



## Sociology of Education: A Tool for Shaping Education System in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*The field of sociology of education explores the various relationships between education, society and social institutions. This paper aimed at determining how the school affects the cultural values of the society in order to package members of the society in discharging their roles as accepted members of the society. Furthermore, it was recommended that different cultural values should be respected to avoid conflict.*

### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction

Sociology focuses on various societal and cultural issues which influence the behaviour of man. Sociology has been defined as the study of the structure of society, its groups, institutions and culture. For instance, Elechi and Ogbondah (2005:2) defined it as “a social science concerned with systematic study of the relationship existing between individuals and groups within a society”. Similarly, Akubue and Okolo (2008, vi) see it as the scientific study of the nature of society and its organization”.

Sociology of education is aimed at relating sociological principles to education process. It equally, aimed at examining wider range of social issues like respect to elders, conflict resolution and management among others in human society and through the process of education inculcate to students, knowledge and skills to tackle such issues. Defining it from the discipline point of view, Elechy and Ogbondah (2005:15) state that, “sociology of Education looks broadly at the relationship existing between the school, the community and social institutions like family, religion, polity and economy in order to determine how the school affects the cultural organization of the society”.

Broadly speaking sociology of education examines how the culture of people affects the school and how school affects the culture. This is because both the school and the culture of the society are dynamic and as such are influenced by each other. This view was supported by the theory of structural-functionalism which believes that society is seen as a system composed of interrelated institutions such as polity, family, religion, economy and education. The institutions perform functions essential for the survival of the society. They play important role in human society with the aim of maintaining a state of equilibrium hence they are regarded as agents of socialization. These agents provide the main setting where roles of all types are learnt.

Socialization in the context of this study is defined as a process of learning whereby people's culture and values are learnt. Through socialization one acquires socio-cultural skills values that makes him think reason and behave in a particular way. The knowledge acquired through socialization help one to cope with the problems of the environment. Through socialization behaviour is acquired and modified to conform with expectations of the society (Kandell, 2007).

The essence of education or socialization stems from the fact that no society or culture is static. The inevitability of social change with its attendant consequences of work in modern society laddened with growing division of labour in industrial society, has led to what Durkheim in Schaefer (2003) called loss of direction in the society. This is a time when social control of individual behaviour has become ineffective. Social change is a shift from old social system to a new social system. Social change according to Maconis (2007:667) is “the transformation of culture and social institution over time”.

In industrial societies when workers become more specialized in their

work, Marx envisaged conflict arising from socio-economic relations of two major classes in the society, the ‘haves’ and the ‘have not’. Conflict theorists do not see the harmonious equilibrium of the society as a natural condition (Elechi and Ogbondah 2005). While Marx saw society as being in a continuous struggle between groups and classes for ownership of production and wealth, Elechi and Ogbondah (2005) assert, that the modern conflict theorists like C. Wright Mills, Dahrendorf and others see the struggle for power and income as a continuous process. In order words, it is one in which many categories of people appear as opponents in their struggle for classes, races, nationalities, religion and even the sexes.

The need for the study and better understanding of human society, its structures, groups and their various culture as well as various social, economic and political institutions are within the scope of sociology of education. Sociology of education could be approached through the following social institutions namely marriage, economy, religion, polity, education and health care as well as through the agents of socialization, namely. Family, school, mass media, community, church/mosque.

#### **This paper therefore focuses on the role of sociology of education in shaping education system in Nigeria for societal survival.**

The researchers tried to examine the state of the art with regard to the above agents of socialization, their defects in the socialization process as well as proffering possible solutions for their effective implementation.

#### **The Role of the Nigerian Family in the Socialization Process: State of the Art**

Family socialization has been the bed-rock for other levels of socialization agents inherent in the social system. This is because the family plays a crucial formative role to the survival of the whole social system. Social scientist according to Edokobi (1991:53) called the family “the first building block of society”. Etim (2010: 113) affirmed that “of all the agents of socialization, family is the primary one, and is central in the whole process”. This implies that family is the foundation upon which the nation stands. Edokobi (1991: 55) quoted Iral Reiss in the following lines: “It is the family that must give the society the type of new generation (society) that it will have”. On this basis, this section will concentrate on the state of the art of the family as an agent of socialization in the contemporary Nigerian society.

The rate of crimes in Nigerian society is enough evidence that Nigerian families have failed in their primary functions of rearing up their children. By implication the incessant drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, prostitutions, etc inherent in the contemporary society are enough evident that Nigerian parents are not playing their roles in socialization process.” Families that socialize their children following the accepted norms and values of the society definitely create smooth transmission from home to school as well as helping to a great extent

the social up-bringing of their children, thereby energizing future generation and cultural values vital for developmental process.

Edokobi (1991) in his brilliant exposition with regard to Nigerian social context asked a question, "Nigeria family –which way to go; violent crime or national development?" To answer this question he carried out a research titled "the Nigerian family, violent crime and National Development". In this study, he selected some families in some towns in Awka and around Awka (Nise and Enugwu-Ukwu), that fit into the group that can be termed middle class families (mostly in majority), and the lower class families who are also in good population which he monitored for a period of five years (1985-1989) to observed development in the up-bring of the children. His major findings among others include that: over 95% of the families in Awka, over 85% of those in Nise and over 90% of those in Enugwu-Ukwu showed signs of backward mobility in the socialization of the children. It was observed that some parents send their children and wards out into the street to engage in street hawking of home food items. These children invariably imbibe subculture of the touts, which may include stealing; double-crossing; all sort of ponographic words; and also culture of living beyond one's earnings. The findings equally showed that the majority of the children were neglected. Both parents are engaged at work, trade or business all day leaving their children to operate without adult guidance. The children are sent to school and when they come back, meeting non-of-the parents in the house will continue to indulge in all sorts of maladjusted behaviour. Supporting these findings, Egbezor (2002:36) reported that "...many parents in the modern society spend less time with their children, preferring to leave them in the hands of their house helps or maids. The above findings are true of the Nigerian contemporary society. It is even worst now, as the economic melt-down has worsened the economic right of the majority. This not withstanding, the family where earliest education of the child in society usually begins, has turn to be a place where immorality and corrupt practices are learnt. Nebo (2011) expressed shock at the Childs' response to his question whether he did well in the common entrance examination. The child replied, "I didn't do well, but my father is working it out". The above scenario showed a clear picture of how children reared by some parents and what type of value they imbibe from certain families. The family value in most Nigerian homes have in one way or the other degenerated to exhibiting corrupt practices, such as misappropriation of student union dues, examination malpractices, prostitution, sexual harassment, grade sorting etc among students at all levels of educational institutions in Nigeria.

With this state of art in Nigerian families, it seems it may be difficult for Nigeria to attain anticipated development through its educational system, hence the need to use sociology of education to re-orient the family to the earlier cherished societal core values and attitudinal change from materialism and self aggrandizement. Igwesi (2008:82) rightly stated that "the remoulding of the Nigeria person will involve the re-orientation of the values of the individual and the revival of those cherished societal values which have almost gone moribund". Suffice it to say that this re-orientation must have its root in the family. Being the first socialization agent that the child first comes into contact with in life, Ekpiwre (2008:176) opined that "whatever training the child receives at home would, to a greater extent, determine the success or otherwise of subsequent training that the child would receive outside the home."

### Impact of Mass Media in the Socialization Process

The media which include the print and the electronic plays vital role in socialization process. Mass media communicates values, standards of conduct and social relationships approved by the society (Etim 2010:120). Through mass media skills, norms and culture of other people are learnt and invariably can help easily adaptation into culture that is not ones own culture.

Despite its importance in socialization process, media on the other hand has some negative implications when misused. The use of media has been abused by various interest groups, political parties and government who see it as an avenue and means of advertising their own ethno-centric and tribalistic cultural values which may give rise to conflicting cultural values hence leads to instability. Expressing his opinion on the use of mass media in Nigeria, Etim (2010: 121) succinctly noted that "the negative use of the mass media in political so-

cialization, alienates the citizens from the correct values of democracy and the government itself; and such a lack of confidence, generates instability....."

It has been equally noted that mass media, instead of promoting core-national values which according to Igwesi (2008), have almost gone moribund. Olurode (2002) was of the opinion that the youth restiveness in Nigeria is partly as a result of unbalanced and uncensored exposure to violence as seen in almost all forms of the mass media.

There is need for the federal government of Nigeria to institutionalize policy on the type of films and programmes which Nigerian media should display. In fact, censoring the films are very necessary. Effort should be made to teach democratic principles through media rather than being used for spreading false information that alienates the citizens from the correct values of democracy to conflict situations (Etim 2010).

However, it is worthy to note that media should be systematically organized to reinforce socialization process. On this note, Egbezor (2002), stressed that since knowledge is acquired through the electronic and media under relaxed and cordial environment, what is watched in video or audio video or in print should be educative to the viewers or readers. There should be a deliberate, systematic, sustained electronic and print media as a supplement for those who are unable to benefit from the formal educational programme.

### Impact of the Church and Mosque in the Socialization Process

The church and mosque play key role in the socialization of the members of the society. The church and mosque reinforce the collective conscience of the society. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2008), social life will not be possible without the shared values and moral beliefs that form the collective conscience. Ethical values are taught to members early and these values are shared and transmitted from one generation to another. This is because people feel a sense of awe, reverence, deep respect, or fear for that which is seen as sacred (Kendall, 2007). Kendall further stressed that there are many things people across cultures and in different epochs considered as sacred. Those include invisible gods, spirits, holy books, alters, crosses etc. The church and mosque socialize their members to the sacred beliefs which are rooted in the holy or supernatural ideologies. In fact, their belief in supernatural forces affect people's lives either positively or negatively. The church and Mosque help in socializing the child or individual(s) to live a good Christian or Moslem life in accordance with the teachings of the Bible or Koran. The church and mosque help in maintaining social control in the society. This is done by conferring supernatural legitimacy on norms and values of a given society (McGuire, 2002). This invariably shapes the behaviour of members of the group in respect to their belief system.

The belief system of a given group in some cases generate to conflicting ideologies. In fact, misconception of belief system triggers off conflict between groups and also among same religions group. This negative attitude is resolved through socialization or educating members to understand that there is a supernatural being, who created all living and non-living things. The different ideologies for different religious sects create serious concern to all and sundry.

The religious movement is a dominant force in both developed and less developed countries in the world. According to Juergensmeyer (2000) religious fundamentalism became worldwide phenomenons that sometimes lead to violence as a means of establishing their fundamentalist ideas. For instance in Nigeria some people have turned religion into a personal and private matter. This act invariably creates more confusion in their practices either as a traditional religious worshiper or Christian or Muslim worshiper. In other words, people feel increasingly free to combine beliefs and practices from various sources and traditions to suit their own taste. In Nigeria, there is the case of "Boko Haram" meaning western education is forbidding in Hausa language.

Some religious sects seem to be brutal in their practice and has no respect for human right. In the traditional, christian or muslim religious groups, sects arise during the period of rapid social change. Accord-

ing to Haralambus and Holborn (2008) the extreme teachings and rejection of the wider society no longer fit the social situation of its membership as a result of the changes from sect to denomination, for instance, the Methodist while the seventh day Adventists and the Jehovah's witnesses continue to remain sects. Different schools of thought see religion differently. For Emile Durkheim religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices that are related to sacred things, for Malinowski, it is a reinforcing social norms and values for promoting social solidarity, for Marx, it is the sign of the oppressed creature, the opium of the people. Religion lasts as long as a society lasts Akubue and Okolo (2008)

From the above meaning of religion by different educators or writers it may be very difficult to ascertain what true picture of religion should be. There is no yardstick or universal standard against which of their belief or teaching should be accepted as true. However, only religion links meaning with ultimate reality since human action is directed by meanings. Efforts should be made to ensure that religious beliefs shape the economic forces of the society by the government, irrespective of religious affiliation of the ruling party to save society from constant killings of the innocent citizens. This should cut across all over the world especially Africa with particular reference to the North East, Nigeria where innocent people including school children are killed by the religious sect known as "Boko haram".

### **The Role of the Community in the Socialization Process**

The community is another powerful agent of socialization that influences the youths in the society. The community helps in providing less dependent of the children to the family activities. They provide discipline to those members that deviate from the accepted norms and values of the society. They provide information on sex related issues which the family may not actually release to them.

The community equips the child to be a more complex person as the child is exposed to values and experiences of many people outside their family (Ogbonnaya, 2011). By implication the community in one way or the other socializes their members to their accepted norms and values and punishes anyone who deviates from it. It equally, provides food, shelter and some degree of safety for its members so that they will survive (Kendal, 2007). Members are taught the ways of community especially in settling disputes and also dealing with emotions either formally or informally for the survival of the community's values and norms. A typical socialization function of the community to young male members is initiation ceremony performed to accept a young boy in the community as an adult (Ibia, 2012). Ibia further stressed that it is the function of the older women in the community to teach the girls how to cook for husbands, take care of their body when pregnant and also care for the new born babies. These activities of the community help in producing a complete member of the society or community. Children acquire skills considered very useful to members of the community (Mgbodile, 2004).

These noble roles of the communities notwithstanding, the complex nature of modern societies made it difficult, if not impossible for communities to cope with the socialization of their children in their earlier informal ways (Nwa-chil, 1999). Not all communities have opened up to change and these communities that have opened up to change either from within or without themselves do not develop very fast (Okafor and Emeka, 2004). Modern societies emerged as a result of social change. Communities constantly change in response to innovation and opportunities for the manifestations of individual talents and abilities (Shankar Rao, 2012). The implication is that communities that are adamant to complex nature of the fast changes may fail in socialization process and adjustment to new innovations, hence, brings up children with negative notions for development.

Communities socialize their children in the areas of culture transmission and occupation. However, since communities left key socialization process to other agencies like school and religion, development of the communities are now left in the hands of some members of the community with selfish interest rather than community interest. The expected noble roles of the communities face the challenges of crimes committed by youths (boys and girls) who now take laws into their hands by joining bad gangs and terrorizing the communities as armed robbers or kidnapers or 'boko haram'. No wonder even as people become more affluent social health of modern societies has

declined (Meyer, 2000). These negative acts adversely affect the development of a community as in some cases, a member of that community might be the one who leads others to invade their community from another communities as gangs.

Sequel to the above situations, the government should empower the communities to form a strong vigilante groups that have the interest of their community members at heart with the approval of military personnel assistance. This will help to a great extent to remind individuals of his social responsibilities and obligation and become more-less brutal in dealing with other human beings to achieve efficient system of social control.

The government should organize seminars, conferences and workshops to sensitize members of the community on the need to curb untimely deaths and loss of property worth billions of Naira that are caused by those that deviate from the accepted norms and values that strengthen unity.

Community members should be brave and very vigilant in identifying movement of strangers by devising language symbols or any other communication system to alert others about the arrival of new and strange movement of unknown persons.

### **The Role of the School in the Socialization Process**

The school is another important socialization agent. Socialization refers to social learning (Shankar Rao, 2012). The school is a microcosm of the society or community where it situates. A school is more "a social institution and organization which transmits social and cultural messages to learners and through which they are socialized into established and standard ways of behaviour" (Ibia, 2012: 50). The school clearly defines the roles for members and groups within it. It provides mechanism for social control and help the learners to acquire skills for economic and political participation. It equally, training in basic skills necessary for teaching and learning process. For example the reading, writing and counting skills are impacted in the learners. Moreover, it provides the young ones with appropriate social and civil competencies that would make them useful members of the society. Scientific methods of enquiry are inculcated to the learners in the school.

The school plays a conservative role in the society by implementing the goals of basic education. It preserves the knowledge and skills of talented individuals in the society which is passed on from one generation to another for their perpetuation. The school promotes cultural change and also transmits the cultural heritage. It also provides the younger ones, with the opportunity for taking part in healthy games, exercise and reforms attitudes. This helps in giving them the opportunity to develop virtue and discourage all evil tendencies. It encourages the spirit of competition, social stratification and mobility. According to Ballantine (2001) in Kendall (2007: 124) the functions of the school include: socialization or teaching students to be productive members of society; transmission of culture; social control and personal development; and the selection, training, and placement of individuals on different rungs in the society.

In spite of these noble and cherished roles of school, the school graduate learners who are unable to be well placed due to social stratification and mobility in the society whether developed or developing. The facilities for education in many societies that is geared towards higher levels of occupation and professions such as medicine, law or engineering are limited and the number of students to make use of such facilities is always high (Shankar Rao, 2012) Nevertheless, the lost of education is high and financial constraints delimit the number of students that qualify due to financial standing or occupation of parents. This gap in admission into higher school leaves education for professional courses only in the hands of those whose parents can afford the high cost of graduating from such courses. (The school in complying with the "equal educational opportunities irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN), 2009:9).

For instance, some schools do not emphasize religious instruction due to people from different ethnic background, social status, religion, gender, integration of individuals with peculiar health challenges in the classroom. This development can make a bright student to be discouraged and drop out of school irrespective of gender.

The schools in Nigeria have failed to encourage those who dropped out of school due to poverty of parents or withdrawal as a result of religious belief or gender despite the need for implementation of the objectives of the basic education. Many scholars who suppose to be in the school move about hawking while other children are in the school. According to Schaefer (2003) children from privileged background develop their talents in school and improve in different areas they are talents for individual.

As a result of the above situation, the government should monitor the school and sensitize children to not to drop out of school irrespective of their social background religion, gender etc. This will help them to have undermost on education and fight in all ramifications.

The government should also sensitize all the stakeholders in education through seminars, workshops and conferences on the dangers of ignorant and education is the key to all aspects of development (human and physical) to meet the challenges of complex social change spreading like a wild fire.

### Conclusion

Sociology of education plays key role in socializing members of the society both young and old for effective education system. Through sociology of education, various relationships between the family and society direct the system of education, since education and the society are inseparable in promoting education system of any nation. Appropriate teaching and learning process take place in education system, paving way for effective transmission of cultural values of the society for national development.

### Recommendation

**Sequel to the above conclusion the following recommendations were made:**

1. Different cultural values should be respected to avoid conflict. This is because different societies operate different cultural values which are unique to them as a society.
2. Socialization agents should effectively perform their functions for the survival of the education system of the society. This will assist them to adapt to the fast and complex changes in the societies.
3. Family as the first agent of socialization should sit up in performing, hence it is the bed-rock to other levels of socialization agents to perform their roles.
4. The government should ensure that the mass media's information must be censored to avoid misleading moral education for the youths.

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