The Nexus between Social Moral Values and Functional Education System in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is regarded as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In 2024, Nigeria was ranked 140th out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. This means, it scores 26 out of 100 on the Index. This is based on how the country's public sector is perceived. The public sectors are manned by individuals who are morally low. Moral values are disregarded and civil servants collect bribes, show nepotism and have low commitment to their work. The issues of ritual killings, internet fraud (YahooYahoo), blood shedding, kidnappings, sexual promiscuity, dishonesty among others make Nigeria a terrible place to live. To reverse this trend, this paper argues that Nigerian education system should be made functional. A functional education is meant to solve the society's problems and challenges. Published articles and papers were studied and analyzed. It shows that every nation uses her education system to correct anomalies not desired. It also reveals that Nigerian education system is equally infested with morality issues such as exchange of sex for grade and certificate racketeering. The authors concluded and made recommendations one of which is that all educational stakeholders must live up to their expectations to reverse the trend.

Keywords: Morality, Moral Values, Functional Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is an inevitable tool for shaping the society. Education is one of the crucial components of human development and change for sustainable development. Education is accepted as a process of transmitting cultural heritage, stabilizing the present and improving or changing the future, all over the globe (Orakwe, 2023). There is a strong connection between the education system of a nation and its societal moral values. Both the society and its education system exist as interdependent entities that cannot exist without the other. The society is a lager entity where the education system exists as a key and essential entity. Thus, the education system of a nation is a microcosm of the society being the macrocosm. The extent of their influence and impact on each other remains symbiotic and equal in scale. The moral values of a society are key in defining the past, current and future existence of a society.

The outcry about Nigerian's dysfunctional education has become a common discussion. Okorocha (2013) decried the theoretically laden education system in Nigeria which is far from solving her developmental needs. Similarly, Ray-offor and Onyezere (nd) contested that while developed countries such as United States of America (USA), Japan and France utilized their education system to drive manufacturing and technological strides which have made their countries investors' choice. Nigerian education system cannot be said to be same as the country has become a dump for both substandard and pricey irrelevant goods.

The outcome or product of a country's education system is strongly tied to her shared norms, values and morals. The key problem with Nigerian education system is not just in the content but in its pedagogy. For example, education could give students skills but only his moral value such as value for dignity of labor could make him/her honest while dealing with clients.

Conceptual Issues

Functional Education System

Functional education is the education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. It is a kind of education that is natural as opposed to the deliberate, goal-oriented education that is directed by man (Zeilberger, 1961, 1999). In similar vein, it has been described as education that comes from the child's needs that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities, its purpose is to develop the life of the mind, which acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future. This is opposed to an education system that takes no consideration to the aspirations and abilities of the child. Functional educational is largely teacher-centered.
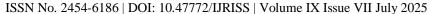
Ogbiji (2013) asserted that the idea of functional education has its origin in the United States and Western Europe. In the United States and in Germany, it refers to the type of education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. Earlier on, Okafor (1988) attributed the origin of the philosophy of functional education in the United States to three notable Americans, namely, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). In Western Europe, functional education refers to education that comes from the child's needs and that uses a child's interest as a mechanism for activating him and towards his desirable activities. Its purpose is to develop the life of the mind that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life and values in the present and in future.

It is in line with the foregoing that Orakwe (2023) maintains that in the modern world today, living without education seems difficult because specific skills are often needed to work and education remains the only means to acquire such skills. Thus an education system is said to be functional if it lives to and achieves the dreams of the society where it exists as much as it solves its challenges by producing graduates with relevant and requisite knowledge. It is based on this that Cookey as cited in Mmaduegbunam and Okafor (2014), considers functional education as the education in which the ability to perform productive tasks is more emphasized than the education that aims at producing ideological conformity. It is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory. Agbowuro, Saidu and Jimwan (2017) reiterate that for an education to be considered functional, it must be able to identify situational problems with the environment and gather information to aid decisions to suite the reality as the world is constantly changing. As the world is speedily changing due to the influence of computer and Artificial Intelligence, the Nigerian education system must as well keep to date with the changes to meet with the current trends. This implies that in planning the education system, the educational planners and curriculum designer are required to not only consider immediate needs but as well be futuristic.

Moral Values

Moral values are products of various components of a society especially its religion and culture. Moral values are critical in all human societies and in societal interactions. Generally, morality originates from religious considerations, and so pervasive is religion in Nigerian culture that the two cannot be separated (Iremeka, 2011). This avers the role of religion in shaping the moral values of a society. According to Churchill (1982) cited in Mohammad (2016), morals refer to human behavior where morality is the practical activity and, ethics describes the theoretical, systematic, and rational reflection upon that human behavior. Morals, values, and ethics are strongly attached to society, spirituality and culture (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1991). For Ajibade and Owujuade (2024), Specifically, morality means a system of principles and judgments based on religious, cultural, and philosophical beliefs and concepts that determine right or wrong actions. The above definitions could be used to explain moral values as those unwritten code of conducts which the members of a society are meant to uphold in their interaction with one another. Thus, Uyanga (2009) simply defined morality as the idea of right and wrong actions in human beings.

Prior to the introduction of western education, traditional religions practiced in different ethnic groups of Nigeria – Islam by the Hausa, African traditional religion by the Yoruba and Igbo had similar moral values. Some of the moral values upheld by the various ethnic groups prior to colonialization includes:

- Respect for elders by younger persons

- Sexual purity before marriage

- Value for human life

- High regard for honesty and dignity of labor

- Condemnation of adultery

- Condemnation of assault and intimidation of the poor

- Decency in dressing among others.

- Condemnation of stealing and thievery.

All the shared moral values by the traditional Nigerian societies condescends to the "live and let live" philosophy of the people. Those who abuse the moral values were regarded as evil and were greeted with various punishments depending on the offense. Criminals, adulterers, dishonest people and murderers were seen as dangers to the society and were avoided. The punishment against moral abuse ranges from minor flogging to banishment (Akpan & Uyanga, 2022).
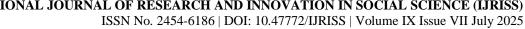
The current trend of moral decadence and disregard to societal moral values and ethos have become a serious concern. What is seen today in Nigeria is a total opposite and aberration of the moral values upheld by the pre-colonial Nigerian people. The rate of sexual aversion and indecent dressing has become so bad that it is gradually becoming a norm. They include fornication, lesbianism, homo-sexualism, prostitution and rape. The rate of human sacrifices and money ritual is another moral decay of great concern (Oderinde, 2008). Bribery and corruption which has become an untouchable sacred cow in Nigeria as a result of a failed education system. The trend of bribery and corruption among civil servants of all cadres, politicians, traders and others is an evidence that our school system failed to raise graduates with the needed behavioral change. The get-rich-quick syndrome and its consequent money ritual has become a hydra-headed monster in Nigeria, serving as motivation for all sorts of criminal activities.
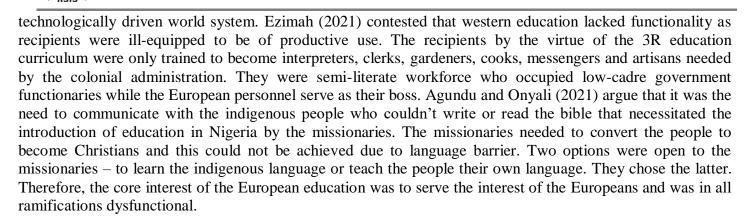
Nigeria's Dysfunctional Education system

The Nigerian education system has been criticized to be mainly theoretical and fails to equip the graduates with the requisite skills needed to solve Nigeria's social, economic, political and religious problems. This has created a gap between the graduates' knowledge and skills and job requirements by employers of labor thereby escalating unemployment in the country. While certain skills required by employers are in acute short supply, others are in excess. This dysfunctionality in the Nigerian education system creates room for exodus of her labor force to the advantage of other countries. But more critically is the failure of the Nigerian education system to address the moral decadence and poor value system. Ezimah (2021) affirms that the dilapidated and outdated state of Nigerian education is not in doubt.

The colonial education system introduced by the colonialists and operated by the missionaries has been accused to had been skewed to be inefficient to the future needs of the country. Mmaduegbunam and Okafor (2014) state that Western education replaced the indigenous education of Nigerian people which was a foreign education system imposed without adequate preparation and modification and did not in any way reflect the people's culture. The implication of this was that cultural beliefs and moral values were trivialized. The traditional education system which had the people's core beliefs, customs, norms and culture were replaced with the emphasis on the reading and writing of European language and arithmetic - the 3Rs as established and managed by the missionaries.

Another indictment of western education given by the European missionaries was its limitation in content. The European Western education system only taught the 3Rs which did not prepare the recipient for the

technologically driven world system. Ezimah (2021) contested that western education lacked functionality as recipients were ill-equipped to be of productive use. The recipients by the virtue of the 3R education curriculum were only trained to become interpreters, clerks, gardeners, cooks, messengers and artisans needed by the colonial administration. They were semi-literate workforce who occupied low-cadre government functionaries while the European personnel serve as their boss. Agundu and Onyali (2021) argue that it was the need to communicate with the indigenous people who couldn't write or read the bible that necessitated the introduction of education in Nigeria by the missionaries. The missionaries needed to convert the people to become Christians and this could not be achieved due to language barrier. Two options were open to the missionaries – to learn the indigenous language or teach the people their own language. They chose the latter. Therefore, the core interest of the European education was to serve the interest of the Europeans and was in all ramifications dysfunctional.

Commenting on the dysfunctional state of the Nigerian education system, Ezimah (2021) listed increasing enrolment, inadequate qualified teaching personnel, inadequate infrastructure/facilities, dysfunctional curriculum and high level educational malpractice at all levels as the symptoms of a dysfunctional education system common in Nigeria. Mmaduegbulam and Okafor (2014) state that the principles of a functional education system should include: to make its products become self-reliant and generators of employment for themselves and others. to serve as an instrument for social stability, economic sufficiency and cultural integration, to solve the nation's social and industrial problems; and to foster the development of character, the fulfillment of individual personality, the acquisition of knowledge and skills and ability to take one's place in the society. These principles are not just too lofty for the Nigerian education but looks unachievable.

Beyond the foundational problem, the dysfunctional state of the Nigerian's education system has equally been attributed to a number of factors such as unavailability of reliable data for educational planning, poor funding of the school system, incessant strikes by teachers and lecturers, corruption and nepotism in teachers' employment system, sex for grade, cultism, examination malpractice, indecent dressings as well as lack of political will on the side of the government (Ojiemhenkele & Ogieva, 2024).

Functional Education and Moral Values – the Nexus

Education system is built on principles, values and objectives. These values show the vision and intentions of the operators of the system since the education system is adjudged a veritable tool for achieving a nation's dreams. The values which Nigerian education is expected to promote are: respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations; shared responsibility for the common good of the society; respect for the dignity of labor; and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children. These values are driven from the country's national philosophy.

The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society is one of the core aims and objectives of the Nigerian education as connected to the country's philosophy (FRN, 2004). Hazzan (2024) notes that the focus on instilling the appropriate values and attitudes as core part of the nation's educational objective underscores the importance of fostering a strong ethical framework and communal ethos. Good moral values remain a key in having a progressive and prosperous nation and the nation's education system must play its role in raising citizens who are morally upright and devoted to the good of others.

A functional education produces graduates who are not just academically sound but morally upright. Neyword (2005) observes that education is not just information but formation. The type and nature of information gotten by the students from the school determines the type of character formed. While a sound academic qualification is required by most employers, character is valued more. It is better to hire one with good character and train to suite the job specifications than to hire an academically qualified candidate who lacks good character. Such could become a serious liability and bad image for the organization. Thus, students are required to be found worthy in character and learning to be offered a degree in a university but that is just a policy statement that doesn't translate to reality. Okpe and Joseph (2021) aver that moral development is the most important aspect

of national development, for there can be no development of a nation if its citizens are morally under-developed or immature.

The pursuit for moral uprightness through the education system inspired the introduction of certain subjects and courses at all levels of education. At the primary level, pupils offer subjects like National Values (NV) and civic education; at the junior secondary, the same is applicable. At the senior level of secondary education, students offer Civic Education as a compulsory subject for all students which they must include in their O'level examination. In the same line, Nigerian peoples and culture is a compulsory course offered by all undergraduates in their first year at the university, polytechnics and colleges of education. Various institutions of learning make policies and laws that combat all forms of indiscipline and other social vices such as indecent dressing, cultism, rape, examination malpractice and gangsterism. Some universities go the extent of forming anti-cult armed security personnel as well as dress code committees.

Unfortunately, Adedigba and Wahab (2022) discover that despite all these subjects offered, achieving moral uprightness among the students is still far from becoming a reality. There are still cases of violence, sexual promiscuity, examination malpractice and so on. The education system though meant to be a societal moral custodian, events in the system have shown that the Nigerian education system is bedeviled with moral issues and lack the locus to super watch moral renaissance in the country. Oderinde (2008) while writing on the need for enhancing character education, wrote that promoting character education is an important aspect of every good curriculum.
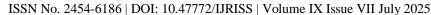
Ways to Reposition Nigerian Education System to Functionality for Moral Values

Emphasis on knowledge above certificate - The responsibility of raising students with good moral values through the education system should become a key Performance Indicator (KPI) in assessing a school's performance by the Quality Assurance Department. Teachers, principals, government agencies and other educational stakeholders are all key contributors and must make effort to change the trend. Skills, good character such as hard work, honesty, and integrity should be emphasized more as against the clamor for certificates. The undue emphasis placed on certificate has contributed immensely to moral degeneration. Those who have skills and character to perform a needed job are neglected in favor of certificate holders who lack needed requirement. "sabificate[1]" should be replaced with "certificate". Developed nations with low corruption rates emphasize knowledge above certificate qualification. Lan (2022) makes it clear that certificate is good, skill is excellent but without virtues, they are both useless. Thus, for people to comprehensively develop, they must cultivate practical activities that combine education and self-education.

Change in pedagogy - No effort towards moral development would yield result if the country's education system fails to play its role. Huseynaga (2024) suggested that moral values and patriotic education should be woven into the fabrics of education and made a conscious goal that all education stakeholders must focus on. This calls for an overall review of Nigerian's education system to meet up with both the immediate and future needs of the country. There is need for a change in pedagogical style of education - practical based learning that would complement various theories emphasized in the classroom. Various strategies have been proposed by Huseynaga (2024) such as historical, film, research, artistic, visual and extra-curricular strategies on enhancing moral values.

Teachers welfare and motivation: Teachers play critical roles in achieving educational goals and objectives. The teachers fail to make the necessary impact due to several challenges the face in the job such as lack of materials to work, poor remuneration, unconducive work environment, too much workload among others. Thus teachers who are in dire need of basic and physiological needs without hope easily become a disaster to the achievement of the educational goals. Such teachers engage in unprofessional characters in their bid to get money.

Inclusion of traditional and cultural education: in pre-colonial society, a child begins learning from home through socialization where the parents, siblings and other older people around serve as instructors. Traditional education has great impact in moral preservation. Though without curriculum or formal assessment, traditional education is very effective that a child can be punished by a stranger for failing to exchange greetings. In

modern Nigeria, parents and grownups in the family are usually busy, making their children start schooling at tender age. Since children spend more time in school than at home, traditional education should informally be part of school's learning.

Other things that could be done are:

1. Political leaders must become responsible and invest in education as they ought to.

2. Adequate punishment should be meted against all forms of indiscipline and moral abuse in the school including the use of supervised corporal punishment.

3. School management should produce school rules and regulation and properly explain them to the students during induction.

4. Proper care should be given to the school security to checkmate students' activities.

5. Employment in the school system should be free of nepotism.

6. Government supervisory agencies should sit-up in their role of school supervision.

CONCLUSION

The essence of education is defeated if moral values held by a society is trampled upon. The core essence of education is to make its recipients reasonable, valuable to themselves, to the society and ability to respect moral standard. Most Nigerian graduates are tagged half-baked because they passed through education system without the education system passing through them. If an educated society could still be a place of ritual murder, stealing, killings, kidnappings, sexual pervasion, bribery and corruption, fake products, cheating, electoral violence and manipulations, forgery, embezzlement, vandalism, cultism, rape, etc., the resource spent in education by such a society is a waste. Therefore, an education system is tagged dysfunctional if these mentioned vices remain common like in Nigeria. The concern of all educational stakeholders should be to reform Nigerian education system to truly reflect our moral values and identities for a developed and prosperous society.

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