

The Myths and Realities of Teaching Vocational Subjects in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract *Myths are narratives formative or reflective of social order or values within a culture. These narratives are believed to be true from within the associated faith system within any given culture there may be sacred and secular myths coexisting. The focus of this paper is the myths and realities of teaching vocational subjects in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper gives the concept of myths and realities (learning technology: the myths and facts). It also discusses the E-learning as obtained in modern world. The paper also proffers invaluable suggestions on how the youths can be empowered for sustainable development.*

Introduction

According to the Greek mythos, myth means story or word. Mythology is the study of myth. As stories (or narratives), myths articulate how characters undergo or enact an ordered sequence of events. The term myth has come to refer to a certain genre (or category) of stories that share characteristics that make this genre distinctly different from other genres of oral narratives, such as legends and folktales.

Many definitions of myth repeat similar general aspects of the genre and may be summarized thus: myths are symbolic tales of the distant past (often primordial times) that concerns cosmogony and cosmology (the origin and nature of the universe), may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may serve to direct social action and values. "The forms of folklore: Prose Narratives" where myths are defined as tales believed as true, usually sacred, set in the distant past or other worlds or parts of the world, and with extra-human, inhuman, or heroic characters William Bascom (1978:20). Such myths often described as "cosmogonic" or based on "cosmic" from the Greek Kosmos meaning order. Leeming (1990:13). Cosmology's concern with the order of the universe finds narrative, symbolic expression in myths, which thus often help establish important values or aspects of a culture's worldview. For many people, myth remains value-laden discourse that explains much about human nature.

There are number of general conceptual frameworks involved in definitions of myth, which include:

- a. Myths are Cosmogonic Narratives, connected with the Foundation or Origin of the Universe (and Key beings within that universe), though often specifically in terms of a particular culture or region. Given the connection to origins, the setting is typically primordial (the beginning of time) and characters are proto-human or deific. Myths also often have cosmogonic overtones even when not fully cosmogonic, for instance dealing with origins of important elements of the culture (food, medicine, ceremonies etc).
- b. Myths are narratives of a sacred nature, often connected with some Ritual. Myths are often foundational or key narratives associated with religious. These narratives are believed to be true from within the associated faith system (though sometimes that truth is understood to be metaphorical rather than literal) within any given culture there may be sacred and secular myths coexisting.
- c. Myths are narratives formative or reflective of social order or values within a culture (eg functionalism).
- d. Myths are narratives representative of a particular Epistemology or way of understanding Nature and organizing Thought. For example, structuralism recognizes paired bundles of opposites (or dualities –like light and dark) as central to myths.
- e. Mythnic Narratives often involve Heroic characters (possibly proto-humans, super humans, or gods)

who mediate inherent, troubling dualities, reconcile us to our realities, or establish the patterns for life as we know it.

f. Myths are narratives that are "counter-factual in featuring actors and actions that confound the conventions of routine experience" Mc Dowell, (1980:20).

Background on Mythology (The Study of Myth)

There have been many other functions and implications attributed to myth. They are often highly valued or disputed stories that still intrigue us even though many of us do not recognize them as a living genre in our culture.

According to Mc Dowell (1980:41), Myths are narratives that are "counter-factual in featuring actors and actions that confound the convention of routine experience. Mc Dowell indicates, myths often involve extraordinary characters or episodes that seem impossible in our world, but "the extraordinary feats and traits of mythic protagonists are possible only because they attach to a primary and formative period in the growth and development of civilization" thus their various aspects or dimensions are best considered as "organically intertwined. Infact the contemporary connotation of myth as a falsehood", often undertood as being in opposition to science because they are not testable, which is the case (at least for origin myths) because of their primordial setting – if events described are from a different, earlier world, then of course they would not be repeatable or logical in our world.

Both myths and science offer explanations of cosmos. A key difference is that information about the universe presented in myths is not testable, whereas science is designed to be tested repeatedly. Science also depends on cumulative, frequently updated knowledge, whereas myth is based on passed down stories and beliefs. Myths may change overtime, particularly after contact with other cultures, but they do not change and adapt to new periods and technological developments in the same way science does. Myths may be enacted through rituals and believed in absolutely, but they usually do not have physical effects in the real world, as in leading to new technology for building cars or providing medical treatment Bauman, Richard (1991:20). People may believe they are cured through faith, and they may find important value-laden sentiments in myths, but these "real world results" are neither empirical nor usually repeatable (two standard criteria for science).

Although science differs from myth in offering actual testable, control over the environment and producing, real repeatable results in the world, science is Not completely divorced from myth. Many scientific theories are presented or understood in narrative form, which often end up sounding remarkably mythic Schrempp, Gregory (1992:90).

Myth is a story handed down from olden times which could be imaginary or fictitious, the story that goes when there is rain in conjunction with sunshine; it is believed that a lion is giving birth under a very big iroko tree Otuaga, Mayes (1997:1).

Myths were considered by Victorian scholars as survivals of previous times (perhaps decayed or reflective of "primitive" ancestors who took them literally). Some saw them as evidence for social evolutionary theories of the 19th century. These Victorians scholars (like E. B. Tylor) believed that humans in all cultures progress through stages of evolution from "savagery" to "barbarism" and finally to civilization. This final most advanced stage was of course best represented by the men (Victorians) writing the theories. Such theories no longer seem reasonable. We have not for instance, progressed beyond brutality, murder, war and grave injustices just because we have more advanced technology (infact we use our technology partly to more efficiently, kills other humans), we also recognize the complexity, thoughtfulness and beauty of many other cultures we may once have considered inferior to our own. Based on over a century of ethnology (anthropological field work) and research in psychology, genetics and other disciplines, scholars now accept that humans from all eras and parts of the world have equal intellectual our ancestors understood metaphor

as we do. This does not mean our ancestors lived exactly as we do or that we conceive of the world in identical ways. But myths serve us better as means of understanding our ancestors if we accept their capacity for complex intellectual and artistic expression. Theories allow us to do our work as scholars, though our best efforts come with self-awareness of the theories and methods we employ as scholars. We now understand and discuss traditional myths and other such texts as emergent and intricately connected to performance situations or context. The more we can understand of the context of a myth, the culture it came from, the individual who told it, when and for what purpose, the audience who received it, etc, the better chance we have of offering an accurate interpretation. Of course, the further back in time one goes, the harder it becomes to study context. Nonetheless, the greater the attempt to understand context one makes, the better one's potential to interpret myths becomes. And even if we can't fully understand another culture's myths, that does not mean those myths are insignificant, useless or "primitive" (a very offensive term these days in cultural studies).

Myths, as explanations of the cosmos and how to live, are parallel to science, in many ways. Yet because of their differences from science, they often appear insignificant, whimsical, useless or primitive to contemporary people. Many people lament the decline of myths, because they promise moral guidance and comfort that helps enrich life. For these reasons, many people remain interested in myths and seek to revive or revere them.

Additionally, myths continue to intrigue us because of their rich symbolic, metaphorical, and narrative appeal. Some people believe classical music, movies, and even novels have filled the places myths used to occupy culturally. In our post-modern world many people believe myths exist in new, combined or revived forms. One of the functions of all art is to reconcile us to paradox. Another is to suggest fundamental patterns of life and the universe. Even if they are no longer associated with religious rituals, belief systems or primordial moment of creation, "myths" of heroic characters who mediate the troubling paradoxes of life will always compel us and can, I believe, still be found in our culture Malinowski, Bronislaw (1992:4).

Definition of Myths and Realities

Myth is a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief. A myth is, of course, not a fairy story. It is the presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another. To explode a myth is accordingly not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them Gilbert Ryle (1972:20). It is distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience. The term mythology denotes both the study of myth and the body of myths belonging to a particular religious tradition. As with all religious symbolism, there is no attempt to justify mythic narratives or even to render them plausible. Every myth presents itself an authoritative, factual account, no matter how much the narrated events are at variance with natural law or ordinary experience. By extension from this primary religious meaning, the word myth may also be used more loosely to refer to an ideological belief when that belief is the object of a quasi-religious faith; an example would be the Marxist eschatological myth of the withering away of the state. "Divinities from the core of all mythology". Myths are distinguished from other commonly collected narratives such as folktales and legends. Myths were defined as stories of ancient times believed to be true Grimm, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1987:203).

While the outline of myths from a past period or from a society other than one's own can usually be seen quite clearly, to recognize the myths that are dominant in one's own time and society is always difficult. This is hardly surprising, because a myth has its authority not by proving itself but by presenting itself. In this sense the authority of a myth indeed "goes without saying", and the myth can be outlined in detail only when its authority is no longer unquestioned but has been rejected or overcome in some manner by another, more

comprehensive myth.

According to (Hansen, William F. 2002:125) the sacred element of myths is a recent attachment to definitions, that in his studies of ancient Greek myths, Hansen notes that not all myths had a sacred element. They were not necessarily connected to religious beliefs, but were often secular stories.

While myths does not need to have a sacred elements, they do appear to share a world-forming, or worldview-forming function.

The word myth derives from the Greek mythos, which has a range of meanings from "word", through "saying" and "story", to "fiction"; the unquestioned of mythos can be contrasted with logos, the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated. Because myths narrate fantastic events with no attempt at proof, it is sometimes assumed that they are simply stories with no factual basis, and the word has become a synonym for falsehood or, at best, misconception. In the study of religion, however, it is important to distinguish between myths and stories that are merely untrue.

Myths of Heroes

Nearly all cultures have produced myths about heroes. Some heroes, such as the Greek Achilles, have one mortal and one divine parent. Others are fully human but are blessed with godlike strength or beauty. Many myths about heroes concern significant phases of the hero's career, such as the circumstances of the hero's birth, a journey or quest, and the return home. The birth and infancy of a mythological hero is often exceptional or even miraculous, in the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world, the birth of many heroes followed similar patterns. For example, the Hebrew prophet Moses, the Greek hero Oedipus, and the Roman heroes Romulus and Remus were all exposed to the elements at birth and left to die, but miraculously survived. Other heroes were immediately able to care for themselves. In early infancy, the Greek hero Hercules strangled a pair of enormous serpents sent to kill him. The Irish Cu' Chulainn, who later became a great warrior, also performed astonishing feats of strength as a child.

Most heroes set off on a quest or a journey of some kind. One of the earliest tales of the heroes journey is the Babylonian story known as the Gilgamesh epic, written in cuneiform on 12 clay tablets in about 2000 BC. The hero, Gilgamesh, embark on a quest for immortality. A goddess named siduri guides him, and in the course of his adventures he must do combat with monsters and visit the world of the dead. At the end of the quest, Gilgamesh must accept mortality, which the gods allotted to human beings when they created them. In Greek and Roman mythology the stories of Jason (who sailed in quest of the Golden Fleece) and of Aeneas (who traveled from troy to Italy to found Rome) likewise describe journeys or quests. Other narratives that may be interpreted as heroic journeys include the biblical story of the Hebrew prophet Moses, who led his people on a 40-years journey through the Wilderness, and the Celtic tale of King Arthur and the quest for the Holy Grail.

The most famous tale of a hero's return home probably the ancient Greek story of Odysseus, recounted in the *Odyssey* the poet Homer. When the story opens, Odysseus has been away for nearly 20 years, fighting in the Trojan war and then kept captive by the sea nymph calypso. Back in his kingdom of Ithaca, suitors who want to marry his wife Penelope were devouring and wasting his property and plotting against his son. Zeus persuades calypso to let Odysseus leave and return home, but the god Poseidon was angry with Odysseus and was determined to kill him. In the course of his journey, Odysseus was shipwrecked, held captive by calypso, and nearly devoured by monsters; all his companions were killed, when he finally returns to Ithaca, penniless and without allies, he must plot the destruction of the suitors and persuade Penelope that he really is who he claims to be. Of course he succeeds brilliantly.

(Learning Technology: The Myths and Facts)

The often used term E-learning implies the concept of learning which is delivered electronically. To see the

computer is just one possible medium through which learning may be presented with the help of the internet services. Radio, cinema, television, video etc were all exciting new media, once. They all remain widely used. But they have not replaced media which pre-existed them. The oldest mass medium i.e. the printed word, continues to flourish.

Just as older means of communication continue to thrive alongside the latest computer technology in the information age, so too do more traditional forms of learning medium such as the printed word and audio and video cassette. The latest forms of learning technology should supplement rather than replace these earlier media in a blended approach to learning.

A successful learning experience relies on each of the available modes of delivery being employed to its strengths Schater, John (1999:30). There are numerous examples of learning technology that do little more than transfer the contents of the printed page to the computer screen in the belief that presenting the information this way will magically promote learning.

Reusability

The concept of reusable learning objects is a simple one. Learning material is packaged into discrete chunks for the purposes of being used in a variety of contexts.

Definitions of what constitutes a learning object vary. The IEEE learning technology standard committee (2002) defines a learning object as "any entity, digital or non digital, which can be used, re-used or referenced during technology supported learning, other, more precise definitions exist, e.g learning content management system vendor knowledge planet states "a learning object has four components: an objective, content, a means of assessment and metadata.

Myths and Realities of Effective Learning Technology

Technology has potential to facilitate communication across physical boundaries. It also has the potential to involve the learner, particularly the distance learner, to a high degree as well as being able to present a highly personalized learning experience Downes, Stephen (2000:20).

We might expect an effective technologically mediated learning experience to offer the opportunity for communication and collaboration with similarly minded individuals from around the world. These individuals would comprise both peers and mentors and would ideally form communities in which different members could take the lead at different stages of the learning process. The communication facility could take any form from the simple e-mail list and/or discussion board through to intelligent avatars inhabiting three-dimensional virtual worlds.

The experience would employ different media to achieve different ends. In many cases, depending on the nature of the course, there would be a significant reading component. This reading need not be delivered as bundles of papers. Instead it could be distributed as PDF files for the learner to print locally. It is likely these files will be fully indexed and searchable to enable the learner to quickly retrieve relevant content. There may also be some form of computerized organizer, note taker and annotation tool, which some learners might find beneficial.

Where the computer is used to present learning there is likely to be a high degree of learner involvement. Rich simulations and models will allow the learner to experiment in a variety of novel situations, learning from the experience of active participation and the resulting feedback. There will be a pre-determined pathway through the computer-presented component. Instead it will adapt itself to the characteristics, needs and earlier performance of the individual learner.

Audio and video elements will also be offered where these media are most appropriate for presenting the learning material. Where a course of study is comprised of different media (print, computer, audio, and video) each component will be of sufficient size to provide a study session of satisfying length and substance,

ie. learners will not be required to switch from screen to paper and back every minutes. Multi-media courses may also provide a printed "summary" of key concepts for revision purposes. The summary could be in skeletal form to be expanded upon by the learner as they progress.

Learning technology is currently attracting intense interest due to the rapid increases in technological capability and in the size of the audience able to access it, and also due to the increasing demands upon the education system as the need for lifelong learning becomes reality Fletcher, J. D (2003:30).

Technology can provide quality learning to mass audience, and by offering greater learner involvement and a more personalized learning experience can deliver the kind of learning most suited to the information age. But if technology's potential is to be fully realized its strengths and weaknesses need to be understood by learning providers. The computer is just one of the range of media that should be used to present learning in a blended approach.

The Myth and Realities of Software Package (Paint Brush)

Paint brush is a software package that can be install into the computer, this package has many tools icon such as: eraser, scissors, knife, colours and brush. These tools can enable the artist to draw and produce all manner of design through manipulation. In this package the artist can mix and achieve numerous colour of his choice. At the end of every design or drawings it will be printed out as a printed matter. Technologically and mythically so much has been achieved both mythically and in reality without the physical presence of the tools used such as paint, colours, brush and knives, but the end produce is real and authentic.

The Myth and Realities of IVF (In Vitro Fertilization)

The term *in vitro*, from the Latin root meaning in glass, is used, because early biological experiments involving cultivation of tissues outside the living organism from which they came, were carried out in glass containers such as beakers, test tubes or petri-dishes. Today, the term *vitro* is used to refer to any biological procedure that is performed outside the organism it would normally be occurring in, to distinguish it from an *in vivo* procedure, where the tissue remains inside the living organism within which it is normally found. A colloquial term for babies conceived as the result of IVF "test tube babies", refers to the tube-shaped containers of glass or plastic resin, called test tubes that are commonly used in chemistry labs and Biology labs. However, *in vitro* fertilization is usually performed in the shallower containers called Petri dishes. One IVF method, Autologous Endometrial Coculture is actually performed on organic material, but is still considered *in vitro* (Moreton Cole 2007).

Method

Theoretically, *in vitro* fertilization could be performed by collecting contents from a woman's fallopian tubes or uterus after natural ovulation, mix it with semen from a man and reinsert into the uterus. However, without additional techniques, the chances of pregnancy would be extremely small. Such additional techniques that are routinely used in IVF include ovarian hyper stimulation to retrieve multiple eggs, ultrasound-guided transvaginal oocyte retrieved directly from the ovaries, egg and sperm preparation, as well as culture and selection of resultant embryos before embryo-transfer, back into the uterus.

Egg and Sperm Preparation

In the laboratory, the identified eggs are stripped of surrounding cells and prepared for fertilization. An oocyte selection may be performed prior to fertilization to select eggs with optimal chances of successful pregnancy. In the meantime, semen is prepared for fertilization by removing inactive cells and seminal fluid in a process

called sperm washing. If semen is being provided by a sperm donor, it will usually have been prepared for treatment before being frozen and quarantined, and it will be thawed ready for use.

Fertilization

The sperm and the egg are incubated together at a ratio of about 75,000:1 in the culture media for about 18 hours. In most cases, the egg will be fertilized by that time and the fertilized egg will show two pronuclei. In certain situations, such as low sperm count or motility, a single sperm may be injected directly into the egg using intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) the fertilized egg is passed to a special growth medium and left for about 48 hours until the egg consists of six to eight cells.

Vocational Subjects as Tools for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Sustainable development and advancement is an issue in a global world. Vocational Education or training is focused on individual skills and capability for occupation, therefore, all the courses involved such as Fine and Applied Arts, Home Economics, Agricultural Science, Automobile Engineering and Computer Studies, just to mention but a few are packaged to provide knowledge and develop the skills of the future generations. Technological development and advancement revolve around a sound vocational/technical education programme Bulus (1991:25).

Contemporary education globally, whether general or vocational, is expensive therefore any rightful mind will not envisage of wastage in education. The measure guarantee of eliminating wastage in education and also eliminating the unemployment syndrome is to provide adequate and functional education especially when such education is vocational (preparation for helpful skill occupation). It is mandatory for the government to preserve and propagate pure and undiluted vocational courses/skills even if its nation economy is so depressed.

The Prospects and Problems of Teaching Vocational Subjects in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

These are instructions intended to equip person's for industrial or commercial occupations. It may be obtained formally in trade schools, technical secondary schools or in on-the job training programmes or more informally by picking up the necessary skills on the job. Technical development and advancement revolve around a sound vocational/technical education programme Bulus (1991:41). Vocational skills in schools is a relatively modern development. Akaniwor (1988:20), observes that "the bedrock of any technical breakthrough in the existence of appropriate skill, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in the society is a dynamic instrument of change". According to Bulus (1991:30) vocational technical education involves the acquisition of skills and competences that can help individuals to function productively in industries and commercial occupation.

Until the 19th century such education, except for the professions, was provided only by apprenticeship. This situation was partly due to the low social status associated with such instructions as opposed to a classical curriculum "which was considered "necessary for a youth" with growth of industrialization during the 19th century, however, several European countries notably Germany, began introducing vocational education in elementary and secondary schools. In Great Britain, however, opposition to vocational education persisted into the 20th century, although a few trade and junior technical schools were established by local authorities before the World War II. By the 19th century, public (common) schools vocational education in the United States consisted of manual training and practical arts. These programmes were generally expanded until 1917 when federal aid was provided to public schools for trade and industry.

Suggestions

Sufficient attention should be given to educational sector especially vocational skills. In this regards the noticeable lapses in policy implementation of vocational education/skills for sustainable development for our future generations can be revisited by gearing them into vocational skills, apprenticeship, and a compulsory industrial attachment.

Moreso, to provide adequate equipment to revive all the ill-equipped laboratories for effective training.

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