

Crisis in Nigerian Education: The Bane of Poor Scientific Discovery and National Underdevelopment

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, education, which is supposed to be the bedrock of development and harmonious integration, is encumbered with myriads of problems, which include poor funding, politicisation of education, incessant strikes, poor policy implementation, and poorly equipped libraries and laboratories. The outlined aberrations have caused economic meltdown, social unrest, and untold hardship and have continued to discourage scientific discoveries in Nigeria. This paper demonstrates that the non-performing attitude to work that is noticeable in Nigeria's educational system today, is due to the government's insensitivity towards the highlighted problems above. Furthermore, the paper attempts a resolution of these problems within the framework of complementarism, a relational and inclusive methodology. Under this ambit or framework, a clearer picture is made to show that the crises and problems in education we are dealing with have something to do with us (academia, students, and government), personally and collectively. In the end, the paper shall outline the effects and factors responsible for the disharmonies in the field of Nigerian education and proffer a viable solution

INTRODUCTION

The concept of education in Nigeria has been mystified due to a series of disharmonies that have truncated the nitty-gritty of the system. In fact, the educational system in Nigeria is on the verge of collapse, as the numerous efforts made by academia to revitalise the system have not yielded any fruit. The decay in the system is worsening, as nobody has agreed or admitted to being the cause of its quagmire. No wonder Adeyinka (1975) observed that the greatest problem of educational development boils down to that of responsibility and control. Things failed in Nigeria's educational system as a result of this. According to Baridam and Nwachukwu (2002), dishonesty and a lack of commitment to the welfare of academia have ushered in variegated problems for governments, workers, and students in various institutions. Indeed, Nigerian education is in shambles. The system, instead of ushering in unity, patriotism, discoveries, and economic stability, ends up bringing untold hardship, fear, illegality, anxiety, disorder, bribery, corruption, etcetera. Onyebamiji (2011), Birabil, and Ogeh (2020) confirm this when they lament over the bastardised and misconstrued nature of education in Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular. The poor curriculum, lack of dependable infrastructure and amenities, and perennial strikes orchestrated by poor governance and the inability of the Nigerian government to keep to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) that it willingly entered into with various unions of institutions have dealt badly with the system.

Ireju and Ahiakwo (2013) note that government insensitivity to the plight of workers, which is evident in poor and irregular salaries, a lack of spirit of hard-work among a growing number of students, and the introduction of sorting for grades, orchestrated by the incommensurate salaries of the lecturers and workers, can be said to be the very reason for the low productivity being experienced in all our endeavours today. It is disheartening that education, which is seen as "a process of learning and training, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills" (Mbotto 2002), is seen as a scam. Today, craftiness replaces creativity; copycatism, plagiarism, and distortion take the place of originality and innovation". The unanswered questions are: what use is a graduate who cannot defend his certificate credibly?; do we still need formal education when one can graduate without being employed to practise what s/he studied?; and who is to blame for Nigeria's educational decay? Do we blame the government or those who put them into power – students or lecturers? Whatever the answer may be, it is of great importance to note that education is essential and instrumental in the growth of man. Dietrich (1987) and Nzewu (1985) concurred with this, as they maintain that education is what makes man realise his full potential as a being, without which s/he will be empty. This is what the Nigerian government or leaders failed to understand, and it could be said to be the very prevalent reason why so many scholars who ought to be in the country chose to move or roll like a billiard ball, in search of greener pastures in other countries of the world. The few scholars who are still in the country are either preparing to join

those that have travelled or combining business with their jobs to make up for their meagre salaries.

The brain drain, which is the case now, is a result of the inability of the Nigerian government to enhance and make scholarship more attractive and enjoyable and allocate a reasonable percentage of the national budget to education. This laden tension has increased social unrest, such as the Boko Haram sect, unknown gunmen, banditry, kidnappings, and Yahoo businesses. Many students have been lured into the aforementioned illegal businesses. Hence, they believe that education and the government of the country are capable of failing them after graduation. In all, the paper identifies that there is a moral decay in the Nigerian educational system due to its unattractiveness. The moral decadence that the Nigerian populace is in today is orchestrated by the failure of the government to see reason in the proposals of the academic and non-academic unions of various institutions in Nigeria. This mentality is borne out of self-interest and an exclusive mindset. Another problem this work identifies is that of ethnocentrism, or ethnic chauvinism, disintegration, and religious skirmishes in the nation. Many in the government believe that the national cake should be shared among themselves and relatives rather than giving out to the workers, whom they feel can manage with the little token they often get at the end of every month. This paper seeks to use complementarity, as an insightful approach or method that operates under the dictates of inclusiveness and togetherness to address the outlined misconceptions. The reason for bringing the philosophy of complementarity to bear on the discourse on Nigerian education is for inclusivity, devoid of exclusivity and divisive mindsets that have for long dominated the educational system in Nigeria. However, the merit of this work hinges on its efforts towards the urgent task of complementarity and sustainability in Nigerian education.

In the first section of this paper, more will be said about the reasons for the crisis and decay of the educational system in Nigeria. A rigorous assessment will be conducted so as to vividly understand the brain behind the hullabaloo often experienced in Nigerian education. At this point, a proposal will be made on how the observed and detected factors responsible for besieging Nigeria's education can be addressed, once and for all. The second section will deal with the issue concerning the negligence and imposition of wrong ideology by the Nigerian government on education. Within this exposure, what education is and is not will be holistically presented. This will address Nigerian students' distorted perceptions of education and encourage the government to promise or enter into agreements with workers in the hope of implementation; thus, a promise made is a debt unpaid. Thirdly, the paper shall recommend complementarity as a way out of the dissolution, bifurcation, and government's hegemony of interests that often see education as nothing that can be considered and held in high esteem. Under this ambience of complementarity, the government will be left with no choice but to see education as important as other necessities of life, like food that we eat; water that we drink; power, fame, and popularity that we seek; and shelter and family that we protect. With this in mind, education would be taken as that which

defines being and becoming, without which society is incomplete and single-minded. After this, a conclusion will be drawn on the best possible format and way forward to address the recurrent problems associated with the educational system in Nigeria.

Adeyinka (1975) observed that the greatest problem of educational development boils down to that of responsibility and control. Things failed in Nigeria's educational system as a result of this. According to Baridam and Nwachukwu (2002), dishonesty and a lack of commitment to the welfare of academia have ushered in variegated problems for governments, workers, and students in various institutions. Indeed, Nigerian education is in shambles. The system, instead of ushering in unity, patriotism, discoveries, and economic stability, ends up bringing untold hardship, fear, illegality, anxiety, disorder, bribery, corruption, etcetera. Onyebamiji (2011), Birabil, and Ogeh (2020) confirm this when they lament over the bastardised and misconstrued nature of education in Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular. The poor curriculum, lack of dependable infrastructure and amebastardizednities, and perennial strikes orchestrated by poor governance and the inability of the Nigerian government to keep to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) that it willingly entered into with various unions of institutions have dealt badly with the system.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theory of national development has been adopted for the purposes of this paper, and Walt Rostow is one of its most prominent proponents. National development theory is a system of principles and strategies that govern a nation's endeavours to accomplish economic and social development (Rostow, 1962). It typically includes plans and measures aimed at fostering long-term sustainable growth, eliminating poverty, enhancing social welfare as well as education, and fostering overall human development. National development theory enables us to comprehend how development is attained and how levels of development fluctuate. National development entails raising a country's standard of living. According to Efemini, "the adoption of a scientific outlook and the centrality of reason are necessary for sustainable development (Efemini, 2010, p.4)." Hence, in terms of practise, this research agrees with the strategy of complementarism.

METHODOLOGY

The analytical method was used in this study. Hence, the paper attempts a resolution of the crisis in Nigerian education within the framework of complementarism, a relational and inclusive methodology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Reason for the Crisis and Decay of Educational Institutions in Nigeria

It is no contradiction to mention here that the reason for the crisis and decay of educational institutions in Nigeria has something to do with us

personally and collectively. For a good number of people, the government should be blamed in totality. This is incorrect, as the government could be said to have the highest share of the blame but cannot be said to be blamed alone. This is because "there is a mutual intimate connection between and among all missing links within a given framework, by reason of which all advantages and disadvantages are shared affairs" (Asouzu 2007a; 223-224). By implication, the government, lecturers, and students are to blame for the issues bordering on a crisis in Nigerian education. While we acknowledge that the government bears the lion's share of the blame because it is its duty to provide for the people, other highlighted agents cannot be excused because they have also contributed in some way. An inquiry into the crisis of education in Nigeria is a complex issue, as diverse reasons can be adduced to explain it. This notwithstanding, some of the causes of crisis and decay in our educational institutions are economic, legal, social, psychological, political, and cultural. Some are due to human failure. We may not go into all the outlined causes; rather, we shall delve into the root causes of this crisis. We are at a crossroads with little or no signpost, and almost no one admits their involvement in creating the problems that we set out to address. A situation where almost everyone does the same questionable thing and goes about complaining about the consequences is a dangerous situation that requires urgent attention. Oh yes, according to Asouzu, "we all feel this collective insecurity, collective deprivation, collective helplessness, and hopelessness; yet hardly anyone dares put the common good first." This we do, forgetting that;

The common good shares much with the transcendent character of being, and any attempt to negate this carries with it a serious repercussion that in turn destroys the very joy and interests a person tends to protect. Being fundamental and transcendent is good. If we act to nullify this goodness, we would be inviting more problems unknown to us (2007a: 226).

Education plays a legitimising role in society. When we define education outside of this framework, which stands for the common good, the resultant effect is a crisis. In other words, when education is seen as something with ephemeral ends, the real reason for its foundation is substituted for something else. If this occurs, vice replaces virtue; sorting or sex for grade replaces hard work; falsehood replaces truth and authenticity; self-aggrandisement replaces generosity; striving for a title, good position, and fulfilling one's desired career replaces ingenuity and scientific curiosity and discovery; and so on, resulting in systemic chaos and frivolity. Within this sphere, the idea that education is a process for the actualization of potential, the common good, and self-fulfilment (Okafor 1984) is neglected. To avoid this sensed calamity, Nigeria's educational system ought to be redefined in consonance with the definition given by D. O. Durosaro and I. A. Durosaro (2009) and seen as (i) "a cultural matrix; (ii) a link of the past with the present in shaping the future; (iii) a means of social change and development; and (iv) a personal function". These summarise what education stands for in this paper. Education, as a link, cultural and social change vehicle, and personal function, assists the individual in appreciating his or her capability in relation to other realities or existents. Plato (1960), Aristotle

(1962), and Dewey (1938) corroborate this, as they averred that "education is more than just imparting information." It redirects the whole personality." It equally helps in the realisation, actualization, and social transformation of man. For them, in a more practical term, education is a drive that puts into the consciousness of a human being the informative message, in an understanding of self and others, for immediate and future referential purposes.

Conversely, good education does not divide; it unites and seeks the transcendent unity of consciousness among all the missing links in the relativity of their being. These superlative hallmarks are nowhere to be found in Nigeria's education. In fact, the system of education that exists here is repugnant and incongruent. To address the issues of crisis and decay in our educational institutions, we must shun exclusivity and embrace inclusivity and the interdependencies that exist between and among realities. When this is done, we mean that where a complementary autodidactic understanding of reality has been inculcated and internalised, we become more sensitive to the fact that education as a process has to do with authentic episteme, which entails self-examination and liberation from ignorance arising from the tyranny of human ambivalent situations, which seeks to inject division into human consciousness and enthrone ethnicity, insensitivity, and religious fanaticism above the common good and orderliness. Under this ambience, education is seen not from the perspective of self-interest but from its fundamental and foundational importance, which is for the mind's reconditioning, retraining, and unveiling of hidden thoughts of thoughts, ideas of ideas, views of views, and realities of realities.

Why the Nigerian Government's Negligence and Ideology on Education Must be Discontinued

As adumbrated by Taiwo (1980: 179), education is meant to empower the neophyte (child) to become a functional member of his or her family and group. The constant attempt often made by the Nigerian government to thwart or neglect the above meaning of education is the reason for the instability and monstrosity in academic parlance and our society at large. The insensitivity of the government to the essentiality of education and its ideology of creating more institutions rather than equipping the existing ones have, in no minimal way, affected the expected result or output of schooling and learning in Nigeria. The Nigerian government is a misinformed government that gives more attention to the budget allocation for those in the Red and Green Chambers (Senators and House of Representative members) than the budget allocation for education. Those in charge of budgeting feel that the mentioned representatives of the government deserve more accolades and remuneration than the teachers and lecturers who taught them and are constantly researching to make discoveries for the betterment of society. This polarised mindset could be said to have been developed by Aristotle (1926:42), who, in his way of reasoning, attached more value to the substance than the accidents or metaphysics of other sciences.

For him, therefore, the substance can always give orders that must be obeyed by the accidents, but the accidents cannot give orders to be obeyed by

the substance. Within this sphere, he sees "metaphysics as a science that supersedes other sciences (ancillary) that contribute little or nothing to society, both in eminence and grandeur" (Ezugwu 2014: 42). Following this hegemonic and dichotomized mindset, "the mind would be inclined to create a picture of human interpersonal relationships where some human beings are perceived as essential and others merely as accidental and inconsequential entities" (Asouzu 2007b: 145). This type of mindset has influenced the way science and philosophy are done in Africa and, by extension, Nigeria. This is also the brain behind the negligence of education on the part of the government. This monstrous view of reality has dealt with the beauty of education, which is subsumed in consideration for others and cogno-normative values (CNV) (values or traditions of logical and universal acceptance rather than emotions). Moreover, the untold disaster that is being experienced in the field of Nigeria's education, which to a reasonable extent is emanating from the government's negligence and ideology, can be averted by understanding reality in its complementary mood and mode. That is to say, the mind must be given complementary training to harmonise and conceptualise everything that exists within the framework of missing links. As a result, the ego or ideology often celebrated within the idea of viewing education as a system-less or meaningless endeavour by both the government and students will be abandoned. Further emphasis on complementarity and missing links as ways of handling the crisis and the Nigerian ambivalent educational system will be given in the next chapter.

The Philosophy of Complementarity: The Way Forward

The term complementarity refers to the idea that "A" remains incomplete until it is complemented by "B" and vice versa. Mbiti (1969), on the notion of complementarity, asserts that to be is to be with others. In other words, an individual derives his personhood from the cultural community. By implication, whatever happens to the individual also happens to the community. It is on this strength that Mbiti came up with the aphorism, "I am due to the fact that we are, and since we are, therefore I am." This view is similar to that of Menkiti (1984), Asouzu (2007b), Gyekye (1995), Ramose (2002), Ijiomah (2006), and Edeh (1983), who believe that "all beings exist in a dual and interrelated fashion". The Africans we know have communitarian mindsets. Therefore, in the African thought system, "being" is "non-being" if it lives in isolation from other beings. Nevertheless, the idea of complementarity was denied by Placid Tempels (1959), who claimed that Africans believe in a unified spiritual life force. This idea is what undergirds the attitude of the Nigerian government and leaders towards the led or governed and education as well. As a result, they believe that in Africa, self-centeredness yields more benefits than a communal understanding of reality. This is the type of mentality that ushered in the crisis in Nigeria's education system.

However, the philosophy of complementarism, which this paper advocates, operates within the ambience of authentic education. Hence, it seeks comprehensiveness, totality, and universality. This type of philosophy is in full

awareness of the implications of fragmentation as an aspect of the future referential dimension of all missing links that exist. As a matter of fact, it admits the fact that "to be" is in recognition of other existents that exist within and outside one's geographical location. Furthermore, complementary education, just like authentic education, does not divide or exclude; it unites and seeks orderliness in relationships with other beings or missing links. It is crystal clear, following the principles of complementarity, that Nigeria's government, which operates on bifurcated ideology and can be said to be adamant about the cries of both students and workers on strike, is no longer in control. This is factual; they can only be said to be in control if and only if they can offer positive governance and a swift response to the outcry of workers who are fighting for a just cause. In other words, to be in control is to be able to understand and empathise with others in the relativity of their being. It is under this complementary lens that (i) a free and democratic society, (ii) a just and egalitarian society, (iii) a great and dynamic economy, and (iv) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (National Policy on Education 2014: 4) can be achieved. Put differently, the above characteristics of education can only become a reality if our minds are geared towards complementary education. Within this framework, education will no longer be seen as a system that has little or no contribution to the development of the nation but as an instrument for national development. To this end, the formation of ideas and policies in government are all aspects of education. In submission, due to the fact that complementarity carries within it the touch of wholeness, universality, inclusiveness, and comprehensiveness, it is recommended as a philosophy that is capable of rewriting the wrongs and addressing the perennial crisis in Nigeria's educational system.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Now, it is obvious that the crisis in Nigeria's education is a result of the hegemonic government that claims to be in control, whereas it is not. The self-egoistic mechanism that is often exhibited by the leaders in dealing with the issues that concern the workers of various institutions plays a major role in the decay and social unrest within the educational milieu. In fact, the poor scientific discovery and underdevelopment in the nation today are tied to the solipsistic mentality of the leaders, who purposely ignore or are unaware of the benefits of education. This paper is a call for the government's politics, lackadaisical attitude, negligence, and unfavourable ideology towards education to be discontinued. This can be done by following the dictates of complementarity. A philosophy of inclusivity, fashioned to end the paranormal that besieged national education and the expansion of thoughts. The philosophy of complementarity, in its relational and interdependent approach, sees reality as an interconnected circuit that is integrated and dialectically attached to each other. Hence, this paper recommends the adoption of complementarity.

It is in this direction that reality is manifested and recognised. Hence, we need one another to be complete as human beings. Within this atmosphere, the Nigerian government will be left with no choice but to guard against any form

of ideology that is not in the interest of all or that is capable of injecting disunity among the Nigerian citizenry, since an injury to one is an injury to many. Likewise, with this, too, lecturers and students will sit up; hence, their inability to get it right now will affect generations to come. Generally, the inclusion or adherence to the philosophy of complementarism will lead to crisis and decay in the Nigerian educational system. Hence, its rudimentary approach allows the recognition of reality in view of the transcendent unity of consciousness among all missing links.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study still has limitations so there is still a need for further research on the topic of crisis in Nigerian education: the bane of poor scientific discovery and national underdevelopment.

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