

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HAPPINESS EDUCATION FOR PROGRESSIVE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This educational research paper discusses happiness education and its implications for national progress in Nigeria as a nation. In the process, it examines happiness as a concept from various perspectives which include philosophical, psychological and religious perspectives. It also examines happiness education considering approaches which include eudaimonic approach and hedonic approach. The problem of depression and other problems, happiness education from the points of meaning, aim, curriculum, role of teacher, role of counsellors, learning environment, role of parents, and more, are also discussed. The study also examines implications of happiness education for national development in Nigeria. Several postulations and arguments feature in this study. The analysis shows that happiness is a feeling of pleasure which is one of the desires of the world. Education involves knowledge transmission and acquisition, skills development and building of good character. The analysis also reveals that happiness education focuses on enhancing happiness of the individuals and the society through education. Happiness education can solve the problem of depression and other related problems like some adverse effects of coronavirus pandemic, sexism, racism, corruption, and more, as it enhances the happiness and total development of individuals and the society. Therefore, it is suggested that happiness education is promoted in Nigeria for solution to problems and national progress.

Keywords: Happiness, Education, Depression, Happiness Education, Progressive Nigeria.

Introduction

Happy Schools Project was launched by UNESCO Bangkok in June, 2014 for promoting happiness, well being and total development of the learners. The outcome of this project was the 2016 publication titled *Happy Schools: A Framework for the learners' wellbeing in the Asia-*

Pacific. The report contains twenty 22 criteria for a happy school under three broad divisions: people, process and place (UNESCO, 2017). The criteria under people include friendships and relationships in the school community, positive teacher attitudes and attributes, respect for diversity and differences, positive and collaborative values and practices, teacher working condition and well-being, teacher skills and competencies. Process division criteria include reasonable and fair workload, teamwork and collaborative spirit, fun and engaging and learning approaches; learner freedom, creativity and engagement, sense of achievement and accomplishment, extracurricular activities and school events, learning as a team between students and teachers; useful, relevant and engaging learning content, and mental well-being and stress management. The criteria associated with place include warm and friendly learning environment, secure environment free from bullying, open and green learning and playing spaces, school vision and leadership, positive discipline; good health, sanitation and nutrition and democratic school management.

UNESCO (2016) avers that countries are now making happiness and well-being as crucial goal of their national and education policies. Examples include *Bhutan's 2011 policy of Educating for Gross National Happiness*, the Republic of Korea's 2013 policy of *Happy Education for all*, and Singapore's *Introduction of Social and Emotional Learning*, and more. For the success of happiness education programme, UNESCO recommends prioritizing learners' happiness and well-being, employment of positive teachers and curriculum assessment and evaluation that is directed towards enhancing happiness. Effective and continuous teacher training and professional development, balanced curriculum, promising and innovative school practices and measuring the quality of education are among other suggestions made by UNESCO for the successful implementation of the happy school project, known in this study as happiness education project.

The systems of education pursue national ideals, aims and goals such as peace, security, science and technology, morality, entrepreneurship, good health and fitness, productive interpersonal relationships, wealth creation, sound education as well as happiness. David, Boniwell and Ayers (2013) define happiness as positive emotion and seeking pleasure. Happiness is a feeling of pleasure. This feeling is pursued by all individuals in the world whether selflessly or selfishly. Veenhoven (1996) explains happiness as the degree at which individuals see their lives as favourable. The sources of happiness include political victory, financial success, spiritual endowment, educational success, to name but a few. Fazio, Eiser, and Shook (2004) assert that happiness can enhance social and successful living.

Happiness as one of the ideals of any nation of the world has been claimed to be the ultimate goodness by many thinkers, and this study will explore the intellectual resources to explain the opinions of these thinkers. Happiness can be promoted through education for solving the problem of depression, and many other problems such as psychological effects of corona virus disease (COVID-19), rape and racism; and enhancing happiness and national progress in Nigeria. The type of education for enhancing happiness for progressive Nigeria is termed 'Happiness Education'. It is against this background that this study examines critical analysis of happiness education for progressive Nigeria.

Researchers have carried out studies on happiness. Ashby and Turken (1999) carried out research on, 'A neuropsychological theory of positive affect and its influence on cognition';

Bao and Lyubomirsky (2013) conducted research on, 'The rewards of happiness'; Crum and Salovey (2013) on 'Emotionally intelligent happiness'; while Dabana and Gobir (2018) studied 'Depression among students of a Nigerian University: Prevalence and academic correlates'. None of these researchers examined Critical analysis of happiness education for progressive Nigeria. This is the gap this study intends to fill.

Concept of Happiness

David, Boniwell and Ayers (2013) define happiness as a common-sense, lay representation of well-being. This means that happiness as a concept is seen as synonymous to the general wellbeing or the essence of well-being. The scholars further explain the concept of happiness using two approaches: hedonic approach and eudaimonic approach. From hedonic perspective, happiness is defined as pursuit of positive emotion, seeking maximum pleasure, and a pleasant life overall with instant gratification. Eudaimonic approach surpasses the limit of hedonic approach as it defines happiness as change, growth and breaking homeostasis. This approach stresses development as happiness and well-being. Examining the two approaches, one can see that happiness, according to the scholars consist of both inner pleasant emotion of happiness and all the conditions of life that can actualize this inner pleasant emotion. These conditions or factors include good health, financial success, safety, fulfilled love, political achievement, academic graduation, knowledge and skill acquisition, etc. Happiness is also defined as life satisfaction.

Veenhoven (1996) defines happiness as the extent to which individuals judge their lives in a favourable manner. Joshanloo (2014) states that Buddhism considers happiness as the most important and the ultimate happiness can only be attained by bringing our wants to zero. This claim is beautified with strengths. There are many wants that cause sadness and anxieties; this Buddhist thought encourages ruling out such disturbing desires for peace and happiness. Moreover, this idea can cure the disease of greed and excessive materialism which has resulted in moral decadence and social vices in the society. Considering, in addition, health science findings (Graham, Eggers & Sukhtanker, 2004), heart free from worries (as a result of unachieved wants) is a gate to good health. However, the fact that human beings can be completely free from wants is uncertain, and peace itself is a want.

Happiness in its wide usage comprises pleasant emotional states such as joy, amusement, satisfaction, gratification, euphoria and triumph (Algoe, Haidt, & Jonanthan, 2009). This affirms that happiness is an emotion from within. In line with this, *Yoruba* (a language spoken among Nigerians) word for happiness is '*idunnu*', literally meaning 'sweetness of heart'. This heart is emotion, not a physical heart.

Philosophers, whose main instrument for acquiring knowledge is reasoning, express their ideas on happiness. Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas state that man's last end is happiness (Aquinas, 2011). To clarify Aquinas's statement, he means that every effort and achievement are the means to the ultimate end called happiness. In support of this view, for example, buying an exotic car, building a great mansion, marrying a beautiful well-mannered intelligent wife, possessing a high-class political post and enjoying a sound health... all are to ensure the possessor's happiness. To Aquinas and other like-minded philosophers, no matter what the achievements may be, if the achiever is not happy about his achievement, he has not had the ultimate achievement which must be ensured by other achievements. Aquinas claims

that happiness is caused by both natural laws and divine laws, and the laws are from God, the First Cause. He maintains that perfect happiness can only be attained in the next life, and this happiness is in contemplation not in operation in this life. However, the imperfect happiness of this world is both in contemplation and in operation of the practical human intellect ruling human actions and passions. *Yoruba* version of African philosophy of happiness also clarifies that '*idunnu ni onje agba*' meaning 'happiness is the food of the old people'. This means happiness is the source of comfort, strength and vitality for the old ones. *Yoruba* philosophers also submit that '*inudundun ni onmu ori ya*' meaning 'happiness is the source of motivation.' All these *Yoruba* philosophical statements have great meaning and are instrumental in the wellness of the society.

The sources of happiness may include increase of dopamine (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999), faith in paradise and religious activities believed to be the access to paradise (Pew study, 2006; Pichon, Boccato & Saroglou, 2007; Randolph-Seng & Nielson, 2007), educational success, political victory, physical health, spiritual endowment such as revelatory powers, financial buoyancy, and many more. That is, there are educational, political, spiritual, financial, etc types or sources of happiness. Happiness may be for individual or the society.

On their part, Fazio, Eiser, and Shook (2004) state that positive emotions, one of which is happiness, motivate individuals to engage in desirable behaviours and to adopt problem-solving attitude. They further that happiness enhances social living, successful living and vital living. Bao and Lyubomirsky (2013) opine that happiness can come from success and success can also come from happiness. Other terms that may be used interchangeably with happiness include joy, bliss, delight and satisfaction.

Based on the above analysis and other postulations, the following are considered to be the characteristics of happiness.

- a. Happiness is a feeling of pleasure: The true happiness lives in the heart.
- b. Happiness has time: Happiness exists in a particular person at a particular point in time.
- c. Happiness has duration: Happiness lasts within a particular time frame.
- d. Happiness has a source: Happiness usually serves as a response to a particular stimulus. The stimulus is a means while happiness is an end. The stimuli or sources may include financial success, sound health, etc.
- e. Happiness is the ultimate end to other ends.
- f. Happiness can be independent: Happiness can exist on its own, void of stimuli as sources.
- g. Happiness is a component of pleasure: Happiness is an emotional component of pleasure. Pleasure can be physical, rational or emotional.
- h. Happiness can happen to anyone.
- i. Happiness may show or happiness has signs: Smiles, dance, active performance and even successes are usually seen as indicators of happiness. However, all these may fail to help one know if one is truly happy.

Examining the characteristics closely, one can see that the basic of them is the first characteristic which states, 'Happiness is a feeling of pleasure' and this is the researcher's

definition of happiness. All other characteristics are descriptions of happiness which do not talk about the 'most specific nature' of happiness, which is a feeling of pleasure.

What is happiness education?

Education involves knowledge acquisition, character development and skills acquisition to solve the problems of life and improve its quality. Happiness education can also be termed joy education, bliss education and delight education. In this section, the meaning of happiness education, aim, method, curriculum, role of teacher, role of counsellor, learning environment, etc will be analysed.

Meaning of happiness education:- Happiness education can be described as transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes instrumental to the happiness of individuals and that of the society. UNESCO (2017) describes happiness education as a process of teaching and learning that is geared towards happiness, enhanced well-being and holistic development. It can be argued that holistic development is required for happiness because all-round development may lead to all-round happiness. UNESCO describes happiness education as positive education which embraces relationship between education and well-being. The organization furthers that happiness can facilitate learning and learning can be a source of happiness.

Aim of happiness education:- Happiness education involves teaching, learning and other educational processes whose ultimate end is happiness of the individuals and the society. The processes and the products of happiness education should feature happiness. Dewey (as cited in Oyelade, 2018) suggests that social utility should be a criterion of value. That is, in order to agree that an idea or an action is good, it should be beneficial and satisfying to the society not just an individual. This is to say that happiness education features in educational pragmatism and that happiness education should make social utility as an aim. More, according to Osuji (2006) existentialist philosophy of education affirms that education should be for independent thinking for wise decisions. Making wise decisions is the same as making decisions that lead to happy results both in the short and long run. This indicates that existentialist education features happiness education and happiness education should also focus on cultivating independent thinking in order to make decisions that bring happiness especially lasting one. Also, idealists opine that education should be for the development of the spiritual self and aesthetic values (Osuji, 2006). Happiness is part of the spiritual self and can also be elicited by the beauty. This idealist aim of education is also aim of happiness education. Happiness education is also aimed at making the learners happy even after the graduation by providing them good employment and other needs for a happy life. Happiness education promotes happiness for a lifetime and everywhere since education takes place everywhere, not just within the formal school buildings.

Happiness education curriculum:- Happiness education curriculum is designed for cognitive, physical, socio-moral, spiritual, economic and emotional development. This means happiness curriculum is inclusive. Happiness education curriculum otherwise called, 'happiness curriculum', 'happy curriculum' contains music, which is also a part of idealist curriculum (Akinpelu, 1984; Akinsanya, 2015). Music is one of the greatest and royal roads to happiness in the world of man. Different cultural groups have their native music and borrowed one from foreign culture. Happiness curriculum should contain the mixture of indigenous and foreign musical contents that are most enjoyable and most educative to the

learners and the teachers. All other subjects can be incorporated into the happiness curriculum whose teaching methods should promote a high sense of fun and play for integrated personality and total development. Telling stories, plays and more may feature well in the happy curriculum. Quintillian quoted by Akinpelu (1984) states that play, reward and praises have to feature in the childhood education. This is to facilitate happiness and self realization of the learners. One of the areas of learning that is committed to happiness of learners and others is positive psychology, otherwise known as *science of happiness*. This field teaches creativity, perseverance, kindness and teamwork as means of happiness in learners (UNESCO, 2017). Happiness curriculum is applicable to the learners at all levels of education since happiness happens to everyone irrespective of age, gender and educational level. The curriculum of happiness should be designed in such a way that it creates bliss for all at all levels of education. Happiness education as a separate subject should include topics like concept of happiness, type of happiness, happiness education, happiness education as a remedy to the problem of depression, etc.

Role of teacher:- Active happy engagement of the learners in the learning process should be facilitated by the teacher. Happiness education teacher should first work on himself or herself to make sure s/he is happy before entering the class. His or her look should be inviting to the learners, not frightening. S/he should teach all the subjects s/he teaches in an exciting way. It is the role of happiness education teacher to study the learners and identify the depressed ones among them, and then work on their problem with the support of other teachers, counsellors, administrators, parents and even other learners. In order for the teacher to play this important role competently, s/he must be versed in the knowledge of *happiness psychology and philosophy of happiness*. These are areas of psychology and philosophy that can enhance happiness.

Education should be fun! In order to kindle the interest of the learners in the learning and achieve happy learning, Comenius (cited in Akinpelu, 1984) points out that a child must be given a reason to learn. In the same vein, Dewey (cited in Akinsanya, 2015) stresses that learning should be according to the learner's interest. This implies that the teacher should enlighten the learners about the values of the curriculum contents, methods and other components of happiness education so that they can appreciate the components and be happy. Happiness education teachers should place high emphasis on the utilitarian life so that the learners would develop and become vital sources of happiness and well-being to other members of the society. In other words, the learners should be educated that they become facilitators of joy, peace and prosperity of their society.

Learning environment:-The learning environment should be paradise where all removable impediments to joyful learning experience are removed. In order to make a learning environment happy, it should be peaceful and secure with the aid of adequate size of experienced and devoted security operatives. Also, the learning environment should be well equipped with exciting learning facilities such as computers, books, and others. The learning environment of happiness school can be beautified with beautiful gardens, attractive painting, educative sculptures and inscriptions, trees, to name but a few. It is important that sporting equipment of adequate size are provided for the learners in their environment. Religious places such as mosques and churches should be made available since the adherents of the religions are usually happy serving their Maker. The infrastructural facilities like electricity,

water, motorable road, health centres, etc. should be available to the learners for their happiness.

Happiness counselling in education:- Counsellors are among the most significant professionals in the school for facilitating quality education. However, for there cannot be quality education if education does not enhance happiness of the learners and other stakeholders, counsellors should be at their best to help the learners to remain happy and not depressed. Counsellors can organize a workshop for all the stakeholders including learners in order to enlighten them about importance of happiness in life and teach them how to remove all the obstacles to happiness in the learning institution. In order to facilitate happiness in schools, counsellor can employ appraisal tools to find out how happy or sad the learners or others are. Counsellors can also work with other professionals in order to rehabilitate the depressed learners and others. Counsellors should teach the students the technique of assertiveness so that the students can avoid engaging in the acts that have sad consequences as they defeat negative peer pressure. Decision making skills and peer-cluster involvement as among the counselling techniques should be employed by the counsellors appropriately. Counsellors can also teach the students and other interested ones the effective study habit skills so that they can achieve success in their academic exercise for their happiness. All the psychological and counselling insights can be utilized by the counsellors in enhancing happiness of selves, students and others. Counsellors should place serious emphasis on sharing of good life that promotes happiness between selves and others.

The role of school administrators and government personnel:- The school administrators should give all the necessary support to teachers, counsellors, learners and others for the success of happiness education programme. They should by all means not be obstacles in the process of enhancing happiness of the school. Since the school administrators are the middlemen between the school and the government, they should always notify the government personnel of the resources needed in school for happy schooling. They should carry out their administrative role effectively and control all the school personnel in favour of happiness education programme.

Government should avoid corruption so that all the learning resources will be made available. Government should sponsor special happiness education training programme for the teachers. Government can also make happiness education a separate subject in the Nigerian education curriculum for higher emphasis on happiness education.

Parents and others in the happiness education programme:- The feasibility of happiness education programme also rests on the parents as indispensable figures in the process of education. In the happiness education programme, parents should do their best to be the best source of happiness to their children from homes, and provide all the needed learning materials for the success of happiness education programme. It is the duty of the responsible parents to study their children and know when the children are happy or sad, and the reasons they are. Parents should work with the teachers, counsellors and administrators to improve happiness of the children. Besides parents, friends, boarding house personnel, sports master, health personnel, school psychologists, and all other educational stakeholders at the policy and practice levels should be at their best to ensure the workability and success of happiness education programme.

Role of researchers in happiness education programme:- The educational researchers have a key role to play for the success of happiness education programme. The researchers should investigate about issues in happiness education, publish their findings in the reputable journals, disseminate their scientific findings through the media houses so that large population can be reached, and send their findings to all the stakeholders in education such as teachers, administrators, students and more.

Critique of happiness education:- Bliss education, if carelessly handled, may result in indiscipline, moral laxity and social vices. In order to prevent these weaknesses, the teachers and other stakeholders should instill cautious happy lifestyle, moral excellence, patriotism and passion for national prosperity, diligence and discipline into the learners. It should be noted that learners could be made sad for a greater future happiness if that is the only way to deal with such learners. Happy education should not give room for excessive freedom which may lead to evils. The strength of this educational philosophy lies in its focus on individual and societal happiness, as well as total development of an individual and the society.

The Implications of Happiness Education for Problem-Solving and Progress in Nigeria

The positive implications of happiness education for problem-solving and progress in Nigeria are discussed here:

Happiness education, depression, boredom, happy citizens and progressive Nigeria:- Depression is a state of mind filled with deep sadness which may result from loss of loved ones, failure in the examination, inability to pay school fees, illness, and many more. Depression is the central problem that happiness education is meant to solve. All other problems are instrumental to depression. Murray and Lopez (1996) affirm that depression is the number one cause of disability in developing nations. Nezlek, Hampton and Shean (2000) assert that depressed people have underdeveloped social support system, few close relationships, serious interpersonal conflicts, little intimacy and little enjoyment in social interaction. In addition, Schultheiss, Jones, Davis and Kley (2008) state that depressed people usually pursue unattainable goals due to their state of mind. In their findings, Dabana and Gobir (2018) reveal that Nigerian students experience depression at mild, moderate, moderately-severe and severe levels. They suggest that screening and counseling are made available to the students so that they may rise above their depression. Boredom can be understood as absence of cheerfulness as the result of absence of desired people, things and experiences. In order to solve the problem of depression and boredom, there is the need for happiness education so that the individuals can become happy citizens. Happy products of happiness education programme can also make other citizens happy. They may be able to apply all their learning in their interpersonal relationships with others for national happiness. More, the happy post-school life which may have resulted from gratifying employment may bring peace among the citizens and thus the anti-social problems such as terrorism, armed robbery, fraud, etc can be eradicated for national progress in Nigeria because eradication of evils is a form of progress.

Happiness education, productive educational system and progressive Nigeria:- Happy and all-round developed learners of happiness education system can become future efficient workforce that heighten the progress of the nation. Productive medical doctors, lawyers,

political personnel, counsellors, engineers and teachers are among the possible products of happiness education system.

Happiness education, COVID-19 pandemic and progressive Nigeria:- As at the time of writing this paper, July, 2020, coronavirus pandemic stills remains life-threatening and life-consuming menace to Nigeria and other parts of the world (Ibrahim, 2020). This global threat has several adverse effects on human race. These effects include death, anxiety, poor economy, interrupted regular educational system, depression, to name but a few. Each of these negative effects has its own brutal consequences. For example, poor economy leads to hunger, inability to afford quality medical care which may result in death of the sick, and other problems. However, the individuals who have positive mindset engage themselves in positive activities such as virtual learning, researching, productive family interactions, proper rest during the lockdown, sale of items such as face mask, face shield and hand sanitizers for protection against the spread of COVID-19. These positive people see the pandemic as a soluble problem and believe that it will surely be defeated. The importance of happiness education during this pandemic outbreak is to equip the individuals with positive thinking, emotional stability and happiness so that they can defeat or minimize the adverse effects of the pandemic and pursue more progress as individuals in the nation.

Happiness education, rape and progressive Nigeria:- Rape is now common in Nigeria and other parts of the world that people now say 'rape pandemic' (Noipolls, 2017). Experience shows that rape kills and injures the victim. It can also lead to imprisonment for the rapist. Rape is anti-social and does not gain collective happiness of the society (Hassan, 2017). With continuous adequate happiness education that encourages happiness of everyone in the society, eradication of rape may be possible. With this in place, moral progress of Nigeria is a certainty.

Happiness education, racism and progressive Nigeria:- Racism is one of the most cruel behaviors of human beings. It consists of killing, torture, enslaving, etc. Black Nigerians migrate to the countries ruled by members of other race and these foreign people also visit Nigeria. Both parties need to live peacefully and happily with each other so that cooperation can be ensured for progress of Nigeria and the foreign nation. In order to attain this noble goal, happiness education has a role to play.

Happiness education, sexism, domestic violence and progressive Nigeria:- Discrimination based on gender results in unfair treatment of members of a particular gender. Domestic violence is another common problem in Nigeria. Happiness education that promotes happiness for everyone can remediate sexism and domestic violence issues in Nigeria. When these problems are eliminated, both sexes will be given equal chance in the families and the society to contribute their strengths to the progress of the nation. The couples will also be peaceful to each other and unite to think positively for their development which is a part of national progress.

Happiness education, corruption and progressive Nigeria:- In Nigeria, corruption has been a problem retarding national development in terms of unconducive learning environment, poor medical care, bad roads, irregular electricity, the list goes on. These basic amenities are meant to ease the living for the citizens and make them happy. Unfortunately, Nigerian corrupt leaders do not care for happiness of large population of the citizens. Therefore,

happiness education should be pursued in policy and practice to promote happiness and integrated development of all Nigerians while eradicating corruption.

Happiness education, general anti-happiness culture and progressive Nigeria:- Happiness education has a focus on uprooting anti-happiness culture in order to foster happiness and prosperity in Nigeria. Anti-happiness culture may include all the afore-mentioned problems and other ways of life such as tribalism, regionalism, religious intolerance and suicide, drug abuse, etc that hinder happiness of selves and others.

Happiness education, holistic development and progressive Nigeria:- Happiness education fosters holistic development for holistic happiness and integrated well-being. Happiness education curriculum is designed for intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual, economic and emotional development. This multi-dimensional development is also for national progress of Nigeria.

Conclusion

In this study, concept of happiness, concept of education, happiness education and implications of happiness education for progressive Nigeria, have been discussed. Happiness is a feeling of pleasure and it is a desirable value of everyone in the world. In order to enhance happiness and total development, there is the need for education which involves knowledge acquisition, skill acquisition and character development. This education which focuses on happiness is termed happiness education. The aim, curriculum, method, role of teacher, role of counsellors and so on, in the happiness education programme focus on happiness of individual learners and their total development. Discussion shows that happiness education can enhance national progress in Nigeria as it solves the problems which include depression, boredom, adverse psychological effects of COVID-19, rape, racism, sexism, domestic violence, corruption and cruelty to animals. Happiness education also facilitates holistic development and productive educational system. Therefore, it is suggested that happiness education be promoted in Nigeria for national progress.

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