

POVERTY , UNEMPLOYMENT, CORRUPTION AS A TOOL FOR CRISES IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM.

By

ZAINAB ABDULLAHI JANTULLU

Department of physics

Adamu Augie Collage Of Education Argungu, Kebbi State Nigeria.

Email address: zainabjntllu@gmail.com

08032968482

Abstract

Education in Nigeria has witnessed a number of crises. The basic and the secondary levels have failed to lay solid foundations for the tertiary level. The crises that pervade the tertiary level resulted in the crises of manpower at all levels. This circle of crises combined to make education in the country a crisis child. This paper therefore focused on education crises in Nigeria. Examination malpractices, menace of secret cults, low enrolment, poor performance, poor products and abandoned projects are the major crises identified and discussed in the paper. Their dangers to the education sector in the country were highlighted. Among others, attitudinal change is highly recommended.

Keyword: Poverty, Unemployment, Corruption, Crises and Education.

Introduction

Education is at the center of building human capital (silas ,2015) . The evidence of the unfortunate state of education system in Nigeria is very glaring , just like other sectors, the nation's education system has been on a steady decline. As we know, incessant school closures due to strike action have been the norm of the day. Also, most of the classrooms in Nigerian schools are dilapidated, sub-standard and unfit for human habitation. There have been cases of school buildings that have collapsed killing children in some parts of Nigeria (silas,2015). Education is the process of developing the capacities and potentials of the individual to prepare that individual to be successful in a specific society or culture (Umar, 2015). From this perspective, education is serving primarily as an individual development function, Which begins at birth and continues throughout life. In the past, once the formal primary and secondary schooling was completed the process was finished, adults are quite often learning in informal setting throughout their working live and even into retirement.

Education, in its broadest sense, may be defined as a process designed to inculcate the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enable individuals to cope effectively with their environment. Its purpose is to foster and promote fullest individual self-realization for all people. Achieving these goals require understanding and commitment to the proposition that education is a primary instrument for social and economic advancement of human welfare (Umar, 2015)

The crises we are experiencing now may well be more dramatic than any of the preceding ones, the rate of change in our age is faster than ever before, because the crises are more extensive, involving the entire country, and several major transitions are coinciding. The current crisis, therefore, is not just a crisis of individuals, governments, or social institutions; it is a crisis of planetary dimensions. As individuals, as a society, as a civilization, and as a planetary ecosystem, we are reaching the turning point (Silas, 2015).

The word, Crises" is a noun and originated from the Greek word „krisis" meaning "turning point in a disease

From the above, crisis is a turning point. In medical field for instance, it is the point at which the patient gets either better or worse. But the present crisis in education is different. Things can't get worse. They can only get better. We have reached an extreme in the swing of the pendulum where we can deliberate and chart a course for education in the country. For every country to have a successful education system the following factors has to be minimize or given consideration.

Poverty is an impediment to the assurance of quality of life in almost all countries of the world. Poverty has increased considerably in Nigeria compared to China, Brazil, Bangladesh and South Africa where poverty rates have declined significantly in the last two decades (Egunjobi, 2019). Globally, in 2019 Nigeria topped the list of countries having the majority of her citizens living in extreme poverty with 86.9m people, closely followed by India (71.5m), and then the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (60.9m) (Abdulmalik, 2015). As expected, Nigeria topped the list in Africa with 86.9m people in this category, implying that 46.7% of its population (almost half of her population) lived in extreme poverty.

In 2019, the estimated population of Nigerian was about 180m, and about 126m of these are poor (Egunjobi, 2019). This trend shows that the rate of the increase of the population of people living in poverty has not only been increasing, but it has also been increasing at a higher rate. The unemployment rate in Nigeria increased from 33.30 % in the fourth quarter of 2020 from 27.10% in the second quarter; though it was 22.6% in 2018. Unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 12.31% from 2006 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 23.10 percent in the third quarter of 2018 from 5.10% in the fourth quarter of 2010 (NBS, 2019).

Corruption is seen as the use of public office for private gains Bardhan, (2013). He held a strong view of corruption to involve diverting public fund and resources into private pocket of government officials. These diverted funds are supposedly appropriated to the provision of public goods and services.

The major purpose of schooling until now has been to preserve the hegemony of the established culture to induct each new generation into the dominant worldview. The schools do not speak to the confused and fearful condition of the young generation who must inherit this troubled culture and this threatened nation. Consequently, Nigerian education has entered a period of upheaval and conflict from which it cannot emerge unchanged. From elementary to university level, the story is the same (Chinyere, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The Rousseau's Theory: Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) wrote his educational treatise in literary form in the book *Emile*. He believed that children should first be trained in a natural environment based on natural principles before allowing them to interact formally with others in school. This emanated from his notion that man is by nature, good but the society corrupts him. The Rousseau's theory is relevant to this work. Obviously, its major concern was the reconstruction of society in order to have right environment for proper education of children. A good society promotes sound education and sound education can only be obtained in a crisis-free academic institution.

The Marxian theory

Was originated from Karl Marx and Frederick Engel— brought with it a radical change to the perception of poverty by formulating the principle of exploitation of labour (Egunjobi, 2013). According to Marxists, the economy is controlled and ruled by a few rich capitalists who own and control the means of production and distribution, while the masses that form the bulk of the population are poor. To them, the introduction of labour-saving technology due to advancement in science and technology will result in the displacement of the workers, thereby

increasing the army of the unemployed, the unemployed, suffering from frustration and discontentment will eventually revolt against the oppression of the capitalists.

New Keynesian Theory of Unemployment

The new Keynesian school of thought opine that unemployment arises involuntarily and proposes reasons why wage rates might not quickly respond to shifts in supply and demand in the labour market. They believe that equilibrium in the labour market may not be achieved for an extended period of time, and this can result into unemployment, especially during economic recessions as experienced in Nigeria. As supported by Jhigan (2004), if there are more laborers seeking employment at the going wage rate than there are available jobs, involuntary unemployment occurs. This is relevant to Nigeria, workers are laid off because of the inability of employers even government to pay the minimum wage compounding the unemployment crises. This is because wage rates are typically not flexible downward and are largely determined by institutional forces, including trade union pressures, legislated government salary scales, and hiring practices of multinational corporations.

Crisis in Classroom Delivery

The world is facing crises, while countries have significantly increased access to education, being in schools isn't the same thing as learning. Students need to be able to interpret information, form opinions be creative, communicate well, collaborate and be resilient (World Bank 2019).

The World Bank vision is for all children and youth to be learning and acquiring the skills they need to be productive, fulfilled and involved citizens and workers, therefore change starts with a great teacher.

Fortunately for many students in every country, there are dedicated and enthusiastic teachers who, despite all challenges, enrich and transform their lives. They are heroes who defy the odds and make learning happen with passion, creatively and determination.

The title of this paper, "The Crisis of Education in Nigeria" in reference to any country must be considered a cause for serious concern because of the great value attached to education world-wide. It is widely acknowledged that education has social, economic, political, and security benefits for an individual, for a society and for a country. Education is almost everywhere considered as the key to economic prosperity and a vital instrument for combating disease, tackling poverty, and supporting sustainable development (Silas, 2015).

I have read reports in the country's newspapers that constitute strong evidence of the crisis of the education sector at all levels: from primary education through secondary to tertiary education. The crises of education in Nigeria have different dimensions and manifestations but efforts here are limited to ones discussed below.

Examination Malpractices

Examination malpractice is any illegal act committed by a student single handed or in collaboration with others like fellow students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examinations in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades. The means of perpetrating this illegal act may range from bringing in un-authorized materials to the examination hall, disrupting the conduct of examinations, buying examination papers, changing of grades after examination and impersonation to using money or candidate's body to earn marks (Silas 2015).

Examination malpractices constitute one of the greatest problems that have generated a lot of discussions among Nigerians because it threatens the very foundation of the educational system (Atonko 2010). Examination malpractices can take any of the forms discussed below;

Impersonation, Collusion ,Examination Leakages, Mass cheating, Smuggling of answer script, e.t.c.

Menace of Secret Cults

This is another crisis situation in the Nigerian education sector and the spread of cult activities to secondary schools and sadly, to some primary schools in the country has cultism more worrisome than ever. There are many definitions of the term, „secret cult“. In an elaborate and convincing term, Igodo (2002) defined a cult as an assemblage of people who share unconventional ideas and beliefs and involved themselves in eccentric conduct and manifestations mostly shrouded in secrecy. Precisely, any movement, organization or assemblage of people who share ideas and beliefs not to be made known to non-members is a cult. Equally, any association or organization that carries its activities, functions in secret is a cult.

They are concealed, covered, covert, disguised, hidden, unknown or behind closed door. The main ingredient of all these qualifications is that those who are not members of the cult do not know its activities. This conceptualization therefore reflects accurately the contemporary secret cults in our academic institutions.

Classification of Cults

The cult groups are classified into five main categories based on their respective *modus operandi* Igodo, (2002).

- Classical confraternities: These include those founded on nationalist ideology which later lost their ideology. A good example is the pyrate.
- Godfather confraternities: These include those that recruit members by promising to shield them from wickedness of teachers or lecturers or oppressive students as well as other cults. The Black Axe is an example.
- Female Confraternities: The last twelve groups in the list presented above are good examples. They assist the male confraternities as spies and sexual care givers. Some examples are Amazons and Black ladies club.
- Mafia Confraternities: These include those cults formed for drug peddling on campuses. The Mafia Lords is an example.
- Terrorist Confraternities: All the most violent cults fall under this category. The Supreme Vikings is a good example here.

The Dangers of Cultism

The scourge of cultism in Nigerian institutions of learning is everyday on the increase with the accompanying consequences of destruction, maiming, decapitation and death on its prowl and this has lately widened beyond the range of students to include academic and non-academic staff who may have stepped on certain aggrieved sections of the institutions. The litany of death and destruction of property through cult activities is endless, Amaefuna (2002). The cult groups operate with dangerous weapons like guns, machetes; axes, acids et cetera, and carry out their nefarious activities even in broad day light. In virtually all our universities, the story is the same. People are no longer safe. An atmosphere of insecurity of life and property pervades the air. All these mean that cult members in our schools operate with the sole intention to kill, and cause havocs.

Low Enrolment, Poor Performance, Poor Products and Abandoned Projects

The third crisis of education in Nigeria finds expression in low enrolment at basic level, poor performance at secondary and tertiary levels and abandoned projects in most tertiary institutions in the country (Silas 2015).

Basic Education: Low Enrolment and Low Quality Teachers

- 10.5 million Nigerian children of school-going age are not attending school – highest in the world.
- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011-2012, Nigeria was ranked 140th out of 144 countries in primary education enrolment.
- Enrolment of children into schools is as low as 12.0% in some states.
- 6 million of 36 million girls out of school world-wide are Nigerians . (Silas ,2015)

Secondary Education: Students' Poor Performance Records

According to Chinyere, (2015):

- The following are the percentages of students who obtained five credits, including English and Mathematics in the May/June WAEC over the last few years: 23 per cent (2018), 26 per cent (2019).
- Regarding NECO, failure rate was 98 per cent in 2018, 88 per cent in 2019.
- Percentage of students who scored 200 and above (out of 400 total) in JAMB in the last few years ranged between 36 per cent (2010) and 46 per cent (2009) – overall average of 42 per cent.
- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011-2012, Nigeria was ranked 120th out of 144 in secondary education enrolment (Amaefuna, 2002).

Universities: Some Specifics on Decline

According to Silas & Chinyere (2015):

- ❖ The most ridiculous situation in our universities was the recent reported dismissal of three graduates of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology from the National Youth Service Corps scheme for falling below the standard expected of graduates.
- ❖ Nigeria's university system is in crisis of manpower. Instead of having no less than eighty (80) per cent of the academics with Ph.Ds, only forty three (43) per cent are Ph.D holders while the remaining fifty seven (57) per cent are not.
- ❖ Almost all the universities are over-staffed with non-teaching staff: in many universities, the number of non-teaching staff doubles, triples or quadruples that of teaching staff; and in some, the number of senior administrative staff alone is more than the total number of teaching staff.
- ❖ There is an average of 4 abandoned projects per university in Nigeria – with negative consequences for classrooms, laboratories, students' hostels, and staff accommodation. Poor infrastructure adversely affects teaching, research, learning and students' health and safety Silas & Chinyere (2015).

Causes Of Crisis In Education

Poverty: Poverty is multi-dimensional and does not have a clearly specified definition. However, basically the poor are those who are unable to obtain an adequate income, find a stable job, own property or maintain healthy living conditions. They also lack an adequate level of education, and cannot satisfy their basic health needs. Also, the poor have are unemployed, have low skills, and have few (if any) economic assets (Orokpo, 2018).

Generally, poverty has adverse effects on individuals, communities and the nation at large: it breeds social exclusion, isolation, fear, distress and deprivations (Danaan, 2018; Backwith,2015)

They are low income earners, powerless, voiceless, live in poor environments, and with low access to social amenities and opportunities needed to improve the quality of life. Poverty may lead to loss of self-confidence, self-actualization, self-fulfilment, lack of good orientation, and the abandonment of cultural values and heritage such that people are ashamed of their cultural and racial identity, and are therefore ready to do anything to accomplish their egocentric goals (Danaan, 2018).

The National Policy on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria (2000) itemizes the features of poverty as follows: not having enough food to eat, unfit housing, high rate of infant mortality, inadequate health care and services, poor nutrition, low life expectancy, low level of economic infrastructures, and lack of productive assets. Similarly, scholars describe, among others: unstable political system; low level of accountability, especially among government functionaries; corruption and mismanagement of resources; poor policy formulation, implementation and evaluation; non-involvement of the poor; poor revenue allocation and distribution; ethnic and religious conflicts; and poor infrastructures (Orokpo, 2018). They believe that the bane of poverty in Nigeria is an incontestable fact that manifests in hunger, unemployment, malnutrition, disease, ignorance and poor access to credit facilities, as well as a general level of human hopelessness (Abiola & Olaopa, 2008).

Unemployment: In Nigeria, the total labour force is made up of persons aged 15–64 years; excluding students, home-keepers, retired persons, stay-at-home parents, and persons unable to work or not interested in work (Kale & Doguwa, 2015). However, unemployment rate refers to the proportion of the labour force who are available for work but do not work for at least 39 hours in a week preceding the survey period (Golubski, 2010). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the unemployed as those who are either out of work, want job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks. The Nigerian labour force participation rate was 55.9% in 2019. It averages is 59.9%, having an all-time high of 61.2% in 1990 and a record low of 53.6% in 2016. Youth unemployment on the other hand is intensifying. Large concentrations of youth, both trained and untrained, educated and uneducated, are idle and without any hope of securing a decent job. Youth unemployment was recorded as 13.72% in 2019.

Corruption: Senior, (2006) sees corruption as an action that involves secretly providing a good or a service to a third party so that he or she can influence certain actions which benefit the corrupt, a third party, or both in which the corrupt agent has authority. This implies illegal and prohibitive efforts of certain individuals employed by the governments to effectively implement government policies and programmes but turned against their employers to advance their own decisive intentions. Daniel Kaufmann as noted by (Pedro, 2006), extends the concept to include legal corruption in which power is abused within the confines of the law as those with power often have the ability to make laws for their protection. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that corruption refers to the abuse of public resources for private gain, through a hidden transaction that involves the violation of some standards of behavior. It also manifest in the form of favoritism, nepotism and clientelism. As observed by Clara (2017) acts that favor friends, family members or member of an association in job hiring or promoting a family member or staff member to a role they are not qualified for because they belongs to the same group also constitute corruption. Therefore corruption is a well-known phenomenon among scholars from different field.

Irrelevant Knowledge and Learning: When educators do not understand the nature of learning and knowledge, both the teacher and the student are trapped in a futile struggle.

Moral Decadence: Moral bankruptcy has ravaged our educational institutions today. Both teachers and students flout orders and pay less attention to moral issues. Absence of moral rectitude manifests themselves in the form of disrespect, quarrel, examination malpractices, indecent relationships, stealing, fighting, dereliction of duties etc. Odeh (2003) observed that “our educational institutions are breeding people who are specialized in all kinds of vices than they are specialized in virtue”.

Family Up-bringing: Home Up-bringing plays serious roles in shaping and molding of people’s characters. In most cases, display of good or bad behaviour is usually traceable to the family of the teacher or the student. Children are found in the mess of indiscipline either because they learnt the bad behaviour from their parents or that their parents did not train them to imbibe the good tenets of the society.

Peer Influence: Peer influence mostly affect the lifestyle of even those who were originally of good virtues. Ezeuwa (2005) observed that certain behaviours such as smoking, alcoholism, cultism, illicit sex, examination malpractices and indecent dressings are by-products of peer group influence.

Lack of Motivation: People especially teachers indulge in indecent acts especially when they are not adequately motivated. Teachers are poorly paid; they are owed arrears of statutory benefits, no regular training and re-training programmes. Problem of motivation does not only lead to indecent behaviours, but also to poor attitudes to work and other activities

Ignorance: Ignorance is a very strong negative factor that can lead to severe mistakes, actions and loses. Some lecturers and students who indulge in social vices seem not to be aware of the implications of their actions. That could be the reason such people brag about it and consider their actions virtuous to the detriment of the entire society.

Conclusion

Education in Nigeria is full of crises. These crises are responsible for the poor standard of education in the country. Among many crises, examination malpractices, cultism and low school enrolment, poor performance and teacher quality as well as abandoned projects have been identified and discussed in details. The ability of Nigerians especially the academia to handle the issues raised in this lecture will go a long way in making the education sector a crisis-free sector.

Recommendation

- Act on the law – and move beyond it: The 2003 Child’s Rights Act stipulates that the “Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide
- (a) free compulsory and universal primary education;
- (b) free university education and
- (c) free adult literacy programme.
- Nigeria also made laws against cultism and examination malpractices.
- The UBE Act also provided for the compulsory education of children of school-going age.
- Put policies in place to help the most disadvantaged– including those from poor households, in rural areas, and particularly girls in the north of the country. Unless the poorest families

receive support to pay for the costs of schooling, they will not be able to benefit from education. The government needs to invest in their education.

- Nigeria should turn the resource curse into a blessing for education.
- There is need for attitudinal change.
- Satisfactory conduct should be the basis of admission of students into Nigerian schools.

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