

The Crisis of Education in Nigeria

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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.*

1. INTRODUCTION

From east to west, north to south of Nigeria, the evidence of the deplorable state of education system is very glaring. Just like other sectors, the nation's education system has been on a steady decline. Both the quality of teaching and infrastructure has been severely impacted by the comatose state of the education system. As we know, incessant school closures due to strike action have been the norm of the day. In fact, it will be considered unusual not to have schools shut down in any given academic year in the country. 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. The crises we are experiencing now may well be more dramatic than any of the preceding ones, because the rate of change in our age is faster than ever before, because the crises are more extensive, involving the entire country, and because several major transitions are coinciding. The rhythmic recurrences and patterns of rise and decline in education standard have somehow conspired to reach their points of reversal at the same time. 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.

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 recent so-called 'holistic education movement' is the manifestation of the concern for an education which 'draws forth' (from the Latin 'educare') the "latent capacities and sensitivities of the individual.... Surely, the education designed for the country seems not to address the needs of our time. 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.

Elementary education is devoid of discipline. The basic routines in language and mathematics have been dropped or corrupted. Memory is not cultivated. Social studies, current events, manual arts and games occupy the major time. Secondary or collegiate education fails even more, though in part the failure is due to the inadequate preparation given in the elementary schools. Most of our Bachelors of Arts cannot read, write, or speak their own language well; neither they nor our Masters of Arts are acquainted with the liberal arts. They cannot read and they have not read the great books in all fields.

They do not possess the leading ideas or understand the basic problems which are permanently human. They have been fed for years on textbooks and lecture courses which hand out predigested materials; and, as a result, they are chaotically informed and viciously indoctrinated with the local prejudices of professors and their textbooks. As a final consequence, education at the graduate and professional level has been necessarily debased. Law schools for instance, seem not to teach reading; graduate schools also seem not to struggle to get Ph.D. candidates who can write simple and clear English. Education in Nigeria is indeed in crises.

This lecture is therefore presented under the following sub-headings:

- Meaning of Crises
- Theoretical Framework
- Crises in Education
- Causes of Crises in Education

2. MEANING OF CRISES

The word, 'Crises' is a noun and originated from the Greek word 'krisis' meaning "turning point in a disease". The Collins English Dictionary (2012) defined crises in the following ways:

- a crucial stage or turning point in the course of something, especially in a sequence of events or a disease;
- an unstable period, especially one of extreme trouble or danger in politics, economics, etc
- (Crises in medicine) a sudden changes, for better or worse, in the course of 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.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Rousseau's Theory: Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) wrote his educational treatise in literary form in the book *Emile* (1762). Rousseau did not want to expose his fictional young student Emile to any formally structured or disciplined program of education. He felt that a systematic approach to instruction would crush Emile's sensitive spirit and inhibit his natural goodness, wisdom, and potential. He insisted that Emile be sheltered from the pressures of institutions, peers, family, and society so as to avoid stunting his development. 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. The nature-society controversy suggests the complementary relationship that should exist between the society (family, church, etc.) and the school. A child that is not exposed to society ills will not engage in activities that will generate crisis, all things being equal. A good society promotes sound education and sound education can only be obtained in a crisis-free academic institution. The family, for instance, should ensure, through good moral up-bringing, that the school child represented by Emile-the sheltered, self-absorbed, and pampered boy-Rousseau's prized student becomes a responsible member of the society.

4. CRISES IN EDUCATION

The title of this lecture, "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. 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. From time to time, politicians, academics and opinion leaders either called for the declaration of a “state of emergency” in the education sector or lamented what they consider as decline and decay in the education sector: while some affirm that 70 per cent of university graduates are unemployable because of their poor quality, others focus on the country’s slow progress towards meeting the development needs of the country. The crises of education in Nigeria have different dimensions and manifestations but efforts here are limited to ones discussed below.

4.1. 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. 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. Examination malpractices can take any of the forms discussed below.

4.1.1. Forms of Examination Malpractice

Impersonation: Entails the hiring of touts to write examinations by appearing in the halls as the genuine candidates. Atonka (2010), stated that male candidates sitting in for girls and vice versa in some sensitive papers, twins writing examinations for each other in connivance with the school examination officers/invigilators or supervisors and other examination officials.

Collusion: Arises when an assigned invigilator or supervisor receiving or giving assistance to candidates in the examination hall for gratification.

Examination leakages: A situation where question papers are seen by candidates prior to the writing of the examinations and are traceable to the printing press or persons connected with the custody of the question papers.

Mass cheating: Is traceable to large scale organized cheating involving school authorities, examination officials and candidates through the answering of the questions on the chalkboard for the candidates to copy.

Smuggling of answer scripts: Involves candidates having external assistance to take to and from the examination hall answer scripts duly prepared by syndicates in connivance with invigilators and/or supervisors and other examination officials.

Dubbing: An arrangement involving the invigilators or supervisors whereby candidates are allowed to copy from each other in the hall.

Insult/Assault on Supervisors/Invigilators/Inspectors by candidates: Takes the form of beating of examination officials, destruction of examination officials’ cars and manhandling of examination officials and/or using indecent language on supervisors and invigilators who fail to cooperate with them.

Bringing foreign materials into the examination hall: Such as textbooks, cribs, past questions papers either containing copious notes or used as disguise for current ones that have been smuggled out, photocopies of prepared answers.

Procurement of answer booklets: This is one of the ways the syndicate operates; whereby they have enough current answer booklets through the assistance of the examination body personnel. They tactically exchange written answer booklets with their candidates before stoppage time and/or in connivance with the school examination officer and the assigned supervisor.

Enrolling syndicate and self: This happens during the enrolment, the syndicate will be enrolled alongside with the candidate using fake names. In the examination hall, the syndicate will be doing the writing and at the end exchange answer booklet with the candidate.

Late submissions of parcels by the Supervisor: The custodian in agreement with some assigned supervisors submits their parcels late. This arrangement gives the supervisors and touts enough time to complete their writings and rearrangement of the scripts. The custodian is settled after receiving the parcels.

Inscription: Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body, for example palms, thighs, baby pampers; dresses, handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Some student even code points and synthesize their notes in such a way that they will be the only one that could understand and use them for cheating.

Personality Connection: There are cases where some influential students make use of godfathers in politics, economic high towers, parents, and cult members to influence the outcome of examinations.

4.2. 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' as there are authors. In an elaborate and convincing term, Igodo (2002:1) 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.

In a theoretical consideration of Igodo's stance, the word 'secret' denotes the way the activities of the cults are run. 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.

4.2.1. Different Cults in Nigerian Schools

There are many cults operating at different levels of education across the country. Some of the cult groups according to Amaefuna (2002:1); Eze (2003:1); Igodo (2002:27-28); Nwosu (1999:3); Nzediegwu (1999:2); Okwe (1999:4); Onodarho (1999:34-36) and Umeh, (2001:14-15) are Black Axe; Black Beret; Black Brothers; Black Ofals; Black Sword; Black Scorpion; Blanchers, Blue Angels; Big 20. Buccaneers; Eiye; Dreaded Friends of friends; Egbe-Dudu; The family; Fangs; The Termites; Gentleman's Club; Green Beret; Eagle club; The Hepos; Mgbamagbu Brothers; Jurists; Dragon; Jaggare Confederation; Klu Klu Klan; Panama Pirate Confraternity; Klan Confraternity; Burkinafaso Revolution; Nite Hawk; Nite Rovers, Mgba Mgba; Airwords; Magic Lords; Marphites; Predators; Pyrate Confraternity; Phoenix; Green Barret; Odu, Red Fishes; Scavengers; Fraternity of Friends; Scorpions; Fraternity; Sons of the Night; Mafiaso; Thomas Sankara Boys; Temple of Eden; Third Eye; The Fame; Trojan Horse; Osiri; Vikings; Black cat; Black Cross; Blood suckers; Bats; Fliers; Clack cross; Ogboni; Red Beret; Red Devils; Black Arrow; Black Cobra; Black Nationalist; Bloodline; Maplates; Mafia; Ninjas; Musketeers; Black Ladies Club; Amazons; Black Brassier; White Angels; Daughters of Jezebel; Bra-Bra; Charlie's Angels; Baby One Breast Confraternity; Black Bra; Bulky Sisters; Royal Queen; Black Angels and many more.

4.2.2. Classification of Cults

The cult groups are classified into five main categories based on their respective modus operandi.

- **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.

4.2.3. *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. Only few recent cases are cited here. It is also important to note here that some of them are not announced to avoid bad publicity in some institutions. Cultism has assumed terrorists' dimensions in recent times. 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 oppress, kill and cause havocs.

4.3. **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. They are taken one after the other and discussed below.

4.3.1. *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. Source: Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2012. (Introduction of EFA goal of one-year Early Childhood Care and Education – three years in Sweden – is unlikely to happen soon).
- 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.
- Northern Nigeria harbours the highest number of school-age children in the world that were out of school.
- 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.
- Nigeria is one of the few countries in the world that has had to launch a boy-child education campaign – launched by the Federal Government in the South-east in June 2012
- In 2008, Kwara State tested 19,125 teachers in Primary Four Mathematics... Only seven teachers attained the minimum benchmark for the test in Mathematics. Only one of 2,628 teachers with degree passed the test; 10 graduates scored zero. The literacy assessment recorded only 1.2 per cent pass.

4.3.2. *Secondary Education: Students' Poor Performance Records*

- 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 (2008), 26 per cent (2009), 24 per cent (2010), 31 per cent in 2011 and 39 per cent in 2012. The situation does not fair better currently.
- Regarding NECO, failure rate was 98 per cent in 2008, 88 per cent in 2009, 89 per cent in 2010, 92 per cent in 2011, and 68 per cent in 2012. The recently released NECO result does not show that students' performance has increased.
- 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. In 2012 specifically, only 3 of 1, 503, 93 candidates scored above 300 and only five per cent scored 250 and above.
- The single biggest problem (in Nigerian universities) is the abysmal quality of the intake; the vast majority of my students barely know their grammar, never mind the poor quality of their knowledge.

- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report Index, 2011-2012, Nigeria was ranked 120th out of 144 in secondary education enrolment.

4.3.3. Universities: Some Specifics on Decline

- The most ridiculous indication of the rot 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. (The university is reported to have declared "an academic emergency.")
- Nigeria's university system is in crisis of manpower. Instead of having no less than 80 per cent of the academics with Ph.Ds, only 43 per cent are Ph.D holders while the remaining 57 per cent are not. And instead of 75 per cent of the academics to be between Senior Lecturers and Professors, only about 44 per cent are within the bracket while the remaining 56 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.
- In 2010, Nigerian students spend about N246 billion in tertiary institutions in UK, more than 60 per cent of education sector budget in 2012.
- Universities do not have adequate supply of Ph.Ds but Ph.D holders seek graduate-level positions and some compete to be truck drivers.

5. CAUSES OF CRISES IN EDUCATION

- **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. No matter how much money the taxpayers spend and no matter how many quick fixes are tried, the chronic failure will continue until education in the country is made responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people as well as relating education of the child to the demands of the labour market.
- **Debase of Virtue and Good Reasoning:** Virtue was once almost as highly exalted as truth in Western establishments of education. The powers of reason were vigorously employed to understand and define moral virtue. In contrast, modern academia is propagating ideas of moral relativism and situational ethics.
- **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. Odey (2003) observed that "our educational institutions are breeding people who are specialized in all kinds of vices than they are specialized in virtue". Many teachers are losing their conscience in the practice of the profession. Punctuality and regularity to school among teachers and learners are gradually fading away. Some teachers collude with students to cheat in examinations even as they also involve themselves in immoral acts such as illicit sexual relationship. The result has been unprecedented prevalence of social vices in schools.
- **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.

- **Presence of Quacks:** Teachings profession these days has been made all comers affair and a transitory point for job seekers. Admission of the quacks has resulted in bringing people of dinted characters and corrupt background.
- **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
- **Corruption:** Though not peculiar to Nigeria, the Nigerian society is morally corrupt to the extent that it has become extremely difficult for many Nigerians to live and survive through an honest means. Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is as difficult as keeping a goat from eating yam (Odey, 2003). Corruption is strong in Nigeria and often regarded as a major cause of social vices in schools. It is the cankerworm behind examination malpractices, certificate racketeering, admission racketeering, misappropriation and embezzlement of education fund in virtually all the tertiary institutions.
- **Poverty:** In recent times, the economy of Nigeria has remained unstable. The situation has equally led to poverty of various degrees. The prevalent poor economy shadows the hope of over 80% Nigerians to live a fulfilled life (Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, 2006). Several persons including lecturers and students in order to survive resort to social vices such as bribery, pilfering, stealing, cheating, book price hike and prostitution.
- **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.
- **Bad Example:** The trouble with our students today is that they are being misled by the adults. When children are given birth to, there is normally nothing wrong with them, but when parents, adults, society and leaders fail in their responsibility to teach them and be good examples for them, they become problem and a serious threat to the nation.

6. 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.

7. SOLUTIONS/ SUGGESTIONS

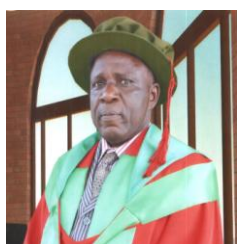
- Act on the law – and move beyond it: The 2003 Child’s Rights Act stipulates that the “Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide (a) free compulsory and universal primary education; (b) free university education and (c) free adult 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. The laws are good but it is important to note that nobody has ever being convicted under any of them. The country must act upon these laws, and ensure all children are not only in school, but also learning very well in school.
- 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 an education. The government needs to invest in their education.
- Nigeria should turn the resource curse into a blessing for education. Although Nigeria is one of the countries furthest from achieving the Education for All goals, it is endowed with natural resource wealth, which could bring enough income to send many of the country’s children to school. Nigeria already retains 72% of oil exports as government revenue, but must manage, distribute and use the revenue better, and ensure that education is a top priority.

- Provide a second chance to the 7 million youth in Nigeria who never had the chance to complete a primary education, the majority of whom are young women. As well as averting a future generation of illiterate adults and ensuring these young people are able to fulfil their potential, the country would benefit from a vast engine of economic growth in the form of its bulging youth population.
- There is need for attitudinal change. In the context of this work, attitudinal change can be viewed to mean change of attitude, doing away with negative tendencies, abandoning vices for virtues, embracing unquestionable character, being dependable, hardworking and patriotic. It is synonymous with such expressions as character re-moulding, ethical re-orientation, moral re-branding and image laundering.
- Satisfactory conduct should be the basis of admission of students into Nigerian schools, recruitment of lecturers and other education workers as well as their remaining as members of the school organization.

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