

THE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN A SPIRITUALLY ORIENTED AFRICAN ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Education they say is light. When certain issues in education are brought to the traditional African environment, certain spiritual interpretation and implications are brought up. In a school/formal system of education, they are things that are seen normal, which the management and supervision of the education system could demand, but will in some cases and circumstances raises dust. For example, were supervision and management of the staff

and students learning standard and environment, or even examinations, falls in a masquerading festival or period in a traditional community, some spiritual and traditional religious cultural contest or disagreements are always common. Therefore, the problem of this research is that this level of education whereby people were taught traditional ways was not given consent, supervision and management in order to develop it gradually. It is discovered in this research, that the development of this level of education system would aid the inculcation of better value in Modern/Western education system via sophisticated management and supervision every tenet of education system in Nigeria, it is also discovered that religious and spiritual perceptions affect educational development in Nigeria ecological settings. The research employs phenomenological method. Materials are got from both primary and secondary sources. Data gotten were analysed with descriptive method of data analysis. The research recommends that traditional system of education taught by elders of different African/Nigerian environment should be encouraged and developed beyond its present level.

Keywords: Education Management and Supervision, Spirituality, African/Nigeria Ecological Environment.

Introduction

Education has been agreed to comprise formal and informal education. Some Africans conceived every form of education acquired by any learner outside an organized Western education system as informal. This form of organized education is patterned as a school system of education. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to know that in the African ecological environment, that there had been formal system of education. For example, people leave their family members to learn herbal medical treatment, farming, fishing, divination, priesthood, pottery, blacksmithing, etc. Children in occasions of the bold appearances of the moon, rally around the elders of various hamlets, settlement, to learn history, myths, legend of certain African settings, proverbs, idioms, folktales, and other important information, morality, customs, norms, and values of the people. Mrs. NwozoOnwumelu (personal communication, 29 December, 2008) stressed on how they always gathered at elderly people's homes at their infant ages especially during harmattan and moonlight at the local fire places in their compounds to learn and be advised on the right ways and acceptable behaviours, proverbs, idioms and history of events and the communities in the locality.

African environment is highly religious, a feature that motivated Africans to adhere to tolerance, and the spirit of hospitality. This is a special education commonly learned from elders to the younger generation. This formal form of education was traditionally transferred to the younger ones before the influx of the two major foreign religions (Christianity and Islam). Anih (1992:1) examines that:

The struggle of religionist to colonize men as adherent whether by abduction or clandestine elopement from one sacred belief to the other is as constant as the dialectics of human existence. This has led to the evils of religious bigotry, prejudice, jealousy, and fanatical extremists, belligerent religiosity which has

deadened man's consciousness and occasionally paralyzed his national spirit. It is then worthwhile that we should start this adventure into ecumenical attitude by a meditation on the cultivation of tolerance which would act as an ictus in the reading and understanding of what we think is contribution to the ongoing dialogue on how man could live peacefully among plurality of religions while maintaining faith in God.

African traditional ecological and spiritual environment has ecumenical spirit in its whole thought. This is one of the basic education elders offer to the younger ones, and it had helped the society especially Nigerians to have lived peacefully before the advent of Western and Arabian religions and education respectively. Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that this form of education that existed in African/Nigerian eco-spiritual ecology to be informal in its totality. This form of education is more formal than informal. Even though, no defined charges or payment are involved, it is formal because it is and was usually done within defined period, and outside one's parent teachings. Even orphans had developed their beings/lives through such education. The problem that bothers this research is that this level of education was not given consent, supervision and management in order to develop it beyond its mini scope to a wider scope. It is found in this research, that the development of this level of education system would assist the inculcation of better value change in the Modern/Western system of education through sophisticated management and supervision of every system of education in Nigeria. It is also found that religious and spiritual perceptions affect the educational development in Nigeria. The research adopts phenomenological research method. Data were sourced from both primary source basically oral interview and secondary sources, for example, internet materials, textbooks and journals. Data collected were analysed with descriptive method of data analysis. It is recommended amidst other things, that the traditional system of education taught by elders of different African societies should be encouraged and developed beyond its present state, etc.

Definition of Concepts

Management, supervision, Education, spirituality and African Ecology are concepts that are chosen to be discussed in the paper study day (n.d:I) discusses management as: "...a process of planning, decision making, organizing, leading, motivation and controlling the human resources, financial, physical and information resources of an organization to reach its goals efficiently and effectively". Management therefore, cuts across every area of human endeavour, be it education/academics, financial engagements, health, sports, home/households, etc. this is because, there is always the need to plan, because who fails to plan, plans to fail. Cambridge Dictionary (2021:6) defines supervision as "the activity of managing a department, project, project, etc, and of making sure that things are done correctly and accordingly to the rules". Supervision is invariably an integral of management. It is always difficult to manage without supervision, otherwise failure will still be recorded in the project or decision made. At every level, unit of every aspect of human activity, supervision remains the medium that reveals possibilities of success or failure at a particular point in time.

Spirituality as a concept, goes beyond ordinary idea of perception of religion. Those who do not believe in any God or religion still have some sense of spiritualities. Those who also believe in a God or religion also have deeper spiritual thought about the God and religion they believe in. Scott (2020:2) states thus:

Spirituality is the broad concept of a belief in something beyond the self. It may involve religious traditions centering on the belief in a higher power, but it can also involve a holistic belief in an individual connection to others and to the world as a whole. Spirituality offers a world view that suggests there is more to life than just what people experience on a sensory and physical level.

This definition or explanation of spirituality in the view of Elizabeth Scott reminds her audience the origin of the adage that man is god to man. It also accommodates the conjunction of some other people who believe in the existence of God/god(s) and religion. But in all, spirituality is based on the reasoning that there is/are force(s) above one's self, the force could be a fellow man, other physical beings/things, or God/god(s) or religion. The Igbo say that “*mmadubu chi ibeya*”, which means that man is god to man as stated above. Some human beings are deified in African societies, likewise natural phenomena. In African context, some still agree to the fact that the white man is a second god due to the sophisticated type of education, health care etc. he provides to mankind and to the hinterland. For the Africans, the Western missionaries and colonists are seen as the saviour against the bunch of illiteracy tied round African soils. Though some disappointments are noticed. African Ecology. Summers (2001:439) defines ecology as: “The way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and to their environment or the scientific study of thus: the fragile ecology of tundra” Summer tries to add the essence of the scientific insight into the concept of ecology as the name implies. Ecology deals with scientific study of this way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and to their environment. The environment meant in this paper is African environment, hence African ecology. African ecology could be taken as the study of the way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other, and to one another in African environment or ecosystem. Therefore, this research examines how the spiritual lives of Africans' environment or ecosystem influences the management and supervision of education systems among the people.

Common Education Systems in Africa

In this research, three education systems are viewed. They include: Traditional (Informal) education system, Western (Formal) education system, and Irregular education system. Ezeilo (2008:18) buttresses thus:

Before formal education was introduced, the girl was educated into the women's role by her mother and other female relations. The early years of female formal education today has gone a long way to diffuse the barrier to the social roles of men and women. Sex does not determine whether the Igbo girls are admitted into the primary, secondary or post-secondary institutions but ability. The socialization process in the education sector seems to be the same for males and females, in terms of academic subjects offered....

The fact here is that there was an education system on the ground in Africa environment before the introduction of Western and Arabian education. At this time, girls were/are taught of their roles in the African and Igbo traditional ecologies inclusively. The boys were/are also taught their own roles. But with the coming of foreign education systems, sex role became diffused in African ecosystem.

Apart from roles according sex and gender, there are so many educational knowledge and values inculcated to the psyche of both children and adults in the traditional African environment. This education can come in form of vocational training, culture awareness, norms, customs, taboos, socialization principles, Mr. Godwin Adinde (personal communication, 2 November, 2019). These aspects of traditional education are most often seen as informal education, but they should better be taken as traditional than informal education because in some cases they involve formal training and organisation. It is worthy to note that informal education could be found within or amongst Western and traditional African educators.

Western formal education is a form of education that created pre-primary, primary, and post-secondary education platforms. Onwuka (2008:53) states thus:

When western type of education was initially introduced, it was considered useful only because it prepared boys to be able to qualify for employment as clerks, interpreters, teachers, catechists, evangelists, stewards, cooks etc, for government office, commercial houses and missionaries. Such employment opportunities normally required the employees to live away from their homes. Girls were not considered fit for such employment opportunities. Parents would not allow their daughters to live away from home. Their main consideration for girls was marriage. So, girls were not expected to take to the European type of education. In the course of time, would-be husbands decided to send their betrothed girls to school.

The expression here is that Western education is a system of education that penetrated African ecosystem though with gender sensitivity at the inception.

Another system of education recognized in this research is what is termed irregular education system. This include education system that lack standard regular organization. For example, in Nigeria, there are Almajiri education of the North *Ota-akara* of the South East, the adult/non literacy education. Kabiru (2012) in Taiwo (2014:3) discusses "Almajiri thus:

...is a word borrowed from Arabic language which was derived from the word "*Al-Muhajir*" meaning a seeker of Islamic knowledge. Origin was the migration of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. Those who migrated with the prophet to Medina were called '*Al-Muhajirrum*', meaning emigrants. These emigrants had no means of livelihood on getting to Medina but based on the fraternity established by the prophet, between their hosts and them, were co-opted into different trades and vocations as apprentices who were paid for their services.

This Almajiri children lack organized education to a very disheartening and unpleasant

degree. Their system of education appears to be immensely irregular. This condition is applicable to adult and non-literacy education. The *Ota-akara* education of the South-East is almost dead especially in the rural areas through it could be taken to have been replaced with formal pre-nursery, nursery and primary school systems. These derogatory education system in Nigeria and other parts of African needs the skills of education management and supervision expertise considering the spiritually oriented nature of African ecology/ecosystem.

Influence of the Spiritually Oriented African Ecosystem in the Management and Supervision of the Education Systems in Africa.

African society is truly a religious and spiritual environment. It is agreeable that it is on this background that a renowned religious scholar, Mbiti (1969:1) points that: Africans are notoriously religious whatever happens to Africans has religious as well as spiritual interpretation. Take for example, the eclipse of the sun/moon in the 1940s, among Africans never had any physical or scientific interpretation. Everything about the eclipse for the African people is completely connected with spirituality. The environment and its inhabitants are spiritually developed as valuable entities. Man, plants, stones, metals, water, soil, animals, days, months, years, hours, etc, are accorded spiritual relevance in so many areas of human endeavours. In the economic, political, social, religious health and other scopes of human activities, spiritualities have their essence. It is vital to note that these non-living things are believed to have granted for the people, worldly or mundane cum spiritual belief that enhances progress and success in human lives. On the realm of education system observable in the continent, there are some influences radiating from the spiritual psychology of the aboriginals. On this background, the three systems of education in this article, which include: Traditional (informal) education, Western (formal) education and Irregular education. The interest here, therefore, is to examine the extent these spiritual attachments influence the supervision and management of at least these three education systems. In most African people's traditions and cultures both economic, social, political, educational, et cetera are meticulously monitored by religious heads. Adibe (2008:6) writes thus:

All Igbo institution: economics, politics, religious, educational and social were meticulously monitored by religious leaders who were under taboos to be exemplary and honest in their discharge of assigned roles. No institution operated in isolation of customary regulations... members of masquerade societies serve as village night guards' collectors of fines, prosecutors of all forms of offenders and protectors of public morality. When some men have no yams to plant or land to cultivate, they would pledge themselves to the wealthy that would support them on agreed terms.... Some crafts as basket making and pottery were common trades. Consequently, the society was cohesive, governable, and naturally religious.

This religious and the spiritual nature of the traditional African ecology have serious influence on the supervision and management of the traditional education system by experts especially those who are not well acquainted with the traditional ways and life

styles. Mr. Fredick Nebokike (personal communication, 14 September, 2017) expresses a great dismay on the barriers created by the spiritually oriented nature of African environment when he stressed that in the traditional African society of the Igbo origin, during the moon gatherings, in the farm, at worshipping shrines, at home on the way to the local markets, and so on, children and adults are educated on crafts, farming skills, religious practices and beliefs, customs, taboos, myths, proverbs, idioms, the general world view songs and dances, opposite sex relationships, etc. But due to the vast spiritual thoughts, a lot of rules and observations are wrongly conceived that people fear to associate themselves to certain traditionalists to avoid being contaminated by their crude spiritual perceptions. With these convictions the traditional education is laid to die in shambles. Those who would have supervised and managed the traditional African education lost interest in managing the education system to an enviable height. In the order way round the spiritual nature of traditional African environment tries to assist in the supervising and managing itself but with limited scope and expertise. Religious leaders of the traditional African environment rise as automatic education managers and supervisors because of the values attached to their spiritual directives on what are acceptable or unacceptable in the spiritual realm. Consequently, traditional education lacks empirical and scientific status.

This nature of traditional education which is prompted by its spiritual and religious undertone hence, promotes theories, superstitions, low vocational and industrial education development among other issues. The influence of this spiritual background of African ecosystem extends to the supervision and management of Western (formal) education. Encyclopedias almanacs (2019:4) states thus:

... the emergence of private and public schools in the Sub-Saharan African, and the place of Western education in the effective colonization and eventual decolonization of Africa. It is noteworthy that the mission school systems, modeled after European metropolitan institutions, became the cornerstone of future educational planning in post independence Africa. At the higher education levels, European university systems were wholly adopted with little modifications in almost all the newly independent African states. Western education became indispensable in the formation of new identities and national development.

As a spiritually oriented society, Africans (mostly Christian converts) embraced missionary schools more than public schools. At a time, the missionary schools were to function under the authority and guides of the government and secular rules, regulations and laws. This spiritual endowment which has become magnetic, glued the minds of parents and guardians and the motives of Christian missionary school system as the major hope and avenue of producing graduates who are both civilized academically and morally sound. Management and supervision of such schools became virtually corrupt free, impartial etc. But with time, a lot of Christian denominations began to establish schools from pre-nursery, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary schools and institutions respectively. Within this era, some missionary schools began to operate with sentiments. Some individuals who also owned private schools and those who are heads of different

public school and those who are in authorities or powers at different capacities in government offices, apply sentiments based on their spiritual alignment or affliction in recruitment, management and supervision of schools within their control. Consequently, the supervision and management of Western education started lacking the envisage sustainable standard. Miss Innocentia Egwuatu (personal communication, 14 April, 2021) lamented that she went for an interview for recruitment of teachers in a school owned and managed by a Pentecostal church. As a graduate of computer science, she displayed her proficiency and was called to start work. But about five months after she had started teaching computer in the school, a member of the church brought one of her children who was writing senior secondary school certificate examination and UTME, claiming that her daughter should replace her (Innocentia) because she is a member of the church and has the same spiritual orientation with the church that owns the school. Unfortunately for Miss Innocentia Egwuatu she was removed and the O' level candidate was taken. But fortunately for her, her brother in-law intervened and she was returned, because her brother in-law was also a member of the church. In Africa environment, the spiritual orientation of the ecosystem affects the growth and decline of Western education.

Moreover, spiritual forces are also believed to be influential in so many things among Africans. No matter the level of education one might have acquired, there is always a need to come home and honour God or gods, inform of thanksgiving and other forms of sacrifices. Such feats are believed to have been approved by God through other gods dwelling in certain wildernesses, waters, mountains, hills etc. when those who are Christians refused to acknowledge such belief, their family members can volunteer to handle such spiritual recognitions. More so, some public schools in the rural areas have spiritual as well as religious histories that might forbid some acts of visits by ordinary man. In some cases, spiritual or religious history prohibits establishment or building of schools at a particular land, etc. All these affect the development of proper or adequate supervision or management of Western education negatively.

Irregular education system in this context involves the adult/non-formal education and the almajiri associated system. Princeton world Net in Otiji et.al (2021:3) discusses adult education thus:

Adult education is the practice of teaching and educating adults. Adult education takes place in the workplace, through “extension”. Other learning places include: community colleges, folk high schools colleges and universities, libraries and lifelong learning centers. The practice is often referred to as “training and development” and is often associated with work force or professional development. It has also been referred to as andragogy. Adult education is different from vocational education, which is mostly workplace-based for skill improvement and also from non- formal adult education, including learning skills or learning for personal development.

The point here is that adult education remains irregular in the sense that it has not been given standard regular status in terms of its own full-fledged centers/school buildings or

structures, popular academic and routine programme of its own, uninterrupted by any other academic programme. In another instance, Otiji et.al (2021:313) stress thus:

... Most of the students are highly traditionally religious... in mathematical calculations; they begin to pay attention to religious significance of special numbers like the local count of four, three, one etc, as the case maybe. In some cases, certain traditionally days have religious regards and are forbidden to undergo any other activities including educational activities on those days...

These religious and spiritual attachments negatively affect adult educational programme in many African societies. At the same time, they hinder efforts for adequate and effective management and supervision of adult education in African eco system.

Almajiri education programme is another irregular system of education in African (Nigerian) ecology. Taiwo (2014:246) emphasizes that: "...the world almajiri as written by Kabiru (2012) quoting. Sheik abba Aji, a renowned Maiduguri-based Islamic scholar, is a word borrowed from Arabic language which was derived from the Al-muhajir meaning a seeker of Islamic knowledge. Its origin was the migration of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina". This assertion is repeated to emphasize on the relation between almajiri concept and prophet Mohammad's migration from Mecca to Medina to re-echo the nature of the state of the almajiri who are always migrants from their original settlement to a foreign settlement as a necessitate to the spiritual conviction in Islam. In the Nigerian society, the almajiri children and their educational involvement are seen in the northern Nigeria. The educational system offered to these migrants is highly irregular and not well structured. This spiritual influence makes it difficult to manage and supervise educational systems in such a spiritually oriented African/Nigeria ecological environment.

Recommendations

This research recommends that:

1. African traditional system of education should be encouraged and developed beyond its current state.
2. Spiritualities should not be allowed to pull the entire education systems in shambles.
3. Some traditional beliefs and practices should not be applied when they are completely unnecessary, but when they are necessary, they should be carefully and systematically applied.
4. Stake holders in these educational systems cultural and traditional practices, should provide avenue for proper interaction between traditional and imported religions, spiritual atmosphere that will enhance general management and supervision of these education systems with highly minimal challenges will be built.
5. The public should be oriented on the values of all these education systems through symposium, conferences, seminars, meetings etc.

Conclusion

The three systems of education in this paper are facing serious problems of management and supervision. In African continent, education standard withers down and away virtually every day. The spiritual environment or ecosystem is very good, and should be encouraged and developed. But at any point or where it would scare prosperous academic improvement, an adjustment should be made, to reasonably accommodate all and sundry.

The foreign and traditional education systems will add serious growth and development in many spheres of Africans' welfare if they are jointly developed. It is proper management and supervision of the education systems that the good results will be harvested. It should be noted that in most cases, the spiritually structured nature of African environment or ecology will assist in controlling malpractices, corruption, bribery etc, in these three levels of education system in Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular.

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Interview

1. Mrs Nwozo Onwumelu, Enugu State, farmer, 81 years, 29/12/2008
2. Mr Godwin Adinde, Anambra State, trader, 62 years, 2/11/2019
3. Mr Fredrick Nebeokike, Enugu State, Rtd. Civil Servant, 90 years, 14/9/2017
4. Miss Innocentia Egwuatu, Abia State, Teacher, 32 years, 14/4/2021