

EDUCATION CRISES IN NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract

Philosophy and Education can be construed as inseparable entities because both penetrate all aspects to search for wisdom and understanding of events in the universe. Philosophy and Education ought to be instruments that will develop morally responsible individuals in the society. Nevertheless, one can observe that the society we live presently is full of crises in which the education system is not exempted. The crises faced by the education institutions in Nigeria are not different from those faced by the society at large and one can attribute this to the abuse of freedom and irresponsible behaviour of the stake holders. If one is to accept the postulation of Pythagoras that man is the measure of all things then one is equally right to rationalise that man is the architect of the crises in Nigeria educational system. It is on this note that the paper tries to give philosophical appraisal of educational crises in Nigeria by looking into what education is and what education is not. Through the philosophical method of analysis, the paper also rationalises different crises in Nigeria education and educational institutions.

Keywords: Philosophy, Educational Crises, Freedom, Responsibility and Society

Introduction

Education could be seen as an invaluable legacy handed down from one generation to the other in furtherance of the cultural heritage of various civilizations. Education primarily is expected to teach values, culture, leadership and ethical behaviour among other things. Socrates, one of the earliest

philosophers asserted that each child is born with some ideas, capacities and inherent powers which are needed to be drawn out and developed to the full for the child to be useful for himself and to contribute meaningfully to the development of wherever he meets himself. This makes education to be a means by which society ensures its stability. It is through education that young members of a society are taught the expected behaviour of the society. Citizens learn the rules, values, norms and mores of the society to enhance their development. Through internalization of expected behaviour, harmonious relationship is ensured among the members. Hence, education is a social control mechanism that will lead to social order in a particular nation.

Owoseni (2006) sees education as an instrument of change by exposing people on how to meet changing situations. Adaptation to social change prevents conflicts as people are gradually cultured into the society. This might have prompted Durkheim (1922) as cited by Owoseni to view education as the action exercise by the older generation upon those who are not yet ready for social life. School as an instrument of education ought to awake and develop in the child those physical, intellectual and moral states which are required of him in any social gathering he finds himself.

Nevertheless, there are abuse of freedom in the Nigerian educational institutions which in turn has resulted in exhibition of irresponsible behaviour and indiscipline among the school administrators, parents, teachers and students. People believe they can do whatever that pleases them thereby creating crisis for the system. In other words, the situation of Nigerian education appears that the crisis in the system emanated from the abuse of freedom and irresponsible attitudes on the part of the stakeholders. This trend no doubt has serious implications for motivation of children in schools all of which now eventually constitute serious educational crisis for the country. Let us examine the areas of crises resulting from abuse of freedom and irresponsible behaviour in Nigerian education.

The poor perception of the teaching profession

The poor perception of the teaching profession by the populace including teachers themselves could also be observed. Some of the teachers appear to see the profession as part-time work and this is supported by the assertion made by Ajibade (2005) that many of the teachers do not show the will to embrace teaching profession judging by the utterances and inclinations they show concerning the profession. The reason for Ajibade's assertion may not be unconnected with the mode in which they were admitted to pursue courses in teaching either in the faculties of education in Universities or Colleges of Education. For instance, Colleges of Education which are supposed to be professional institutions for teachers in the making are now seen as stop-gaps to get learners qualified into the universities. Even those admitted into certain courses in the Faculties of Education in Universities perceived the admission as the last resort since they may not be admitted into other courses. The result of this is the exhibition of lack of interest in teaching when they are eventually offered appointment in the teaching profession. It has even been observed that many of those who are supposed to be teachers do prefer to pursue the courses they combined with education during their period of studies in Colleges of Education if they have the opportunity to further their studies. This could be the reasons many who are supposed to be in teaching profession engaging in other professions like journalism, finance and even politics.

Authorities of some of these teacher institutions, most especially, the part-time programmes, may also be seen as constituting problems for effective teaching in Nigeria schools. One could observe how admissions are offered for teacher education even to those who are not qualified to teach. Admission into the part-time programmes of study seems to be a play-down on education. This is because admissions are given to students indiscriminately. Some of these students are admitted for four years, some five years and even six years. Admissions are given without proper consideration for the available lecture rooms that could accommodate the intakes. One could at this juncture question the rationale behind the admission of students without the required accommodation. One may justify Ogunode, Akinjobi & Olatunde (2022) when they opined that poor funding of public higher institutions in Nigeria is responsible for the poor quality of education and decay infrastructural facilities. Some of the teacher training institutions seemed to give admissions to students not because of the interest to develop man power for teaching but because of the financial benefits they derived from the students. It is not impossible to see some lecturers that are supposed to develop man power for teaching engaging in the sale of course materials to the students without making efforts to teach them. The outcome of this practice is the fall in the standard of academic performance of students since the graduates of this poor system would go out to engage in professional teaching especially in the public schools.

Crisis of Personnel Management in Nigeria Education

The inability of government to tackle the cost – benefit analysis of education in Nigeria has resulted in personnel management crisis which again has left debilitating effects on the entire education system. Today, with increased enrolment at all levels of educational enterprise coupled with the expansion of sandwich and long distance programmes, part time weekdays and part time weekend, the cost of education has soared tremendously. Improved level of educational attainment has called for improved investment in teachers’

salaries and allowances. This is particularly the case now that primary school teachers are mandated to obtain the minimum qualification of National certificate in Education and compulsory degree certificate for those who will rise to the position of head teachers.

Presently, teachers at the secondary levels are also encouraged to improve themselves educationally. With poor payment and in some cases inability of government to pay teacher's wages as at when due, an environment has been created for indiscipline, decline in standard, frustration, divided loyalty, strikes and paralysis of the school system. As a result of which schools are sometimes closed down for months. Attendance is erratic, progress is stunted in which teachers have to find alternative avenues of making ends meet, dedication, and morale have literally been thrown to the wind. The situation is such that many parents are today withdrawing their children from public schools to more expensive and sub standard private ones.

Private schools are more inviting because attendance of teachers and students is consistent and disruption to academic programmes is relatively low. Nevertheless, some of these private schools are poorly staffed and insufficiently equipped when compared with the public schools. Many of them employed auxiliary teachers to beat down the cost of education. Some of these private schools operate without playing ground, no recreation center for pupils to explore from the workings of nature, no laboratory and no good library. While it is possible to believe that government should treat education as a social service, it is also possible to feel that the situation on ground dictates that government should be less involved in educational administration. In the south west of Nigeria, most of the public schools are overcrowded and can only be attended by the children of the poor who cannot avoid high school fees paid in the private schools. Despite the problem associated with the above, our leaders are busy pursuing their political agendas at the expense of the future generation. Dakuku (2022) reported that the rich and middle classes in Nigeria have

tactically escape from the crisis by sending their children to private schools either at home or abroad thereby creating social inequality.

Based on the above, one presently observes insufficient personnel in the schools, inadequate posting of useful personnel to where they are less needed by the ministry of education. For example, there have been instances in which computer graduates are asked to teach Mathematics in our secondary schools or even at the extreme cases, asking Laboratory assistances to teach Biology and other science subjects simply because government did not post enough teachers to that school and one at times observed arbitrary posting of five teachers to school where there should be two teachers in a particular subject. One expects management and planning of education to be left to professionals who arguably have the training, experience and commitment necessary for attainment of both the long and short term objectives of education.

Enrolment Crisis

Akinwumi (2007) dwelt on the primary schools' enrolment in his article 'Trends in School Enrolment of Primary School Education in Nigeria between 1984 and 2002' with a view to forecasting an adequate enrolment figure for Nigeria. One can infer that as a result of awareness of the social benefits of education by Nigerians, there has been a tremendous increase in students' enrolment. One could trace this to the increase in birth rate and since people are given birth every day, there will be increase in the pupils' enrolment at the primary level of Nigerian education. The high population in tertiary institutions may be seen as a result of increase enrolment in primary and secondary schools and nonchalant attitudes of our political leaders in financial education. In most cases, authorities of the tertiary institutions are charged to look inward, thereby asking the poor students to pay a sort of fees for their education (Adeniyi, 2016). This turn out to be crisis in Nigerian education since government lack the caring capacity, claiming that the era of government funding tertiary institution is over. It is disheartening to know that those in power today that

benefitted immensely from the free education of Obafemi Awolowo in the then western region are proving they lack caring capacity for financing education in Nigeria..

Apart from this, another cause of enrolment crisis could be traced to the misplacement of values by the Nigerians. People seem to attach much importance on schooling. They believe the only way to success is schooling at the expense of vocational training. Nobody likes his son to engage in farming and other traditional training like mat weaving among the others as it was practiced in the good old days. To Nigerians, the only way to success is schooling hence there are crisis of increase enrolment at all the level of Nigerian education. With the increase enrolment of students, government appears not to be interested in the provision of infrastructural facilities to the schools. There is growing shortage of fund and learning resources (Akindutire, 2004). Apart from the inflationary rate which has made it increasingly difficult to construct new classrooms, the existing ones are getting dilapidated and more often are left at the mercy of parents and community to maintain. Even the buildings constructed or renovated at times are done with inferior materials as it is observed in some of the schools in Ekiti State of Nigeria. Usually, government claims that the funds available to it have to be spread on the provision of other social services. In extreme cases, especially in the Eastern parts of the country, students have had to receive lessons under the trees. In other cases, the classrooms are so crowded that learning and teaching process is hindered considerably. There are situations where two teachers make use of the same classrooms at the same time with the attendant disturbance to lessons. Library and laboratory facilities are either in gross shortages or at times not in existence in some schools. Accommodation has become for many students harrowing experience. In fact, many universities no longer provide boarding facilities with its attendant inconveniences to students and dire consequence for learning. At the extreme, students of the higher institution of learning are currently falling

prey to the hands of ritualists in the community they are compelled to live due to lack of hostels in schools. One may ask why we must bring students to where there are no accommodations. Based on the above, the researcher may infer that a teacher will perform best where there is less population of students.

Crisis of Examination Malpractices

Examination malpractice is not something new in our school system. The current trend is alarming and calls for proper attention in order to get rid of its consequences in schools. Whereas in the past, students tend to hide the acts but now advertise them with positive blatancy. The situation is so embarrassed as reported by Ifreke (2023) in Daily Post Newspaper on how the last Unified Tertiary Examination results of some candidates were manipulated on the JAMB portal. The case of one Ejikeme Mmesoma who inflated her result from 249 to 362, and announced as the overall best candidate in 2023 Unified Tertiary Examination justified this. The most pathetic side of it was that the self acclaimed best candidate had been awarded the scholarship of three million naira by Chief (Dr) Innocent Chukwuma before the truth of her involvement in malpractice was revealed. Students involve in the examination malpractice because of desperate need to obtain certificates. Various methods to perpetuate examination malpractices are employed. Some students are competent enough to write examinations for their friends, while some candidates bring prepared materials to guide them at the examination. Alternatively, students by one means or the other obtain question papers and answer scripts in advance which they answer at home. Some of the examinees are assisted by friends, teachers and in some instances by their parents.

Students at times may write important points on their desks before the commencement of the examination. Ladies write on white underwear which they wear to examination hall. Often times smuggled in materials are kept in calculator, four-figure tables, or even inside the answer sheets from where they are recopied. Now with the advent of hand-sets, students may store information

on them or from there receive relevant answers to the examination questions from those who may communicate them.

Sometimes examination invigilators are induced to look the other way or leave the examination hall so that students can engage in malpractices. Unfortunately, at the secondary school level, school principals and subject teachers often collude with students and parents to influence this ugly practice. This is ostensibly done because of their desire to present good result which comes to be a false impression of their students' performance. The consequence of all these is that the results of public examinations have become suspicious with many candidates who have obtained 'pass' grades in this manner get admitted in courses, but they are unable to perform in accordance with the face value of their entry qualifications. The rampant incidence of examination malpractices have been blamed on a number of factors, one of these is that the educational system of Nigeria tends to place more importance on examination and certificates especially for securing employment. This is especially so where a pass or failure is determined by one examination.

Crisis of Admissions and Certificate Racketeering

Consequent upon the limited vacancies and the high demand for placement into secondary schools especially those that are perceived to be of high standards, there are today an admission crisis. Admission into higher institution exhibited high rate of irresponsibility on the part of the school authorities and the parents. In Ekiti State for example, the most sought after secondary schools are the state government colleges which most parents believe to be of higher standard, less school fees and of better facilities than the other public schools. Consequently, parents negotiate the admission of their children especially where the latter score marks which are too low to qualify them for admission. Bribes are known to be offered to secure admission.

The situation is not better in the federal government colleges where admission is based on merit, state quota, catchment zone and discretion. The

implication of the discretion is that admission can be offered to students who do not meet the admission grade by school principals, and federal ministry of education officials on this criterion. Often, such admission spaces are reserved for children of the powerful and influential members of the society, even to the rejection of more brilliant students. That of the university displays high level of abuse of freedom given to the institution authority. Thus, the admissions process is sometimes influenced through bribery, nepotism and other such negative considerations to the disadvantage of merit and scholarship.

The most embarrassing one is the crisis of certificate racketeering as currently observed that Nigerians travelled to the neighbouring countries such as Benin Republic and Togo to obtain degrees that are supposed to take the duration of four years in six weeks as reported by the Vanguard newspaper of Jan. 4, 2024. Also, students at the secondary level today are often caught with forged certificates and statements of results all in a bid to gain admission into tertiary institutions. The incidence of certificate forgery is assuming crisis in a high proportion such that universities and other tertiary institutions now carry out certificate screening exercises to fish out students so engaged in this act of irresponsible behaviour. In some cases, parents and irresponsible university officers are accomplices in this ugly act.

Crisis of Indiscipline, Decline in Standard of Education and Cultism in Educational Institutions

One can observe that today the educational system at all tiers is pervaded by social indiscipline and moral decadence. Students are increasingly questioning and standing up against established norms and values of the society. At secondary school level, cases of disobedience to constituted authority and complete disregard for rules and regulations are becoming rampant. Today, suspension from school or outright expulsion is seen merely as a fashion of the season especially for boys.

Adigun (2005) averted that deviant behaviours like sex abuse, alcoholism, smoking, absenteeism, bullying and acts of hooliganism are common features of the boarding house system in secondary schools. Consequently, education standard are said to be declining at a very rapid rate as this is reflected in the number of failure in senior secondary school examinations. Even for those who through one avenue or the other would manage to succeed in the senior secondary school examinations, the ability to analyse issues clearly or present arguments logically at the tertiary level become quite worrisome. Students' ability to express themselves in clear, correct and simple English and other languages appears to be on the decline in spite of the improved means of communication. Ability to undertake private study and academic research is on the decline too for the students of most of the Nigeria tertiary institutions. Perhaps, what is more worrisome to parents, guardians, teachers, educational policy makers, the government and indeed the entire Nigerian society is the spate and incidence of secret cult activities on the tertiary institution campuses in Nigeria. Today, the entire university environment is threatened by the emergence of secret cults whose members have unleashed a ruthless orgy of sexual assault, arson, outright killing of members of competing cult associations and at the extreme, killing of the innocent student on the campus as it happened recently in the Federal University of Oye in Ekiti State.

An ordinary law abiding member of the university community suffers a threat. These include lecturers who are perceived by such members to be obstacles to the attainment of their nefarious acts. The members exhibit irresponsible behaviour like regular absence from classes, abandonment of their studies in order to attend what they understand as "connections and conclave meeting" in distant states. Cases of student deaths have been reported as a result of cult activities. Cult induction based on the abuse of freedom is said to include

administration of hard-drugs and body mutilation and a variety of irresponsible activities.

All the above facts are clear indications that there is high level of indiscipline and irresponsible behaviour in Nigerian education system. This could be attributed to abuse of freedom by an individual as opposed to what entails in the traditional education of Nigeria where morality, discipline, honesty, freedom and responsibility are the watchwords. Education is good only if it is primarily for the sake of developing the individual, that is, the mission of education is to teach the individual how to think and act responsibly. To develop and perform some skills by himself and for his own benefit within the bounds and restraints set out by the democratic system and its laws.

Conclusion

Education that leads to the development of the individual must be accompanied by freedom, because without the mental disposition, education becomes nothing but imposition. Absolute freedom however, should be avoided because this can hinder the process by way of abuses. Education is ultimately an activity of the individual. The society at best provides only the means and method. Existentialists recognized this fact when they stressed the need for teachers to guide the young ones. This is because, though education is personal, the individual must use his knowledge for the society because the degree to which an individual contributes to the society will depend on the kind of experience imparted on him by that society. Finally education is to develop the individual through the instrumentality of the society by way of organisation of experience such that the individual is transformed into a useful part of the

society. Such an education which can develop man to be free and be responsible is essential to every individual and it should be strived for by all.

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