



## **SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE IN NIGERIA SOCIETY: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study centered on sociology of education and its relevance in Nigeria society: Contemporary perspective. The emergence of sociology as a discipline is the direct consequence of the inadequacy of the earlier branches of knowledge before it to explain the debilitating crises of renaissance and enlightenment era. The research was prompted by observation on how sociology of education will assist to reduce social vices and unrest in our society today by transmitting the right values and norms to our children. Sociology took as its primary focus the study of man in group context to underscore the need of group dynamics in understanding the total social system. The greatest uphill task of the society then was how to restore peace and order in the society. It later delves into the influence of social relationships on people's attitudes and behaviours and how societies are established, managed, and changed. As non-professionals perceive it, sociology is the study of man's interaction within the society, but it is far beyond that as it also deals with the organizations (industries) and control of man's behaviours and attitudes to life within the society. In other words, in any setting where there are two or more persons in interaction, a sociological study is bound to take place. In view of the above, we may be force to assert that we have sociology virtually in anything including the sociology of sociology. The paper is situated within the framework of Structural functionalism theory. The researcher utilizes only qualitative and descriptive research methodology predominantly, Time Series research design was adopted and data was collected mainly through Documentary Observational Method as a data gathering technique. In this discourse the researcher deemed it pertinent to start by giving a general overview of the study. Thus, the problems were highlighted and possible remedy outlined. The study recommended among others that: Government, parents/guardians and policy makers should as a matter of urgency put more effort in creating educational policies for the betterment of the child and the society at large.*

**KEYWORDS:** Sociology, Education, Society, Social Value, Contemporary Perspective, Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Man is a product of socialization. It is based on this that Lock argued that man is born a complete "tabula rasa" and every knowledge man exhibit is learnt from his interaction with his immediate environment and the larger society (Lawhead, 2002; Udoidem, 2002; Minimah & Inoka, 1997). However, there are some traces of hormonal compositions that can make



man behave in a certain way, which cannot be negated. Nevertheless, whether an individual is innovative and creative, endowed with the need for achievement, good leadership qualities, sociopathic and psychopathic, patriotic or unpatriotic, discipline or undisciplined, corrupt and incorrupt is all result of a socialization process. This implies that good value does not exist or manifest in a vacuum, they are learnt consciously or subconsciously through a socialization process. This makes the discipline called sociology of education very necessary in our educational system today.

Therefore, a society that teachers its citizens sociology of education in an organized educational system have solve half of the problem by putting the citizens into the right track of development. It is the right knowledge of sociology of education that entrenches on the individual the attribute of discipline, respect for norms and values of society, uprightness, trustworthiness, honesty, among others, which every citizen needs to drive a better society and development. One very incontestable fact is that the concept “education” is slippery and elusive to define. It has diverse and sometimes misconstrued interpretation from different scholars or individuals. Arriving at a consensus of what education precisely is, by definitions, has been a difficult task, for sociologists and educators alike.

Be that as it may, this has resulted either in education being too narrowly or too broadly defined. Again, definitions of education are either sociological or humanistic. In other words, education is either applied as an acculturation of the child to do the will of the society or leading the child to develop his in-built potentials, taking into cognizance his age, interest and ability, among others. Each of the two approaches has its interest and ability as well as its methods of transmitting what it considers desirable and worthwhile to the individual. From the point of view of sociologists, the method and content are regarded as satisfactory by the society. Perhaps, such content may not take full cognizance of the learner’s needs and inborn qualities. As argued by humanists, the learner is the focus of education. He is given enough freedom in the pursuit of knowledge as well as in determining what knowledge could benefit him within the context of his society.

A definition of education that may be generally acceptable is possible if the two positions are blended together. This is why most contemporary sociologists agree with the normative concept of education as set down by Peters (1966), supported by Frankena (1978), Akinpelu (1981), and others. In attempt to avoid defining education in too narrow or too broad terms, Peters further set up three cardinal criteria based on which a decision can be taken as to whether a process merits the name education or not. These criteria are stated below:

- i. Education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it;
- ii. Education must involve knowledge and understanding as well as some kind of cognition, which are not inert;
- iii. Education, at least, rules out some procedures of transmission on the ground that they lack willingness and witness on the part of the learner.



A critical analysis of the above criteria indicates that education is value-loaded. It as well, transmits such things desired and cherished by both the learner and the society.

Therefore, education develops the holistic man including his cognitive, psychomotive and affective domain that make him/her an educated person, who in turn develop the society. Going by this meaning, education functions as the true light that lightens every society in particular and the entire world in general. To this end therefore, Elekwa and Okanezi (2013, p.18), asserted that education is simply the different experiences that people go through in life which help in the nurturing of their personal growth. Therefore, it is imperative to mention that the destiny of a nation is determined by its level of commitment to quality and sound education. In a changing society therefore, the educational system performs the function of social control as well as social change. Its foster conformism up to a particular limit in individuals and groups but beyond that limit it fosters critical judgment and deviation among them enabling them to accept and adjust to change. Hence, the input a nation or people makes to education leads to the expected output. A careless approach to any nation's education system results in careless production of citizens. The better the education, the better the citizens and then the better the human productivity in the nation's total development.

In addition, Ezewu cited in Elekwa and Okanezi (2013), holds that without education there is no society. In the same vein, Swift (1969) cited in Elekwa and Okanezi (2013), posits that education is all that goes on in society, which involves teaching and learning. To Plato, one of the foremost Greek Philosophers, education is the training which is given by suitable habits, emphasizing on virtues in children/citizens when both pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. From the view of Plato, education gears towards moral training, and right conduct. While retaining the moral ingredients of education, highlighted by Plato, Aristotle who understudied Plato, and was a product of Plato upheld that education is the development of a sound mind in a sound body. He emphasized that moral training cannot be achieved without a sound body. Again, Milton gave a more accommodating expression of education as "that which prepares a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously in all offices either at war or in peace" (Ezewu 1993,p.29-30).

To conclude this segment, it is necessary to bring to mind the etymology of the concept, which is two Latin words "educare" and educere". The former meaning "process of forming", "molding" or "making from nothing to something", the latter stands for "nurture", "guide", "uphold", "to lead out from within", "build", thus regarding education as a process of bringing to fruition the inbuilt potentials of the individuals for his/her personal development and to a large extent societal development. There is no gainsaying fact that education is a process that produces the true 'educated man'. As a process it involves a lot of tasks: human and material, spiritual and physical, tangible and intangible, immediate and remote. Conclusively, sociology of education is the study of how public institutions and individuals' experiences affect education and its outcomes. It is mostly concerned with the public schooling systems of modern industrial societies, including the expansion of higher, further, adult, and continuing education (Gordon, 1998). Sociologically, therefore, education being a vital part of human existence is an indispensable part of an individual and societal life. People become useful and civilized if they are better educated and socialized.



## Statement of the Problem

The present reality in Nigeria education negates “sociology of education” which principally, is the “live in unity, socialization and harmony as an indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality and justice”. Regrettably, one major problem facing our society today is how to get the Nigeria educational system right in the 21<sup>st</sup> century comparatively with other developing nations in the world. But the crucial questions remain: How better is our society operating today? Does our society have good system for our education to strive? It is obvious that many do not know that public institutions and inter-personal relationships are relevant in our educational system and it affects the outcomes of the children education. Government has deliberately do not pay much attention to the common slogan of “educate the child, educate the society”. Parents and guardians are also accused of this in our society recently.

Over the years, experience has shown that Nigeria is engulfed in so many ills, among which are excessive materialism and corruption, which affect our private and public lives. The political system, the religious system, the social system, the education system, among others is bastardized because of obvious sharp shift from right societal values and dignity. Education in most cases is no longer looked at in terms of the knowledge and intrinsic value of change in behavior rather unethical issues has become common in our learning system.

It is widely reported and argued in the literature that lack of enough budgetary allocation to education which affects the infrastructures and other basic necessities to quality education in the nation is a challenge. It is unfortunate to mention that beyond the rhetoric and enticing statements in favour of progressive government investment in education, Nigeria over the years still ranked among the least in funding of education globally and in Africa. Ololube (2013), observed that Nigeria is far from meeting the minimum standard benchmark of 26% of its annual budgetary allocation to education as recommended by UNESCO. Thus, these ugly scenario and assertions gave vent to the researcher to investigate sociology of education and its relevance in Nigeria society: Contemporary perspective. This will bring to the knowledge of the government and parents which share the bulk of the problems the important of education versa-vice sociology. To provide answer to the foregoing questions, this study is laid on the following premises;

- To identify the sociological perspectives of education.
- To find out the historical development of sociology of education.
- To highlight the relevance of sociology of education in Nigeria society.

## Research Question

We will proffer solution to the underlisted crucial questions and it is hoped that concise answers to these questions will help us in solving the problem that necessitated this study.

- What is the relationship between sociology and education?
- To ascertain the relationship between education and social value?



## METHODOLOGY

This study is purely a qualitative and descriptive research. It utilized the Time Series research design. This type of design is longitudinal in nature. However, it involves a proper observation of a phenomenon over a specific period of time frame while attributing changes in the phenomenon to a causal event (Campbell & Stanly, 1963). This design is deemed appropriate for this study with a phenomenon that is characterized by the presence of a periodic measurement process. Sociology of education is a lifelong field of study, at such subjecting its analysis over period of time leads to a better understanding especially as it interrelates with a variable such as society that is better measured historically.

In terms of how data was collected, this study utilized the Documentary Observation Method, argumentations and personal reflections as a participant observer of the Nigerian educational system and larger society, social value system, and socialization processes. Consequently, data was basically drawn from secondary sources. The study surveyed books, monograph, and academic journals, among others in order to generate fact for adequate exploration of knowledge.

### Sociological Perspectives of Education

Starting from the days of the founding fathers of sociology such as Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim in France, or Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel in Germany, sociologists have struggle with the question of interpreting social life and social phenomena. We cannot avoid the fact that in the years since Durkheim published his work entitled "The Rules of Sociological Method (1895-1964), commitment to the development of sociological theories of society has become a new scholastic orthodoxy. On the other hand, there are thinkers such as Parsons and Merton, who with Durkheim assert the primacy of society over the individual. They stress the paramount necessity of external constraints for both societal and individual wellbeing hence, the notion of a social system which, though created by people, nonetheless, enjoys an independent and external existence while at the same time acting as a constraining and conditioning influence upon individuals (Dawe, 1970; Meighan, 1986).

On the opposite side, and at every level in conflict with the system theorists, thinkers like Max Weber, Mead, Cooley, and Blumer reject the notion of a social system or the view that human action is a response to that system. The key notion of the action theorists is that of "autonomous man" who is able "to realize his full potential and to create a truly human social order only when freed from external constraints" (Dawe, 1970). These latter thinkers have tended to emphasize the ability of individuals to create meanings, constitute social situations and in effect, control the social and natural world (Meighan, 1986).

These sociological perspectives persist till today; they affect not only the sociological scholar seeking to preserve viewpoints, which radically separate him from his colleagues, but virtually every student of sociology as well. Sociological researches are approached from different theoretical perspectives ranging from structural functionalism, Marxism, interactionism to feminism, each affecting not only the way the researcher seek to explain what constitutes the problem under study, which radically separates him or her from the others, but also the recommendations that he/she makes for redress.

Importantly, the three main sociological perspectives, which are represented by the three groups of theorists enumerated above namely, consensus, action and conflict perspectives





would be examined in order to see what it is about these sociological theories that has made them different from each other. To achieve this, we must also look at the meaning and scope of sociological theory. We must clarify what are sociological perspective and the assumptions upon which a given perspective bases its analysis and interpretation of social life. From that point, we must further ask what conclusions about the nature of sociological perspective follow from our earlier definition, and how the different perspectives enumerated above can interest with the study of education.

### **Brief Historical Development of Sociology of Education**

It is on extant literature that Emile Durkheim was the first sociologist to conceive the idea of sociology of education as a subject matter. As a result of the deteriorating social disorder in modern industrial society which was offshoot of wars and industrial revolution, Durkheim was prompted to develop the idea of the subject. One of his recommendations among others was that education should be reorganized or restructured to provide for the improvement of social life and deteriorating social disorder or immoral life of the French society through such activities as the development of community and other projects similar to most communities today. Examples of such projects are Adult Education, Community Health Center, and Education for the citizens, Farm Settlement Co-operative Farms, among others.

Secondly, another notable scholar who contributed immensely to the development of the subject was Dewey-he is an American educational thinker. At the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century John Dewey notice that village life has started breaking down gradually, people was moving to the urban areas, social structure is perceived to be changing, both the school and the religious organizations had done little or nothing to make the child conscious of the new society growing up around him forgetting that the child was an essential product or part of society. With this mind set, Dewey was quick to help promote a social spirit of co-operation and mutual aid between school, home, and provide within the school itself, the situations in which such co-operation might be elicited. Furthermore, he felt the school must be in closer relationship with the home and general life of its neighborhood. He saw the school as a place which reflects the true picture of the larger society and sought to upgrade it for the benefit of everybody.

In another development, sociology sharpens education and forms a vital force in the entire framework of education. This is because the whole superstructure of education has real upon social forces, needs and demands. This includes the expectations and aspirations of a changing society which are manifest through the educational system of a nation. Society is dynamic, it grows and change constantly at such must not only be manifest in education but also must affect it. Sociology of education is therefore the consciously controlled process whereby changes in human behavior are produced in the persons and through the person within the group. It focuses upon the social force through which the individual is developed and the social relationship by which the individual gains experience and exposure. Put differently, sociology of education is both the influence and relationship between the education system and other social/ cultural system of the nation-social cultural, political and economic.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is situated within the framework of Structural functionalism theory. Structural functionalism theory as propounded by renowned scholars (such as Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer) is discussed and adopted for understanding of sociology of education and its relevance in Nigeria society: Contemporary perspective. Ajah and Nweke (2017) noted that structural functionalism is an approach in sociology which has developed at the wake of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries industrial revolution. The theory was developed as an adequate tool for dealing with the interrelatedness of various traits, institutions, groups, and so forth, within the social system. Structural functionalism is as old as the history of sociology.

This is evidential in the works of founding fathers of the discipline like Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Coser (1976) as recorded in Ajah and Nweke (2017) attempts a definition of structural functionalism. He saw structure as referring to a set of relatively stable and patterned relationships of social units, while he perceived as referring function to the consequences of social activities, which makes for adaptation or adjustment of a giving structure or its component parts. The functional approach in sociology was borrowed from the analogy of organism in the biological sciences in which it is known that all the body organs, in any living organism, have a kind of interconnectivity which links them together. Perhaps, each of these organs plays a crucial role for the survival of the organism. For any reason whatsoever, any of the organ's malfunctions; it is believed that this malfunctioning might affect the life of the organism. The functionalists, therefore, argued that the society is made up of groups and institutions, which constitute the whole. They further state that each of these institutions that form the society plays a part for the survival of the system (Ajah and Nweke, 2017).

In applicability of the assumptions of this theory to understand sociology of education and its relevance in Nigeria society: Contemporary perspective. The proper adherent to principles of the course sociology of education will immensely lead to tolerant, trust, respect for elders and norms, good value system, honesty, peace and unity which brings about a crime free society and sustainable development in the country. In addition, strict adherence to teachings of sociology of education will provide unifying foundation that will usher love for one another and reduce religious crisis and ethnic rivalry, co-existence will now become possible and achievable in our country today.

### **The Relevance of Sociology of Education in the Nigerian Society.**

Globally, learning is a process that takes place throughout individual life time. It must include the social and personal experiences that alter one's knowledge, behavior and attitudes. But for no reason no society leave such experiences to chance. Education does not operate in a vacuum neither can society exists without education; it is a means by which it reproduces itself. It is worthy of note that organized societies kicked-off at rural level and evolved into nation states far back 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the nation state is being out grown and humanity is moving to the creation of a global society. Education is playing a core role. Durkheim said education, "can be reformed and can reform only if society itself is reformed". He further argued that education is only the image and reflection of society which it imitates and reproduces. It does not create it" (Pezone and Singer, 2013). As a believer of Durkheim, I agree that education does not spring up on its own; a society chooses the education system it deserved.



Blaming education for the ills of society is like blaming a mirror because you do not like your reflection. The first step in improving education is to recognize that the matter plaguing education are rooted in the way society is structured, that is garbage in garbage out mentality. For example, we live in a competitive economy where everyone seeks advantage and higher profits, where people on the bottom rung of the economic ladder are stigmatized as failures and blamed for their conditions. The educational system of any society is related to the total social system of that society. Whether it prepares the new generations for status quo or for change depends upon the needs and goals of the society concerned. In a modernizing society the educational system has two main functions, transmission of the cultural heritage to new generation, and enabling the new generations to develop a degree of adjustability to change in the society (Amaele, 2010).

One of the oldest social institutions is education, the formal direction of learning experiences. It does not require the services of a prophet or a soothsayer or a philosopher to explain that educational institution serves certain basic social purposes; the most familiar of education is socialization or the transmission of cultural knowledge, value and beliefs. Another purpose is social control, whereby schools regulate the way in which people behave. This field of study proffers solution on how to tackle the challenges confronting the society today which include cultism, deviance behavior, disrespect to elders and constituted authorities, sharp practices, among others. In a similar vein, it helps people to choose and learn social roles, the educational institution attempts to ensure an adequate supply of trained people to fill needed occupation in an effort to match peoples talents and abilities with the needs to specialized occupational roles, school channel children into different areas of study and place them at distinct academic levels. However, the socialization function of education goes beyond merely reaching values and norms. Again, schools are also expected to convince their students that it is necessary to behave according to these principles. Indeed, students are graded not only on how well they cooperate, how orderly they are and even how clean they keep themselves.

Simply put, during the early years of schooling these are the only kinds of things on which they are given marks. If children do not behave according to certain norms by the time, they enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade they will have had time no matter how well they perform in academic subjects. Thus, through the process of socialization schools are directly engaged in social control. This includes instilling loyalty, obedience to authorities. Schools promote social control by teaching the children to idealize nation's leaders; people in place of power are presented in such a way that it is not easy to question their authority. Although, schools serve as custodial institutions for nation by keeping children off streets for many hours of the day. Schools also try to channel youth into socially approved activities and jobs when children show interest in disapproved areas or are identified as having behavior problems, the school may keep close monitor over them for a long time.





## CONCLUSION

Let it be re-emphasis that, corruption, leadership deficits and violent conflicts are direct and indirect consequences of poor knowledge of the proper right value of our society. The study has examined the concept of sociology of education and its relevance to Nigerian society. Also, the sociological perceptive of education and historical development of sociology of education was considered in this study. This study has argued that for our society to produce individuals that will respect and keep our values system, norms, and culture sociology of education must be taken seriously. Therefore, education should be seen to be positively related to every human development indicators and Nigeria sadly is carrying a heavy development deficit burden by not taken sociology of education seriously. Sociology is the scientific study of man's behavior in his social group relationship. Just like in other branches of sciences, sociologists of education utilize scientific techniques and studies group behavior. Education on the other hand can be as all that goes on in the society which involves teaching and training. The child is expected to develop individual identity, cognitive skills and self-control, and appropriate behavioural attitude. Socialization is that which occurs beyond childhood, it starts from birth till grave.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government, parents/guardians and policy makers should see it as a necessity to put more effort in creating educational policies for the betterment of the child and the society at large. The sudden withdrawal of the initial commitment of the Federal Government to education explain why the five main national goals set by the Federal Government as the necessary foundation for the national policy on education, failed to meet its targets.
- There should be awareness to the public, for them to realize the relationship between education and the society, and as such put value on education. To succeed in this venture, the Federal Government should draw up a comprehensive plan on education: comprising the primary, secondary, tertiary, teacher education, and technical/commercial among others.

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