many societies of the world. Dore (1976) in his book (The Diploma Disease) said that it is all about the phenomenon known as qualification escalation, which means moving towards achieving higher levels of education in order to stay competitive within the working environment. He draws analogs from a company that normally requires a junior secondary school certificate holder to work for $5 per week as a bus conductor and a senior secondary school leaver works for $7 per week as clerk. As the number of senior secondary certificate holders increases, many could not get the job and now prefer to take up the job of a conductor which is for the junior secondary certificate holders. Within a short period, the bus conductors slot was filled up.

The situation in the present Nigeria society is that people are underemployed. A university graduate will take up jobs that are meant for secondary school leavers just because they couldn't find a suitable one for themselves. Dore gave the reason for the escalation given by employers as simply that, they follow the widespread myth that education "improves" people, and that they are therefore getting more for their money if they get or strive to get more education. The main issue here is that as people are getting more into higher education, packing qualifications upon qualifications, the certificate resource devalued. Little wonder then that many Nigerian graduates are on the streets seeking for jobs.

The "diploma disease" is as a result of the explosion or high increase in the world population (Dore, 1976). Take the case of Nigeria as an example,

increase in population has really caused an increase in the enrolment of pupils in schools, and this large number have to struggle with the limited materials available. There are insufficient funds to cater for these populations of students or pupils, as well as the staff. This situation is not only peculiar to the primary level but all other levels in Nigerian educational system, and this impacts negatively on the quality of education the students are expected to acquire in school.

Dore (1976) also pointed out that the limited number of white collar jobs vacancies is another factor responsible for the escalation of qualifications. Due to the fact that there are fewer jobs opportunities, the level of certification required to attain these positions rapidly increases. With particular reference to Nigeria in the early years of education, it was very easy and possible for a secondary school certificate holder to gain a very good employment either in the public or private sector. For example, in the university setting most of the early Lecturers were employed as graduate assistants, that is, they were employed with a first degree (B.A., B.Sc. or B.Ed.). But today, due to qualification escalation which is rooted in a limited job, the minimum entry qualification for lecturing in any higher institution of learning is Master degree (M.Ed. or M.Sc.).

Another area of Diploma disease is the value placed on the certificate by the society as the only yardstick for employment opportunities. This has also caused many problems in our society and in many other countries of the world. It has led to a drastic fall in the roles or functions of the school. Dore, (1976: 156) stress this further by maintaining that, the more widely education certificate is used for occupational selection, the faster the rate of qualification inflation and more-examination-oriented schooling becomes at the expense of genuine education.

Dore (1997) considers the disease as not only about individuals becoming mindless paper-chasers. Rather it is a systemically induced or compelled phenomenon, affecting societies rather than individuals. Dore's hypothesis has found resonance in several studies focusing on the ill effects of examination-dominated education systems, particularly in developing countries, the study of Little and Singh (1992) and also, that of Assessment in Education special issue on the diploma disease (1997). However, there is more to the disease than the emphasis on examinations. What of the learning deficits creeping in from schools that have to be addressed by examinations at a higher level. This implies that education which is meant to train the mind by giving knowledge that will equip a man to be self-reliant and develop the individual all-around has drastically changed. Schools now produced students who are

schooled but not educated, (victims of a system of schooling without education). The real effect of schooling, which is to alter a man's capacity and ability to do things not only depending on what he learns or the way he learns it, but also why he learns it. That is the basis of a distinction between schooling which is education and schooling when is the only qualification, a mere process of certification. For Dore, the ritualisation of education stems from processes within the classroom "the teachers' emphasis on teaching for the examination, sticking to the syllabus, concentrating on learning to remember rather than to understand, showing extra attention to the bright boys who have a chance of making it" (1976: 81).

When we say schooling for certification, it means the process of schooling for mastering and obtaining qualification, i.e mastering and learning to be able to reproduce facts and ideas for examination purposes only and not gaining knowledge or mastering facts and ideas for application to real-life situations. A case of Sir Lanka was cited by Dore, (1976) where the education given to the children was to qualify them to be unproductive to the economy of the society, rather they become consumers.

The value placed on the certificate by the society has also given birth to social vices and corruption in the educational system of developing countries. In Nigeria for instance, competence is not considered, this now prompt students, teachers, and even parents into going to any length to acquire a certificate. This was the genesis of examination malpractices of a different sort, pay of thesis syndrome, falsification of the certificate, strictly trying to cover the syllabus and devaluation of the certificate.

The concluding part of Dores' analysis proffer some possible ways of combating the Diploma disease in society by introducing some 'modest' proposals aimed at eradicating this education qualification process. These proposals encompass transforming the entire work and education system (including reviewing and renewing school curriculum). In his first proposal, Dore suggests that individuals should start their careers selection earlier as in the case with the developed society. Developing a society experiencing diploma disease should endeavor to transform all their tertiary education and training centers to career learning centers, either part-time or full-time basis. Other proposals are, there is the need to provide capacity selection tests to all points where there has to be a job selection process. He also proposed a radical alternative which is "Deschooling" the society. Dore concludes his analysis by examining his proposals. He expected that it was unlikely that change based on his suggestions would transpire because in order for them to be implemented, a total restructuring of not only the education system but virtually all aspects of society, needed to occur.

A good proportion of Nigerian youths are either unemployed or underemployed according to a report published by the National Bureau of Statistics (2017). The labour statistics report of Nigeria in the forth quartile 2017 has shown that there are 7.9 million Nigerian youths aged 15-34 that are currently unemployed. Also, the report, which was released on Monday, fifth of June 2017, by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that 58.1% of youths within this age bracket of those that are currently working are underemployed. What does this imply? It implies that an individual has to get the maximum possible qualifications to get a competitive job. People's goals and dreams can also be a source of social problems such as depletion of scarce resources and frustration. Social strife across the globe is closely intertwined with the soaring numbers of unemployed and underemployed graduates as a result of the global economic downturn. This is the sole cause of the diploma disease (Dore,1976).

This phenomenon has an unintended consequence on the belief that educational certificates are the key to obtaining the best-paid and most secure jobs, individuals may come to strive for constantly higher credentials in order to procure jobs which previously did not demand these, and for which their education does not, in any case, prepare them. Education thereby becomes merely a ritualistic process of accumulating qualifications. As many graduates continue to be given the power to do all that pertains to their degrees, they have to contend with the reality that their qualifications are either too low for certain job openings or they lack the required entry experience. As a result, they opt to stay in school to get greater qualifications to make them more competitive as they wait out the economic storm. At the end of the day, stacks of certificates will not solve any problem. Employers keep on shifting goal posts. Each dawn comes with new job demands. The result is devastating, Nigerian workforce will get more and more certificates and end up keeping themselves on the shelves to serve as memorabilia of their lost time and dumped money in pursuit of classless credentials. Education in Nigeria has turned to mere certificate-issuing factories and that the acquisition of certificate is doubtful. This qualification inflation has also intensified the lack of workforce alignment. This paper assessed whether The Diploma Disease syndrome that was discovered by Ronald Dore in the year 1976 can be considered as one of the areas where the Nigerian education system got it wrong. Whether the diploma disease after 42 years of its discovery is still on? This was confirmed by the Postgraduate students of some selected Nigerian Universities.

The study examines postgraduate students' assessment of the causes, consequences, and ways of combating the Diploma Disease syndrome in the Nigeria education system. Especially, the study examines:

a. Whether the diploma disease syndrome exists in Nigeria education system after 42 years of its discovery by Ronal Dore.
b. Postgraduate students' assessment of the causes of the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system.
c. Postgraduate students' assessment of the consequences of the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system.
d. Postgraduate students' assessment of the ways of combating the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study

a. Does Diploma Disease syndrome exist in Nigeria education system after 42 years of its discovery by Ronald Dore?

b. What is the assessment of Postgraduate students on the causes of the diploma disease on Nigeria education system?

c. What is the assessment of postgraduate students' on the consequences of the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system?

d. What is the assessment of Postgraduate students on ways of combating the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system?

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted in this study; the choice of the descriptive survey was in line with Sambo (2008), who maintained that it is concerned with the gathering of information on peoples' opinions and assessment of judgment. The population for this study comprised all the postgraduate students in the three purposively selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The target populations were postgraduate students from public universities in the three states of Nigeria (Kwara-University of Ilorin, Sokoto-Usmanu Danfordiyo University and Oyo-University of Ibadan). A multistage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the respondents, at the first stage; purposive sampling technique was employed for the selection of all the three federal universities in Kwara, Sokoto, and Oyo. This is in line with Sambo (2008) who maintains that a researcher can purposively sample

respondents for use if the researcher finds any attribute of interest in the population. Secondly; the stratified sampling method was adopted for sampling faculties in these three chosen universities. That is, the faculties of Education, Agricultural Science, Social Sciences and Humanities.

Thirdly; proportionate sampling technique was adopted for the selection of 926, 204 and 138 from University of Ibadan (6,021), Ilorin(1326) and Sokoto (944) respectively to make a total of 1,275 as sample out of 8,291 postgraduate students (Postgraduate databases of the sampled schools).The respondents include Masters, Doctoral and Professional class postgraduate students. This is in line with The Research Advisor (2006) Table for selecting the sample which stated that the best sample selection for a population between 10,000 to 25,000 at 95% confidence level and 2.5% margin of error.

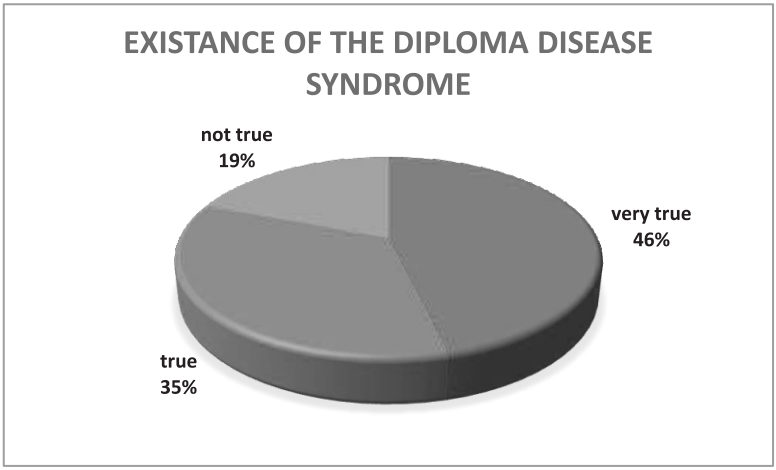
A 22 items of three point-Likert scale researchers' designed questionnaire entitled "Postgraduate Students Assessment on the Diploma Disease Forty-two years Questionnaire" was used for eliciting the needed data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were validated by experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin to ensure its content validity. This is in line with Sambo (2008) who maintained that the best procedure for validating research instrument is to give it to a panel of experts. A test- re-test reliability method was carried out with a sample of 136 postgraduate students of Faculty of the Arts, University of Ilorin. Three-week interval was given, the scores of the first were correlated with the scores of the second using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability index of 0.66 was obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentage).

Results

The findings of the study were presented as follows:

Research Question One: Does Diploma Disease syndrome exist in Nigeria education system after 42 years of its discovery by Ronald Dore?

A pie chart showing the respondents responses on whether diploma disease syndrome exists in Nigeria education system



The pie chart reveals that majority of the respondents attest to the fact that the Diploma Disease syndrome exists in the Nigeria education system after its discovery by Dore 42 years ago. Meaning this might contribute to parts where Nigeria education system got it wrong.

Research Question Two: What is the assessment of Postgraduate students on the causes of the diploma disease on Nigeria education system?

Table 1: Respondents assessment of the causes of Diploma Disease still on

	HMÖ ÖÕPÕ PONÑ postgraduate programme to acquire more certificate because	IJÑÝÑ true %	Í Ø Ñ %	Í ÖP True %	Ī ÑÖ MÓÕCE
Ĉ	ÑÖ ÓÕÕÑÝÒÒÕÕÕÕÕÑ,ÑÓØPONÑ Ö ÖCEØÞMÕÕÑÑ ÑMÕÑÕÑMÑ PÖ ÑÑ employed	ĊĐĐĐ	ÇĊĐĈ	ĈĐĐĐ	Í Ø Ñ
Č	HR MÕPPÖ Ö MÕÑ Ö ÖÓÑ Ö ÖÕÑRÆĐ PÑÓĐ CĐÕ,ÑÑPPÑÓMÕÑ,ÑÖÕÑ salary	ĊĐĐĐ	ÇĈĐĐ	ĈĈĐÇ	Í Ø Ñ
Ċ	Í ÖÑMÑ CĐÕNCEMÓÑ Ö ÖÓÑ CĐÖÖÒĐÒMÑÑ MÕÑ ÑÖ ÓÕÕÑÝÒĐEMÓÑ expecting more with respect to skill, complexity, and specialization.	DĈĐĈ	ĊĐĐĈ	EĐĐ	Í Ø Ñ
Ç	HR MÕPPÖ N,MÖÕ Mcompetitive edge among other candidate seeking employment	ÇĐĐĐ	ĊĈĐÇ	ĈĐĐE	Í Ø Ñ
D	Í ÑÖÕÕÑ R ÞPOOÒ,ÑÓÑÓÕÑ,ÑÖÕĐ,ÑÑÓÞÒÒMÑÑ CØÞMÕÕÑÑ,ÑÖÕÑ to have better job security	ĈĈĐĈ	ÇĈĐĈ	ĊĐĐĐ	Í Ø Ñ
Đ	Ė ÑÑÒPÖÕÕÑMÕÑÑ,ÑÓÑÑÖØÑÓÞÒÒMÑÑ R ÒÕÕÑÑÖÖ Ñ ÖÞCEOÒ,ÑÓ separate status quo among my mates	ÇĐĐĐ	ĊĈĐĐ	ĈĊĐĐ	Í Ø Ñ
Đ	Ė OÒ,ÑÓÑÑ,ÑÑ R ÒÕÕÓÕÕÒÕÑÖ Ñ R ÞPO ÑRÓÕÕCEØÑ PÖ MÕ,MÓÑPR of ideas that will help me expand horizons	DĐĐĐ	ĊĐĐÇ	ĊĐE	Í Ø Ñ
Đ	HPR ÒÕÖÖÓÕÕÑÖ Ñ ÖÑÖPÑÓĐ CĐÑ,CĐÑÖMÕÑPR ÖÓĐ	ĈĐĐĐ	DĐĐE	ĈĊĐĈ	Í Ø Ñ
E	HPwill give me more focused to get things done, that is, it will improve my discipline, which is just what employers are looking for	ÇÕĐÇ	DĊĐÇ	ĊĐĈ	Í Ø Ñ

Table 1 revealed that after forty-two years of Dore's work "the Diploma Disease syndrome", majority of the respondents assessed what Dore pointed out as some of the causes of the Diploma Disease as true, with 84% of the total respondents attesting to these facts.

Research Question two: What is the assessment of postgraduate students' on the consequences of the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system?

Table 2: Percentage table on the consequence of Diploma Disease

	true		True	
hence, the teachers stick strictly to covering the syllabus				
remember rather than to understand.				
leading to examination Malpractices of any sort by all the parties in the education sector (i.e. teachers, students, school administrators and parents)				
certificate falsification				

82.71% of the respondents also attest to the points highlighted in Table 2 as some of the effects or consequences of the diploma disease syndrome in the Nigeria education system as also pointed out by Dore since 1976.

Research Question three: What is the assessment of Postgraduate students on ways of combating the diploma disease on the Nigeria education system?

Table 3: percentage of combating the Diploma Disease in Nigeria education system

ÌOÑGDÖÖÖÖÖMGÒÖÑMÖÑÖBÖNÝÖÖÖÑÑNMÖNNÑÝÁMÒÒMÑÑNR	IJÑÝÖR true %	ÌØÑ %	Í ÖP True %	ÏÑÖÑÝÖÖCE
GÑÖÖÖÖÖÖÖÖÑPOÑCÖNÖÑPÖNÑMNÑPÖÑÒÑÖÑÝÖÖÖÖ ÑÖØPOÑ development of basic vocational skills outside the classroom setting	ČÐBE	ÇÐBČ	ČÐBČ	ÌØÑ
FÖÖCÖMÖPMÖÑÖØÖÖÖPÑÝÑÒÖÑR ÖÑPOÑÖÖÖÖÖÖÑÞØØÑPÖÖ to be able to meet both the social and economic needs of the people.	DČBČ	ÇDBÐ	ĆBÐ	ÌØÑ
ÏÕMÖÖÑÒÖ ÖØÑÒMÖÑÝÑÖÉÑÑPÖÖMÖÖÖÑMÖPCÉÖØ peoples' diverse skills rather than mere certificate by both public and private employers of labour	ÇÐBE	ÇEBÐ	ČBÐ	ÌØÑ
Ì MÖÖÑÒÑÖØÑPOMPPOÑÑÖÖÖRÖÑÖPØØÑÑÖEEÖÍ ÒÑÝØM society focuses more on the breadth and depth of peoples' real experiences and capabilities rather mere paper qualification.	DČBÐ	ÇČBČ	ÐBČ	ÌØÑ

90.75% Postgraduate students agree to the fact that the items in Table 3 can help in combating the diploma disease syndrome in the Nigeria education system.

Discussion of Findings

As revealed in the study, Diploma Disease has been existing in Nigeria since independent in the years 1960 to the present. It was evident from the study that, educational qualifications have been the only requirement used for the recruitment process, and it has increasingly become a very vital prerequisite for job opportunities. Nigerians now see paper qualification much more vital than skills and capacity. Therefore, the aims of teaching and learning in the school have also changed from learning to acquire basic knowledge and skills to learning for certification (mere paper qualification). The certificate is a document, diploma or credential gotten from schools as evidence that one has acquired a certain kind of knowledge. Furthermore, knowledge refers to the fact of knowing about something; general understanding or familiarity with a subject, place, situation by a person through books, media, encyclopedias, academic institutions, and other sources. However, it is mostly through an academic institution that an

individual can be offered a certificate. Nigeria is experiencing a rising number of post-graduate students, in all the fields of study, since attaining higher qualification or certificate as now become prerequisites for job placement, better salary, a better competitive edge, higher status quo, improve social network and career advancement among others as revealed from the study.

This phenomenon is invariably leading to lower quality of the graduates of all education attainment, poor teaching and learning process in the school, student learning only for certification, increase in the rate of examination malpractice, high rate of certificate falsification, a lot of students now contracted their thesis or dissertation out for people to write for them, in the end devaluing the so call certificate.

Form the findings of the study, combating the diploma disease syndrome in the Nigeria society requires among others, deschooling the society, constant and promote review of the school curriculum to be able to meet both the social and economic needs of the Nigerian people, among others. It was evident in the study that for over 42–years of the existence of the concept of the Diploma Disease, it qualification syndrome is still much around in Nigeria education system and constituting threat to the education system.

Nigeria education system after 42 years has been producing seekers of white –collar jobs with little experience and skills required to take Nigeria to be identified as one of the developed nations of the world. Thus, these hands-on experiences lacking in Nigeria education system today contribute immeasurably to what skills and abilities we have but are rarely identified or valued. Degrees and diplomas are in many ways discriminatory as they tend to bias a narrow range of human intelligence, capacities, and cultures. They only reflect how well one is able to memorize de-contextualized facts or perform well on tests, criteria that really mean nothing when working with communities. As Ronald Dore warns in The Diploma Disease (1976), “More qualification- earning is mere qualification-earning – ritualistic, tedious, suffused with anxiety and boredom, destructive of curiosity and imagination – in short, anti-educational.”

Conclusion

Forty-two years later, the education phenomenon labeled by Dore as 'the diploma disease' still eating deep into our education system. Not only that. As Dore (1997) admits four decades after its original piece on the topic, “its presence is stronger and fiercer than ever”. However, this is not to say that the Diploma Disease went unnoticed by its readers. In fact, the Diploma Disease has become one of the most influential pieces within the field of education (Little, 1997). Take areas such as the value placed on the certificate by the

society as the only yardstick for employment opportunities. This has caused many problems in the society and in many other developing countries of the world. It has led to a drastic fall in the role or functions of the school. Dore, (1976: 156) stress this further by maintaining that, the more widely education certificate is used for occupational selection, the faster the rate of qualification inflation and more- examination-oriented schooling becomes at the expenses of genuine education.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was put forward

a. There is a need for the government and private employers to lay more emphasis on capabilities, skills, and ability of job seekers to applied learned knowledge into practice when recruiting for employment.
b. The government of Nigeria should place less value the numbers of certificate earning by the people so as to be able to help solve social problems associated with an examination in school.
c. There is the need to review school curricula to be able to train Nigerian who will not be white collar job seekers but creators of the job.

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