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ABSTRACT

Education is the bedrock of development in every society. In developing countries including Nigeria, education is conceived as the tool through which national objectives (such as nation building, social integration and economic development) are achieved. Although education has so many prospects for developing countries, Nigeria continues to be crawling with its education sector. It is against this background that this paper seeks to answer the fundamental questions: what are the problems facing the Nigerian educational sector and in what ways can they be mitigated? The national policy of education (1998) in Nigeria has five working objectives and philosophies through which education is geared toward. However, the reality on ground shows that these objectives have not been achieved or have been minimally achieved. Through research, the authors of this paper have discovered the underlying factors for the decay and the agents, cankerworms eating up whatever should have enhanced the development of our educational system. The major problems of education in Nigeria are corruption and misplaced government priorities in policies. Others include poor funding; shortage of quality staff; dearth of contemporary infrastructure; indiscipline among stake holders, staff, students, guardians and government; decayed social values and impunity to existing laws and regulations in the operational modules as it concerns the educational system. The authors suggest that there should be aggressive and intensive sensitization on the need to discard and eliminate corrupt practices and institute a lasting legacy in accountability and transparency by institutional officers as well as amongst policy makers.

INTRODUCTION

Education is said to be the foundation for development in every society. A society with educated citizens is more likely to be more advanced than a predominantly illiterate society. The importance of education needs not be overemphasized. Every society has its own educational policy, focus and philosophy which serve as a pointer to the goal and objective of the society. This is based on the philosophy of the nation's educational system, which encapsulates her needs, goals, objectives and aspirations (Nwafor, 2014). This policy and philosophy are fashioned according to the societal values and the goal which such society intends to achieve. Education, no doubt, is the key to socio-economic and political development of any nation. The type of government also has a determining factor on the philosophy and policy of education.

The policies and programmes are expected to touch every facet of societal needs and aspirations in terms of human and material resources development. It is known that development in any society begins with its human elements, which in turn develop the material resources. The development of the human resources cannot be devoid of education and all its ramifications (Nwafor, 2014). Since an enlightened mind is likely to conceive positive thoughts, human resource development is sine qua non

to national development. In developing country such as Nigeria, education is conceived as the tool through which national objectives (such as nation building, social integration and economic development) are achieved. It is through education that national development can be fostered. An educated and well enlightened community is characterised by the kind of citizens which exist in such community.

Although education has so many prospects for developing countries, the Nigeria educational sector remains one of the most backward and archaic in the committee of nations. This is evident in the large number of Nigerian students who travel abroad for studies, neglecting their home institution. Also, academic calendars are often disrupted due to face off between government, management of educational institutions and the various labour unions. These factors leads to delayed graduation of students and the concomitant spiral effect on the society in terms of developments.

This then leads one to ask: what is the problem with the Nigerian educational sector? It is this thought-provoking question that drives this research to investigate the Nigerian education system and to bring to fore the problems therein. It is the hope of this work to proffer a possible solution to this existential educational predicament in Nigeria and anywhere in the globe experiencing the same problem, through critical assessment and recommendations based on findings.

THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Etymologically, the term “Education” is derived from two Latin words ‘educare’ (educere) and ‘educatum’. “Educare” means to train or mould. It again means to bring up or to lead out or to draw out, thrust from inward to outward. The term “educatum” refers to the ‘act of teaching’ (Kumar & Ahmad, n.d). While the term “educare” or “educere” solely concerned with the development of the latent faculties of the child, it is the teacher, the educator, who guides the child to attained possibilities, using appropriate methods. This implies that education is a process that involves the educator and the educated.

Aside from its etymology, the concept of education has been defined by various scholars in various ways. Aristotle for instance, “Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity which are latent in the mind of every man”. Anuwa Madaki on his part defines education as “the total process of training, gaining of special competencies, knowledge, behaviours and morals required by an individual to be responsible while contributing to societal development” (Madaki, 2019). John Dewey defines education as “the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, towards nature and fellow men” (quoted in Sharma & Hyland, 1991, p. 8). Notwithstanding which of the definitions one chooses, what is common is that education is a process of self-development to attain certain knowledge.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Akpan & Udofia (2015), argue that the system of education which the colonial masters brought into Nigeria was to no good. It was a system of education which was meant to serve them (colonialists) without adding anything meaningful to the individual. Corroborating this view, Chris Akpan & Christopher Udofia in their article “Reforming Education in

Africa: The Liberative Pedagogy Perspective” (2015) avow that “most anti-colonialist of the pre-independent and the immediate post-independent Africa were unanimous on the position that the system of education bequeathed by the colonialist was only useful for the perpetuation of the oppress” (Akpan & Udofia, 2015, p. 72). Further substantiating this view, Agbafor Igwe in his work *Zik: The Philosopher of our Time* (1992), while expounding Nnamdi Azikiwe’s view on colonial education posits that:

...the average colonial subject was educated to seek only white-collar jobs, shun manual labour... with this miseducation, the recipients of colonial education were only fit for public or private employment of the imperialists who retained them as junior workers and grossly underpaid them. (Igwe, 1992, p. 120)

The educational system brought by colonial masters was not meant for the betterment of Nigerians at all, nay, to aid them in further exploration and exploitation of the country’s economy. The system was criticised for being based more on theory than on practice which makes it add little or no meaning to life (Ibukun & Aboluwodi, 2010). It was a banking system of education that is not tilted towards the development of the country, rather, to keep the country in a perpetual slavery without proper technological and economic development. After independence, there was need for a new system of education as this current system was found wanting. It was irrelevant and not suitable to meet the demands of Nigerians. Also, it did not suit the nation’s economy, culture, polity, social set up, desires and aspirations, potentialities, needs and other considerable factors (Kani & Sa’ad, 2015).

Consequentially, various anti-colonial personalities such as Azikiwe, Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, amongst others, who saw “education as a tool for liberation” (Akpan & Udofia, 2015, p. 76), made attempts to formulate a liberative ascetic system of education. This new system of education, according to its proponents, will benefit the African person and at the same time cause derangement to the colonialist system of education. In Azikiwe’s thought, it will bring about spiritual balance, social regeneration, economic determinism, mental emancipation and political Risorgimento (Enoh, 1996). This is similar to the liberative system of education that Frantz Fanon advocated; “an educational system that will make man to be actional; evolving a critical consciousness that will challenge and question the colonial situation” (Fanon, 1967, p. 229). Submitting Fanon’s position, liberative education for Fanon consists in the training of both the mind and hand to overcome psychological impediment and prepare for violent revolution against any oppressive order (Akpan & Udofia, 2015).

Be this as it may, it is important to quickly point out here that the rationale for Fanon’s position was the prevalent education system of that time. As a result of this, it was indeed necessary, as the need of the age, to agitate for the emancipation and freedom from the colonialist. It was pertinent for these revolutionary ideas to come into play if Africans (Nigeria in *strictu sensu*) were to attain self-governance (independence). However, the situation is not the same again. As argued by scholars in extant literatures, the change in the pre-independence system of education which birthed the national policy on education was necessitated by the need to have a

qualitative education which will meet the needs of the contemporary era.

PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION

Philosophy is etymologically defined as the love of wisdom. It comes from the Greek words *Philo* and *Sophia*; where *philo* means 'love' and *Sophia* means 'wisdom'. Therefore, it can be deduced from the above that philosophy is the love of wisdom. But then, this love of wisdom seems to possess ambiguity and controversy (Umotong, 2020, p. 8), since the definition does not convey much itself (Sharma & Hyland, 1991). People have defined philosophy to mean different things. However, the definition of philosophy can be viewed from three dimensions: (1) as an activity (2) done objectively, and (3) with criticality. Thus, philosophy of education is an activity which would be concerned with all sorts of educational problems and questions (Sharma & Hyland, 1991). It is a "critical reflection on justification of certain basic human beliefs and the analysis of basic concepts" (Umotong, 2007, p. 3).

The contemporary role of philosophy of education is far-reaching and comprehensive. It consists, not only of the application of philosophical ideas, knowledge and expertise to the study of educational issues, but also the analysis of claims and arguments put forward in the other disciplines of education. Thus, the global and synoptic perspective of philosophy entails points of contact with every facet of the educational enterprise (Sharma & Hyland, 1991).

The philosophy and objectives of education of a nation is usually an off-shoot of the people's goals which can be regarded as the identified societal values to be attained or sustained through education. It is to be noted that the philosophy and objectives of Nigerian education has metamorphosed into the present state, having passed through some stages with appreciable landmark (Molagun, 1999).

Taking a particular look at the educational situation in Nigeria, first, it is important to highlight that Nigeria as a nation state fashions its federal system of governance in a democratic form; at least nominally, democracy is the system of government in the country. With this, the country has its own educational policy and objective. Second, due to the multiplicity or say, plurality of the Nigerian society, some scholars opine that it is difficult to frame a policy of education. Cornelius Taiwo is one of such scholars. He corroborates that

for sense of national unity, a country where people are different races, and each race tries to emphasize its own importance and there are social or tribal jealousies, one race fears the domination of another race, it is always very difficult to make for a national system of education. (Taiwo, 1980, p. 75).

That notwithstanding, the national policy of education (1998) in Nigeria has five working objectives and philosophies through which education is geared towards. These cardinal points include:

1. A free and democratic society;
2. A just and egalitarian society;
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

It is believed that the above objectives are geared towards self-realisation, better human relationship, national consciousness, national unity as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (Adeyemi et al., 2012). However, the reality on ground shows that these objectives have not been achieved or have been minimally achieved. Premising on the little or no achievement of the educational objectives evident in Nigeria, it is easy to guess that there are factors responsible for this laxity. With this, in order to find solution to this challenge, it is necessary to first articulate the problems and issues facing the Nigerian educational system.

NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: ISSUES

Notwithstanding the palatable and juicy objective of the National Education Policy, it is pitiable that the Nigerian educational system is yet to create national consciousness and patriotism among students and even among lecturers (teachers) at all levels, because citizenship education exists more on paper, and not in practice (Nwafor, 2014). The moral decadence in the education sector is alarming. It is for this reason that Adah (2009) lamentably observes that:

The entire Nigerian educational system is bedevilled by a myriad of problems and the situation is getting worse by the day. These problems include: poor funding, shortage of quality staff; dearth of infrastructure, inadequate classrooms and offices, inadequate laboratories for teaching and research; shortage of journals; indiscipline among staff and students; inconsistent and ill-conceived policies; corruption in high and low places; cultism; irregular payment of salaries; examination malpractices as well as politics in the appointments of heads of many tertiary institutions (cited in Nwafor, 2014, p. 95).

The hallmark for the problem of education in Nigeria is corruption and bad governance. The Nigerian society is generally enveloped by insecurity and near absence of freedom and democracy. Yes, how can a system be called democratic when it does not yield to the needs of the people? How can a system be democratic when her citizens cannot exercise their constitutional rights, namely, freedom of speech, constructively criticise the government without being witch-hunt or their criticisms tagged "hate speech"?

Noticeably, corruption is a prevalent issue in the Nigerian political and economic arena. It is not a contradiction to assert that politically, Nigeria is highly in disarray; unity has eluded her as there are incessant crises in every part of the country due to corruption. Terrorist activities of Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram, IPOB uprising among others constitute the problems we have in this country (Nwafor, 2014). Some researchers like Imhonopi & Urim (2016) have argued that even these perpetuated evil acts/attacks are sponsored. Corruption has really sucked deep into the fabric of the country.

But it becomes a more perturbing and tragic issue when it is found in the educational sector. As sad as this is already, the prevalent corruption in Nigeria political and economic terrain has managed to crawl into the educational sector of the country. Egbefo captured this in his assertion that the practice of corruption in politics is sufficient "tragedy" for a country; when it is practiced in the educational sector, it is a "double tragedy".

This is because the impact of the educational sector on capacity building and national development is fundamental to the development of a given country (cited in Makadi, 201, p. 44). Since education is supposed to be the pacesetter for the people, then, poor education engineered by corruption in the educational system is a fundamental error to any country. This is corroborated in Ozturk (2001), who is of the opinion that societies all through time have always relied on the education for guidance.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2008, defined corruption as the misappropriation of office, public power or authority for personal privileged through bribery, misuse, scam, nepotism to mention but a few. In recent times, UNDP employs a broader definition of corruption in the bed to accommodate corruption practiced in the private educational sector as such, the definition offered corruption as the misappropriation of delegated power in order to get private privileges (UNDP, 2008).

It is an evident and undeniable fact that where corruption strives, doom is inevitable. Corruption is detrimental to the growth and development of a people. In line with this argument, corruption in the educational sector is basically characterised by the inappropriate behaviour of individuals' holding authoritative position in this sector that bring about personal gain and is detrimental to the standard of education and national advancement (Makadi, 2019).

Exemplifying how corruption plays out in education, Okorosaye-Orubite (2008) opines that in one of the workshops organised by the Universal Basic Education Board, about 800 million naira was outrageously spent in budget for a one-day training workshop. This highlights the corruption reality on ground in the education sector in the country. From the above example presented by Okorosaye-Orubite, it can be deduced that the Universal Basic Education Board workshop was used as a means to line the pockets of those in charge of organising the seminar with money rather than serve as a means to improve the educational sector through innovative brainstorming (Makadi, 2019).

In addition to corruption as a factor affecting the Nigerian educational context, other factors including vouchers being inflated, sex for mark practices, ghost workers employed, faked supplies and supplies of fake educational materials, ethnic based appointment and promotions, commonization of withholding of retirement and salaries.

FISHING OUT THE CANKERWORM OF NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In order to be able to check the excesses in education sector, there must be first of all, widespread sensitization on the need to do away with corrupt practices. Students should be made to understand the menace that corruption has brought to the education sector as well as why it is needful for it to be checked. Therefore, corruption must be clearly defined for members of society to have a clear understanding of. By so doing, individuals will be exposed to the dangers and consequences of indulging in corrupt practices.

Secondly, there must be accountability. The accountability is one of the major ways through which corruption can be curtailed. There should be accountability and transparency in

all levels of management. In fact, it should be imposed on in all public officers (including tutors). When people start becoming accountable, they will be cautious on what to and not to do. Also, an effective and reliable financial management system should be established to control and monitor the use of educational resources.

Also, teachers should be paid their entitlement in full as at when due. This is because the happiness of the teacher is paramount in the quest to deliver his services in the 'educare' process. How can the government be underpaying/ cutting salaries of teachers and still expect them to discharge their duties as they ought to? A teacher is thought to be moralist and the final arbiter of the rules (Ottaway, 1962), but when the right condition of living has not been met, it is detrimental, not just to the teacher, but to the student and by extension, the nation in whole. The resultant effect of this is half-baked students who cannot compete globally, delay in graduation due to strike actions, collecting of bribes to grades upgrade, etc. One cannot expect a hungry teacher to happily and dutifully discharge his/her duties. Ludwig Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* wrote "the world of the happy man is different from that of the unhappy man" (Wittgenstein, 2007, p. 72).

Another is for the government to practice true democracy. Nigeria claims to be practicing democracy, however, its system of government looks more like dictatorship. Explaining what true democracy is, Christopher Udofia in his paper "Leadership and National Development" articulates that, "the democratic style of leadership adopts the consultative as well as the participative decision making model whereby followers are consulted and given the chance to participate in decision making" (Udofia, 2020, p. 70). The government should adopt a liberal system of democracy where the freedom among other rights of the citizen is guaranteed. When this is done citizens will feel free and see the need to contribute the growth of the system with positive ideas and constructive criticisms. Government should not always impose or issue directives that are anti education. Funds should also be released for research and revitalization of the education sector.

CONCLUSION

Describing the extent of corruption in Nigeria, Okeyim, Ejue & Ekanem (2013, p. 24) write that "corruption is pervasive in Nigeria" and analyzing the consequences of this, Lawal and Tobi (2006, p. 642) write that "Nigeria presents a typical case of a country in Africa whose development has been undermined and retarded by the menace of corrupt practices". The prevalence of corruption in Nigeria has gained global recognition so much that Transparency International Corruption Perception Index of 1995-1997 ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world and in 1999, Nigeria was also named the second most corrupt country in the world.

Okeyim, Ejue & Ekanem (2013) rightly captured the effect of corruption in education sector when they articulated that corruption is responsible for the high unethical practices among teachers, lecturers and other stakeholders in education and correspondingly all this singularly and collectively poses serious threats to academic standards in Nigeria's education industry and this on its own tells on the quality of manpower

that the education industry produces for the development of the Nigerian state.

It is also the case that corruption is responsible for the poor infrastructural development in Nigeria's education industry despite the many instruments set aside for its development. People in power and managerial positions use the little funds allocated for education for their selfish interest. The government owes its teachers, and when teachers exercise their freedom of expression by way of instituting strike actions, they face threats from the government. On the other hand, the school managements embezzle maintenance funds and deliver substandard infrastructure. In the university scenario, a good number of lecturers collect bribes for students to make them pass. There is a need to sort out this moral decadence in Nigeria; it needs to be radically checked, lest, the effect becomes more catastrophic than it already is. Consenting to this argument, Nwanegbo (1999) writes that:

Morality is a condition-sine-quo-non for development. Any society that experiences fraud, misappropriation, burglary, murder, enticement and various vices rise would face development impediments. A country where egocentrism, individualism as well as greed are central parts of the social arrangement will have development become an illusion (quoted in Madaki, 2019, p. 46)

RECOMMENDATION

In order to restore moral rectitude to the Nigerian educational a number of things have to be put in place:

1. Sensitization: there should be widespread sensitization on the need to do away with corrupt practices.
2. Accountability: there should be accountability and transparency imposed on all public officers (including tutors).
3. Joint monitoring of projects embarked on in the educational sector: projects should be laid bare for public monitoring, and the figures for such project publicized.
4. An effective and reliable financial management system should be established to control and monitor the use of educational resources.

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