

INTERROGATING THE CONTEMPORARY STANDARD OF EDUCATION IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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Abstract

The fallen standard of education in contemporary Nigeria continuously degenerates, with nothing significant done by concerned authorities, elites, individuals and groups to ameliorate the issues at stake. This study interrogates the standard of education in contemporary times and makes a case for its revival through a retrace to Nigeria's past glory of quality education. Using descriptive method and participant intuition technique, the paper taps from closely relevant textual materials for content-analysis data. It reveals that the education sector of this nation continuously battles with low standard and productivity, pervasive corruption, poor funding, embezzlement, examination malpractice, lack of trained/competent manpower and logistics, cultism, half-baked graduates, incessant strike, outrageous school fees, discrimination, and dichotomy syndrome. In submission, the situation presents complex ethical issues compounded by the unwillingness to address them. Addressing the issues entails collective efforts and scholars' attention to explicate and find the ways-out, tracing the remote and immediate causes of the fall, towards resuscitating its lost glory.

Keywords: Interrogating, Education, Standard, Revival, Nigeria

Introduction

Education in contemporary Nigeria is in great distress and needs pragmatic efforts for a rescue. It seems the more schools, the lower the education standard, the more the problems confronting the education sector and the higher the illiteracy level. In the past, up to the 1980's, Nigeria was known and applauded for quality education, even though then there were few schools compared to the current number of schools. Today, in the post-independence era, the standard of education in Nigeria has been falling drastically, heading towards a state of total collapse (see Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007). In short, it seems to currently have no headway. This is why most Nigerians, especially in recent times crave for overseas studies. Most wealthy Nigerian parents, especially the bourgeoisie and politicians who are the prime causes

of the unfortunate and ugly educational standard/situation, at the same time, send their children and wards out for better education elsewhere.

Nigeria no longer has anything tangible to show for its acclaimed Western education, got many decades ago. What is most hilarious and shocking is the negative turn-around of education standard in Nigeria in the post-independence era, whereas Nigerian education standard in the past competed favourably with what obtains in other parts of the world, where quality education obtains, as in the education in Britain, America and such other nations. The backdrop portends a digression from the core norms, values precepts, ethics and aims/objectives of classical education. It is against the foregoing backdrop that this study rises to interrogate the standard of education in contemporary Nigeria, reflecting on the past and making a case for returning to the past good days, reviving Nigerian education standard, doing the needful and retracing past experimented measures and ideals as well as evolving new ones that would yield the desired results.

Nigerian Education then and now

At independence, Nigeria had only one university, the University of Ibadan, and about three colleges of art, science, and technology. In 1962, the number of universities increased to four. By 2001, there were not less than 51 universities, and by 2005, 29 additional universities had been created to bring the total number to 80 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). As universities increased so the number of enrolment increased proportionately. In 1985/1986, admission into post-secondary institutions stood at 135,783 and humped to 350,000 during the 1999/2000 academic year (Onwuka, 2006; Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007). By 2005, total university enrolment stood at 724,856 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006:23; also see the official website of the National Universities Commission). With deregulation, the establishment of private universities became formalised and encouraged. Consequently, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary schools became privatised and their numbers exploded over time.

Education quality has indeed dropped and continuous to drop drastically. Those days a Standard three (3) pupil was already a teacher. A pupil of Primary two (2) then could read and write. That is, pupils who had just spent two years in Pre-nursery and Nursery of between three and five years in present time. The poser here is why was it possible for such pupils to read and write, but their contemporaries of present-day Nigeria and even their seniors in primary 4-6 and Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1-3 and beyond can seldom read and write well, not to talk of speaking good English? Then, pupils in Standard three (3) then used to teach their juniors in Primary 1-2. Pupils of these classes then could write good letters to and for parents, guardians, relatives, friends, age grades, organisations like religious and traditional

groups/unions, and so on. They could speak good English, their formal language of instruction. Then, First School Leaving Certificate holders were employable competent graduates, mostly teachers, artisans, technicians, artists, bureaucrats, craftsmen/women and learned youth leaders.

Erstwhile, Nigeria had specified school age and other requisitions for intakes into primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Then when one's hand must cross and touch the other side of his/her ear. Then, secondary school applicants must not be below twelve (12) years and tertiary institutions' applicants must not be below sixteen (16) years. Because students were advanced, at least at average level, before getting into post-primary and post-secondary schools, students were less vulnerable to the uncontrolled social vices that currently engulf most of them now in our schools — on campuses. We now have a great number of adolescent and teenage graduates, who lack the maturity in handling the practical and technical aspects of their professions, all just for such parents to boast about having graduates of this or that number(s) and profession(s). Out of fear, borne from immaturity, some lives have been lost to incompetent Medicine and Surgery graduates. A visit to a big and busy teaching hospital would convince you. In Nigeria, *where anything goes*, medical practitioners are seldom sued for the damages they caused to patients. Some times when their errors cause damages or death, the people rather take them/it as the handwork of God or devil. They take such problems in good faith.

These days, millions of pupils and students leave and get into schools every year, with little or nothing to really show practically for the education. Admission processes are becoming more complex every year, unlike then. In contemporary Nigeria, admission into tertiary institutions is only possible through Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), now Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and the entrance tests or screening afterwards, known as post. Otherwise, one gets admission through remedial or pre-programme (pre-degree, pre-N/HD, pre-NCE and IJMB: Interim Joint Matriculation Board). UTME has been so made compulsory that those seeking admission into non-conventional tertiary institutions (like Senior Seminaries, Nigerian Defence Academy, Police Academy, etc.) must still take UTME examination or pay for admission regularisation to UTME through their institutions. The little children, who now get into tertiary as underage students, are most often vulnerable to lots of things on campus. As undergraduate students, they are barely able to undertake courses of independent study or cope with the conceptual and critical reasoning challenges normally associated with higher education. What is worse, the education system at all levels is oriented towards the cramming of (mostly foreign) academic theories, and away from the application of the theories of solving real-life practical problems.

Gone are the days when schools were disciplined. These days, unlike then, schools no more show discipline. Failing pupils and students are no longer repeated but continuously promoted and even jumped classes. Gone are the days students revered their teachers like demi-gods/goddesses, all because parents oriented their children/wards like that, such that once a child saw his/her teacher from afar, after having committed a crime or disobeyed their parent(s)/guardians(s), relative(s) or thereabout, and was told that s/he would be reported to their teachers, the child would run and hide. Then, a teacher could discipline (punish) an erring child right before his/her parents/people without any complaint from the latter. But now, parents, especially female parents/guardians, would wear a tight short for a fight with a teacher (teachers, even a headmaster/teacher or a principal) for flogging an erring student/pupil. Then, when merit was the basis of great achievement, students/pupils worked hard for good/excellent grades. Every student strived for success, the best and never to be defeated by others. They studied and worked hard for the grades they envisaged. Then, meritocracy rather than mediocrity was the order of the day.

Then, parents made sure their children/wards were serious with/about their studies so that they would not end up being like some of them, who were erstwhile not educated formally or mere farmers, artisans, craftsman local technicians, nurses, health practitioners and afterwards teachers. Children were taught to respect elders (their older ones or seniors), customs, tradition, norms and values, those in authority of any capacity, and so on. Then, unlike now, teachers were hardworking, disciplined, fearless and bias-less. They were never afraid of losing erring (bad-egg) student. Any erring student was decisively punished, with corporal punishment, fine, suspension or expulsion. Then, school rules and regulations were not mere paper laws but functional, operational laws, and never toyed with by any student or staff. Truancy was a serious offence, unlike now. No student dared touch a teacher and still be or returned to that same school, even after several punishments and/or arrest. No student used to address their teachers by their names, all in the name of adding Mr/Mrs to their names. Teachers were simply addressed as Sir/Madam, Teacher, Master or Mistress. Parents never walked into schools to harass, embarrass and insult teachers. Teachers and lecturers never harassed/abused students and pupils sexually, nor extort them. They had self-esteem and maintained professional ethics.

Lecturers and teachers never collected money or got sex for pass grades — to pass failed students with B's, A's. Rather, any such attempts were announced in the class to shame such students. But now sexual harassment by lecturers and teachers has become the order of the day. Female students are harassed for sex, including married women. Some are simply denied certain grades, rights and victimised variously, all because they stand their ground never to be sex objects to such lecturers or teachers. Public schools' teachers were very committed to their duties without contempt (Robert, 2017). Rarely were teachers seen under the trees in the school premises

gossiping. They used to be punctual, devoted, honest, diligent, competent, virtuous, God-fearing, studious, exemplary and extremely competent, unlike now that the reverse has become the case virtually everywhere. This work thus reflects on the past glory of Nigeria in the education sector with several posers, having set out to interrogate the standard of education in contemporary Nigeria. Where is the past glory of Nigerian education? What has gone wrong? For how long do we continue like this in a mesmerised education of quantity rather than quality, of little or no standard? Where is Nigeria heading to in terms of education? What are the concerned authorities doing practically about the issues at stake? Can't this sector be revived, reformed and repositioned?

Again, in those old good days, ghost workers never filled and truncated the education sector. There were a few schools but high unimaginable productivity, quality, standard and dividends of education largely obtained. Then, teachers were teachers and not otherwise. There were a good number of Drs and professors in secondary schools and even in some primary schools too. Teachers and lecturers never compromised ethics of the teaching profession. The mostly thatched-built shades and classrooms were properly cared for and maintained, unlike today that the mostly expensive concrete blocks structures and classrooms of public schools are dilapidated or collapse. This is partly because the schools building projects are dubiously awarded. Even foreign building and construction firms now connive with awarding agents for bribery, loot, corruption and fake projects execution, economising the resources so as to make away with a lot. If students, who learnt under shade, trees and thereabout could do well, their contemporaries of these days ought to do better. But the reverse is the case. This portends that something is fundamentally wrong. There is the dire need for a retrace in order to find lasting solutions to the issues at stake.

Dilapidated structures are not rebuilt or renovated. Rather, new ones are demanded or provided, which sooner become likewise. Vandalism from students and staff has become pronounced these days, unlike then. Polytechnic graduates, who were honoured for their practical knowledge, are now poorly trained (half-baked) and graduated with certificates that are discriminated against for not bearing degree nomenclature. Theoretical knowledge impartation and acquisition has taken precedence over practical and technical skills impartation and acquisition. These days, high and outrageous school fees have kept back many in their homes uneducated and semi-educated respectively. And it is unfortunate that none of these people are courageous/determined enough to acquire formal education at all cost at home, perhaps under trees and shades and home libraries, like Abraham Lincoln, William Blake, Robert Frost, Malcolm X, among others who acquired formal education on their own at home. For example, this is what informed William Blake's

Romanticism expressed in his poem, 'The Schoolboy' (see Nwachukwu et al., 2015). Yet, their prowess, knowledge, contribution to the society at large, and fame know no bound. Several great philosophers of repute never really acquired formal education. Some did half-way. Examples include Socrates and Thomas Hobbes, among others. It is worth emulating. It is the reality of acquiring education outside the school structure or environment that Cornelius Ndubuisi reiterates thus: 'Schooling is not education' (Ndubuisi, 2018:481). He also notes, 'Certificate IS NOT Education' (Ndubuisi, 2018:483). But would Nigerians of these days ever acknowledge the knowledge and contribution of any such emerging individuals? Won't ridicule, scorn and humiliation silence them? These days, education is no longer for the poor. You hardly see or get the rich who voluntarily train the poor without any gain in return. This is unlike then and it is really become unbecoming, too absurd. It is unfortunate and regrettable. Now, a poor family relative would be used most times by the rich member of that family for labour, with/out being sponsored through schools. Yet, s/he runs the home and businesses of their rich relative amidst maltreatment, molestation and different forms of abuse and human trafficking. The instances are legion, but the aforementioned and illustrated ones suffice for others.

Factors Responsible for the Decline in Education Standard

Various factors account for the incessant decline in the standard of education in contemporary Nigeria. It is quite worrisome that instead of improvement in the standard of education, there is continuous decrease. The standard is falling as well as degenerating alarmingly. Issues of standard, quality and productivity in this sector are ethical and epistemic. The decline is caused by both human and natural factors. The blame is both individual or personal and collective or group. First, the government takes the largest portion of the blame. Schools take second position in the blame. Parents follow, as the third defaulters. Corporate bodies in-charge of the education sector and other elites come next in this regard, though they also share the blame of the government. As secondary agents of socialisation, the Nigerian mass media also play significant role in the issues at stake (Robert & Besong, 2016). The students are also to blame for the decline in education standard in contemporary Nigeria.

Accordingly, the government continuously fails in its responsibilities. It gives little or no priority to education. It fails to offer good leadership and the measures, modalities, logistics, infrastructure and amenities, attention, support, supervision, funding and staffing and training needed for progress in this sector. Most of the issues are simply or out rightly ignored by the government (Robert, 2017; Robert & Besong, 2017; Robert, 2020). Schools are to blame for their internal lapses. These include poor school management and administration; poor teaching standard; operating without registration with appropriate formal bodies; lack of teachers and

logistics (teaching facilities, aids and infrastructure, etc.); gross abuse of teaching ethics and of students' rights; poor and rigid working conditions; poor teaching styles, communication mishap and negative attitude; initiating, aiding and/or abetting crimes like examination malpractice; child abuse and initiation into bad non-academic groups and activities; etc.

Most parents of these days are not helping matters in the education of their children/wards. Such parents do not support teachers and school authorities but detect for them (Odongo, Aloba and Raburu, 2016:104; Ashiona & Mwoma, 2013). They do not take discipline seriously and thus walk into schools and harass teachers and/or administrators for flogging their erring children. Some parents use money to make up for their children's academic performance and achievements. They begin the process of examination malpractice and go on to pay whatever financial and/or material bribe to get whatever they want for their children. Most of them force their children/wards to study courses they have little or no competence in. Some of them do not encourage them to read. They buy expensive phones and the likes for them, but rarely buy a book of one hundred and above for the same children. In fact, there are just too many ways contemporary parents contribute to the falling standard of education in Nigeria. Bad parenting greatly affects children in all ramifications, inclusive of their academics.

The Nigerian mass media have contributed greatly to the fall of Nigerian education standard. This is evidence in their media contents and programmes. They rarely engage in adequate educational programmes. Their contents distract most Nigerian children from academics and expose them to media violence, western ways that contrast with those of Africa, and so on (Robert & Besong, 2016). The influence impacts negatively on children at home, school and beyond. The children in turn influence their siblings and peers. The distracted students of this era of computerised and technology-driven world do not take their academics seriously. They are mostly undisciplined and not well groomed at home. Such students frustrate teachers' and school administrators' efforts at moulding them academically, intellectually, morally, socially and otherwise. On the whole, such students rarely do well. Other aforementioned players in the decline of education standard do so in what they do, fail to do and their misdeeds. They fail in doing the needful. For example, Robert (2017) notes, private schools are the bane of most of the plagues public schools suffer in contemporary times, in their sustained efforts to compete more favourably with public schools. This is evidenced in areas like running special examination centres, engaging in examination malpractice in order to get more students, not disciplining erring students for fear of losing them, and so on (see Ochima, 2014; Robert, 2017).

Beyond the above, there are other factors responsible for the decline, which are basically phenomenological or phenomenal. These include corruption, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, nonchalant and negative attitude, cultism, protracted and recurrent strikes, ethnicity, cultural embargoes, negative globalisation trends, the bad sides of science, information and technology of the global village, brain drain, religious fundamentalism, civil unrest, internal insecurity (such as terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, etc.), peer influence, the attrition of informal education and indigenous knowledge, over zealousness, parenting styles, home influence on students' academic performance, and what have you. Yagboyaju (2019:53) agrees that protracted and recurrent strikes also account for the decline in the education standard in contemporary Nigeria, as he observes that the falling standard of education in Nigeria is worsened by protracted and recurrent strikes.

Financial and Allied Forces Causing the Fall

The current education situation in Nigeria in terms of standard, quality and productivity implies quantitative rather than qualitative education. As Balogun (2011) notes, access to education has improved steadily over the years, but for a long time demand exceeded supply. Gross enrolment at primary secondary and tertiary levels is slight above the Sub-Saharan African average for the year 2005 (102.9 as against Sub-Saharan African figure of 94.9). However, net enrolment is lower, which means dropout rates are higher, in Nigeria than in the Sub-Saharan African average – 67.9, compared to Africa's 69.2 (World Bank, 2005). Onwuka (2006) laments that public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP has been on the decline in Nigeria; as a proportion of public expenditure education spending fell from 7.8% of the federal government total expenditure in 1994 to 4.5% in 2003. In the same vein, Balogun (2011) observes that 'the decline in education expenditure has serious consequences, considering the challenges facing Nigeria in this sector. The precipitate fall in the standard of education is one of such challenges.' Balogun (2011) further notes,

Due to a combination of factors, the quality of education impacted at various levels of the school system had dropped sharply. Among the factors accounting for the deteriorating education standard are shortage of qualified teachers, explosion in demand and the consequent over-crowding in classrooms, the application of ineffective and archaic teaching methodologies, the growing incidence of indiscipline among teachers and pupils and probably the pervasive influence of cults and violent groups on campuses. The last factor, the take-over of schools by secret cults, deserves urgent action. As a matter of fact, the reform of the education system should begin with a strategy aimed at reclaiming the schools from the cultists and from their intra-and extra-mural godfathers.

Balogun's observation aptly lends credence to our central position on the falling standard of education in Nigeria. His position on educational expenditure tallies extensively with Onwuka's (2006). These scholars, like their fellows, describe the pathetic situation in Nigerian education sector, which applies to most, if not all, other sectors too. Teachers are grossly incompetent because most of them are half-baked at schools, from primary to tertiary levels. Equally important, as an education reform agenda, is what to do about primary and secondary graduates, who can barely read or write. Between 1977 and 2002, primary enrolment increased from 9.9 million to 27 million. By 2005, total primary enrolment had soared to 20.95 million (Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN], 1980; National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Secondary school enrolment rose from 998,976 to 7.5 million between 1977 and 2002 (CBN, 1980 & 2003). Even at that, the enrolment is yet to be at level in which literacy rate would outweigh illiterate ratio. The falling standard of education is the kernel problem responsible for the whole ugly situation.

The situation of quantity taking over quality rose with the launching of Universal Primary Education Scheme in 1976 and of Universal Basic Education Programme in 1999. It is good that this scheme was launched, but all that has to be done to make it a worthwhile venture remains the problem at stake. Funding is the first and highest problem facing the realisation of the goals of the scheme. Management lapses, including corruption, bad leadership and inefficiency, follow. Monitoring of programmes is inconsequential and thus the scheme suffers various threats to its survival and progress. Negative attitude on the parts of all its players involved is another problem. These include parents, teachers, schools' authorities, government and its agents, pupils/students, private schools, and so on. The increment of school fees and other levies is another issue at stake. Free education, at least at the Lower Basic, is worthwhile. But this is rather theoretical than practical. Where it obtains, schools' authorities resort to various charges. Parents' unwillingness to send their children/wards to public schools is another problem. This follows the mentality that private schools rarely teach and do better than public schools do. This is not really true but a case of fallacy of hasty generalisation. Most private schools lack the capacity to do well in whatever regards (Robert, 2017). The problem of truancy, lack of commitment to duty, unpunctuality, having dilapidated structures and crowded classrooms, among others, are erroneously taken to mean that public schools are inefficient, less productive, worthless and so on. Several other problems follow suit, most of which come under the aforementioned ones.

Education of Mere Quantity without Quality

The education we have these days in Nigeria and many other nations of the world is deficient, not holistic or comprehensive. It is that of quantity without quality. It is that flooded with theories, mostly Western theories, with minor practical, Africanised

and non-Westernised curriculum. It is the quality eroded education of paper qualifications rather than talent; whereby paper grades count against practical talents and showcased intellectuality. Drawing from Prince Nico Mbarga's conception of holistic education, expressed in his music, Ndubuisi (2018:484-492) points out and briefly discusses the following obstacles to holistic education: 'the ailing educational system; hip-hop culture/celebrity worship syndrome; dirty habits and lewdness; shift in societal values/value crisis; social media addiction; media social irresponsibility; and 'no time' syndrome.' He also points out the way forward to include:

Rediscovery of the nexus between youthfulness and old age; learning as the distinctive mark of the 'new' generation; Investment in the leadership of tomorrow; the pride of place of the God-factor; Futuristic orientation; the need for contentment; intensive learning; time consciousness; the importance of self-confidence; and all hands must be on deck (Ndubuisi, 2018:492-495).

One of the recurring issues has always been that of the poor performance of UTME (aka JAMB) candidates. The poor performance of students at post-UTME test often reveals two important facts: namely; (i) the decline in the nation's standard of education or the quality of the students being turned out of our secondary schools; (ii) the inability of UTME body to conduct qualifying examinations for students entering into our nation's tertiary institutions. Every year, at the end of the academic session, thousands of students are graduated from secondary to university. Many of them, who sit for WAEC or NECO or both, most times pass with above five credits, some with over five or at least 3 B's/A's even in English and Mathematics. But these are students most of who cannot construct a single good complete sentence or do arithmetic well.

Ironically, most of these students can rarely sit for and pass aptitude test, mostly of just fifty questions in General Paper, English and Mathematics, a prerequisite examination for securing admission into tertiary institutions admission. Yet, these are candidates that have had may 5 B's/A's, 4 C's; 9C's and others C's in WASSCE/NECO SSSCE or even GCE and at least 180, 250/280, 320 or so in UTME (JAMB). Then, the question is: How did such students get or *harvest* the excellent result for harder exams but can't pass at 25/50 in such test that there is no room for cheating? This means that there is mass education of quantity rather than quality from both primary and secondary schools. With screening rather than aptitude tests now, many of them are admitted to universities and other tertiary institutions on the ground of the ill-got grades from secondary schools, assuming that they really have competence in such subjects and should be admitted into departments that suit the subjects they have got such good or excellent grades. Also, tertiary institutions of

these days graduate millions of half-baked, porous and un/less productive graduates in these days. Yet, in this era, the emphasis is on paper grades, regardless of how they are got. We are into a pathetic situation of many schools, 'schooling and [many] certificates without education (Ndubuisi, 2018:481, 483).

Every society or nation in world history produces and gets the educational system it deserves. The educational system of a nation or every society is the direct outcome or product of its elites, people, citizen and nation. The sociological dimension in understanding the state or quality of our nation's educational system ought to be overlooked. An in-depth objective reflection on the Nigerian state and society shows that the basic preoccupation focuses or dwells on the Nigerian political class. And, the number one motive of the political class is materialism, the extreme accumulation of wealth and power, to the detriment or outright neglect of the Nigerian masses. These days, the paradigm shift from classical virtuous values has ushered in culture of making money in whatever way, regardless of how such wealth is amassed. In contemporary Nigeria, those who engage in looting, stealing, siphoning, pilfering and embezzling public wealth and resources are glorified. The proofs and testimonies to the legacy of corruption in Nigeria are often reported daily on print and electronic media (Besong, 2017).

The Nigerian political class misappropriates billions and trillions of Naira on daily basis, with impunity, disdain, recklessness and indifference to the people. Nobody can make the political class accountable for such large public fraud or theft. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has been reduced to a toothless bull dog that serves as the appendage of the nation's political class, having been founded by the same political elite, who are guilty too. It is only there for non-loyalist thieves, deviants and the poor ordinary citizens. It rarely tries and punishes any erring bourgeoisie or political elite accordingly. There are countless cases of corruption among top members of Nigerian executive, legislature and judiciary at all levels. Corruption has been institutionalised by Nigerian political elites. The implication of the above is the reality of the widespread corruption bedeviling our education sector in contemporary times.

The corruption in our school systems, colleges, universities or institutions is a reflection of the larger picture of corruption experienced by the Nigerian state at all levels of government. The school system in Nigeria is part and parcel of the Nigerian society. It is the integral part of the whole nation, Nigeria, and suffers from the crisis of corruption the same way the entire society suffers. The miracle centers in our contemporary schools for SSCE and UTME (JAMB) are the direct manifestations of the larger corruption in Nigeria. The miracle centers reflect the behaviour of the nation's political ruling elites who cannot offer anything or think of development

apart from the mass pilfering of public funds. Institutionalised corruption has bred other phases of corruption. The masses have been made to believe so much in corrupt practices and thus indulge in such ill-acts. Virtuous living is no more given consideration. No more hard work, merit or excellence, honesty, sincerity and integrity. How can we adequately and honestly explain how erstwhile very poor citizens turned stingingly rich politicians overnight? There is no rational way of explaining the sudden success of these wo/men than corruption. Corruption is glorified and encouraged, as most people now worship and applaud these evil wo/men.

In view of the above, the way to the top is no longer by hard work, but by dishonesty and dubious ways. These new evil ways evidently justify the culture of anything goes in our schools, including running miracle centers, mushroom schools, fake admission, forged certificates, misappropriation of funds meant for the development of schools and sponsoring students on scholarship, and what have you. The Nigerian experience has proven that most of those who rule today as governors, president, chairmen, legislators, judges, business men, etc. are not occupying such exalted positions by merit, hard work, integrity or fairness, but merely by favouritism, nepotism, mediocrity, bribery and corruption, fraudulent means, godfatherism, elitism, and what have you.

It is difficult to believe that the youths of Nigeria who are part of the educational system of the country are deeply involved in the current mess in the sector. Our leaders gave/give little or no priority to education. Besides, they set and show bad examples and legacies that continue to affect our education sector, as most of their subjects and fellows in the education sector follow their footprints and thereby do what contribute to destroying education standard as well as the whole education sector. Nigerian youths cannot learn from the bad ways of leaders like Ibrahim Babangida, whose image conjures corruption; Olusegun Obasanjo, whose name re-echoes the memories of the plagues of his erroneous introduction in the 1970s and his use of military instruments to subvert the Nigerian electoral system; Gen. Abacha, whose main legacy is how to plunder and rape our dear nation; and Gen. Muhammed Buhari, who justifies the use of Islamic militia and herders in destabilising the Nigerian state; among others. They have not bequeathed any worthwhile legacy for the youths to emulate them for.

However, our youths have to look both inward and outward for worthwhile role models and good lifestyle that would influence the education positively. They have to explore worthwhile opportunities at their disposal and champion deserving change. One of such opportunities to explore and utilise appropriately is information and communication technology. This is one way Nigerians as well as their schools

could compete favourably with other for knowledge, enterprise and learning in the 21st century of globalisation. Nobody doubts what information technology has done to our social networks, regardless of the negative sides of social networks (social media). They offer students different avenues for educational interactions. The mobile phone is one technology that could be used for educational purposes besides social networking purposes. Yet, three serious challenges to the utilisation information technology are financial constraints following poverty and corruption, epileptic power supply and cyber crimes (inclusive of hypnotism). Several other challenges abound. Nevertheless, all the challenges could be surmounted if there is the willingness to do so. Attitudinal change is required.

Conclusion

So far, this work has objectively interrogated the standard of education in contemporary Nigeria. It has proven that the standard of education in Nigeria has fallen and continuously degenerates since the late 1980's up to this time. There is a very wide gap between education then and now in Nigeria, as discussed with examples in the body of this work. The ugly situation has become more severe in recent years. It is quite surprising that then when Nigeria had no much of the new opportunities that it has now, it did well (far much better than now) in various regards. The difference thus lies in the leadership. The leadership of those days was good and thus ensured the education standard was high. Then, priority was accorded the education sector, such that professors and Drs were also in secondary schools, unlike now that those who attain such academic cadres simply dump secondary schools immediately, assuming that their positions have risen above the secondary school level. So many things have gone amiss, which is why the education is in shamble. These include corruption, manpower and logistics shortage, ethical issues, the rise of private schools and their misdeeds, the sustained negligence of what has to be done rightly, and so on, as heightened and discussed with examples so far in this work. The attitude of people and government towards education also made the difference.

Consequent upon the lapses, many people desperately crave for overseas education. The same elites, who destroy the education system in Nigeria, turn to overseas schools for themselves and their children. The situation has become so severe that Nigerian certificates are valued less compared to those acquired overseas. Meanwhile, in contemporary Nigeria, certificates and schooling are considered above talents, prowess and practical performance. This is wrong. It should be a blend-up situation, with talents being considered first. Schooling and certificates could be without education, which means such education is not holistic. On the whole, the whole issues bedeviling the education sector in Nigeria, which affect the education standard, are of ethical concern. The unwillingness to address them is what

compounds the issues at stake. Addressing the issues entails collective efforts and scholars' attention to explicate and find the ways-out, tracing the remote and immediate causes of the fall, towards resuscitating its lost glory. This is what this study has done so far, interrogating and rousing deserving attention to the chronic issues at stake and calling for collective and individual solutions. It also charges all and sundry to do the needful that would cause the deserving change and revive the lost glory of Nigeria in standard education.

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