

The Place of School as a Formal Organisation and the Quality of Nigerian Education: A Systems Approach

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Abstract

This paper used a systems approach to theoretically examine the meaning, objectives and component parts of schooling, types of schooling, and systems of schooling. Systems approach is a standard used to measure effectiveness based on long-term growth. It interacts in different ways, in different contexts and its influence relatively impact changes over time. School and schooling are central to the broader economic and social development plans and objectives established by nation-states. Often, curriculum is designed to produce graduates most able to meet the emerging challenges of the society in which they will live and work. As such, this paper examined school as a social system, particularly an open social system. As social systems, schools are influenced by or subject to inputs, outputs, hierarchical organisation, feedback processes and goal directedness, among other characteristics. This article looks at the bureaucratisation of schools and some of the programmes that have been central to recent developments in the Nigerian schooling system as well as the declining quality of education in Nigeria. The paper concludes that all levels of school systems in Nigeria should be systematically planned to foster positive behaviour changes in both the students and the teachers to enable them fit into and contribute to the country's developmental agendas.

Keywords: School and Schooling, Formal Organisation, Types of Schooling, Agents of Schooling, Social System, Bureaucratisation of Schools, Systems Theory, Approach, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

School is an institution or building in which children, youth and adults receive education. In order to convey the intended education, lessons are taught. Usually school lessons require that the person's previous knowledge be adjusted to his or her knowledge of the school lesson. What happens in a particular lesson then becomes part of the participant's knowledge.

Students in contemporary societies ordinarily have their lives organised by those who are deemed to have already achieved competence and they see them as their forbearers or models (Wood, 2012; Hope, 2012). In a school environment, these models are school teachers. Teachers, as education service professionals expand their purview of their teaching activities (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011), they are more specialised in their understanding and treatment of students, and base their work on available research about students and their learning difficulties and needs (Ololube, 2011).

Teachers make decisions about the level and type of instruction received by students (Austin, Dwyer & Freebody, 2005). These decisions are guided by the school's curriculum. The information and lessons that students learn in the school are set out in the school curriculum. Curriculum can be defined as the totality of experiences, which the school offers to its students. These experiences should be systematically planned to produce positive behaviour changes in students and it helps them to fit into and contribute to the society in which they live and grow. At the same time, a school's curriculum is always a reflection of what people think, feel, believe and do in a given culture (Ololube, 2009).

Governments exercise authority and regulate schools activities through rules, regulations, policies, and administration. These measures exist to ensure effectiveness and accountability in school activities that are consistency across schools globally (Masters, Rowley, Ainley & Khoo, 2008; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). In addition to the policy structures and administrative mechanisms, schools cannot function effectively without facilities like, chairs, desk, computers, boards, books and above all the buildings where teaching and learning take place (Fareo & Ojo, 2013). In addition to be available infrastructures, schools facilities and equipment must be well-maintained (Asiyai, 2012; Ekundayo, 2012). It is the administrators' responsibility to guarantee that resources are preserved and functional and are used economically and flexibly too (Amanchukwu & Ololube, 2015).

A question needs to be asked, what are the purposes of school and schooling? In answering this question, one must critically evaluate the diverse functions of school with reference to recent changes in school policies and reforms around the world. Essentially, school functions as a means of education and social control; it is a place where teaching and learning takes place. It helps to inspire and reassure the young to develop into good citizens and prepares them for employment and productive contributors to society (Ololube & Egbezor, 2012). It is a way of reducing social differences and inequality or a way of breeding social inequalities. If schools are effective and excellently executed, it benefits the individuals who acquire the knowledge (Norviewu-Mortty, 2012), the society they live and the economy of the country (Serageldin, 2013).

According to Ololube et al. (2012), schooling in its extensive sense is any act, experience, skill, understanding or knowledge that has a formative effect on the mind, character, and physical ability or capability of an individual (for example, a child is educated by the school environment through interaction with teachers and peers). Schooling is an entire range of experiences in life through which individuals learn something new (Adeyinka, 2015). In a practical sense, schooling is the process through which society purposefully transmits its knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next through teaching and learning (Dienye & Iwele, 2011; Ololube, 2012). Teachers in schools direct the learning of students and draw on many subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, etc. (Dienye & Iwele, 2011). Such teaching denotes the actions of an instructor to impart knowledge to students. Learning in this context refers to the processes that equip students with definite knowledge, skills and abilities that are made functional upon completion. In the context of the compulsory education of youth, this technical process is sometimes called schooling (Hunner-Kreisel & Bohne, 2016). Given the centrality of formal schooling across the world, education has become a powerful instrument of social progress without which no individual can attain professional development (Ololube, 2011).

To this end, the purpose of this study is to determine the place of school as a formal organisation and the quality of Nigerian Education using the systems theory approach, which is a

standard used to measure effectiveness based on long-term growth. Specifically, two questions were raised and theoretically answered with the support of literature. The questions are:

- How does school act as a formal organisation?
- What is the quality of Nigerian educational systems?

BACKGROUND

The growth of British commercial and colonial interests in the 19th century brought about the establishment, by British missionaries, of institutions for formal education so as to create understanding between the colonial rulers and native Nigerians and to secure British economic, political, social and religious control (Ololube, 2009). At one point, nearly all of today's developing countries were colonies. That is, they were under the direct administrative rule of one or another European power. Asafa (2015) posited that colonial rulers were mainly interested in raw materials, cheap labour, and acquiescent subjects, thus schooling for the masses was considered helpful, but it was a comparatively low priority. In the absence of strong official support, Christian missionaries often introduced formal education as a way of evangelising the indigenous populations.

America broke free from European rule in the late eighteenth century, but most countries in Africa, the Near East, and Asia only won their independence in the last 50 to 60 years. Between 1945 and 1968, sixty-six countries gained political independence from colonial rule. Thus, most of the developing countries consist of new states (Brint, 2006), of which Nigeria is one. After independence in 1960, Nigeria's federal government held little influence over education at the primary and secondary school levels because lower-level education remained the constitutional responsibility of the states. This resulted in a multiplicity of educational policies, practices and standards.

The contribution of the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 marked a turning point in the Nigerian educational system. The General Assembly proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child, which, among other things, called for free and compulsory primary education, secondary education accessible to all, and the accessibility of higher education based on individual capacity. This declaration supported and encouraged less developed countries to embark on educational development in their various countries through the introduction of diverse educational programmes. Since then, the Nigerian government has more consistently pursued educational policies aimed at shaping the individual into a sound, useful and patriotic citizen. This declaration underpins the phenomenal expansion of education at all levels and vigorous experimentation in all aspects of education over the last two decades in Nigeria. The government has provided educational opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The government has placed emphasis on the quality of education and established nationally acceptable standards and practices in order to ensure even progress and development throughout the country (Eurosaf, 2013).

As a result as well, a national policy on education was developed. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) is as much a policy statement as it is a curriculum document. It sets out the goals and aims of Nigerian society, from which issue the goals of education and subsequently the objectives of each level of schooling. The National Policy on Education (NPE) was introduced in 1977 and revised in 1981. It marked a radical shift from the British system of

education, which Nigeria had inherited upon independence to the 9 years for primary and junior secondary education, 3 years of senior secondary school, and 4 years of university education.

Primary education consists of the first few years of formal and structured education preferably between the ages of 6 and 11. In Nigeria, majority of primary aged children are enrolled in primary schools, and this percentage is increasing daily. Following the United Nations movement for Education for All (EFA) programmes driven by UNESCO (2000), Nigeria was committed to achieving equity in national enrolment in primary education by 2015, which according to UNESCO has not been achieved. This system of later formal education is characterised by the transition from typically compulsory and comprehensive education, to optional and selective post-secondary or higher education. Nigerian system of education was aimed to achieve the following national goals:

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and Nigerian society;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around it; and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as tools for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his or her society (FRN 2004, p. 8)

SCHOOL AND SCHOOLING

In the twentieth century, many nation-states attempted to embody and provide for their citizens' needs through a set of programmatic provisions, including education. The extent to which nation-states transformed themselves into service states by providing programmes for well-balanced living became a hallmark of their modernity; the adequacy with which they sustained these provisions became a predictor of their political credibility and stability (Uriah & Wosu, 2012). Taking on increased educational responsibilities brought with it a number of organisational imperatives. Governments centralised the administration of schooling and regulated it with legislation for the management of schools, funding of schools, teacher training, and the provision of materials and procedures for accounting for an institution's performance (Ololube, 2011).

Schooling is frequently associated to economic, national, social, community and personal development. It is as a public practice has invested heavily in increasingly refined versions of students. As such, the policies governing schooling place increasing emphasis on acceptable descriptions of the nature of students, their needs, how they learn, what materials they learn from and how that might be assessed (Austin et al., 2005). Schools simultaneously assumed increased responsibility for providing students with technical skills, a sense of civic responsibility, personal development, mental and physical health, and cultural awareness (Ololube, 2011).

While education and schooling are related to each other, they are not reducible to each other. Education refers to the search for meaning in life whereas schooling refers to the political and historic realities that accompany the institutionalisation of learning so as to meet the demands of society. Schooling has a history and is about helping to create and maintain a workforce. Schooling is about power relations and the ways in which schools filter, sort, and select students through testing and evaluation. Schooling is also about certification and credentialing students for various professions in society (Hudah in Uriah & Wosu, 2012).

Schools are established to assemble people for the purpose of education and training. Schools are located in all geographical areas and they occupy a particular environment, they have boundaries, inputs, outputs, processes and information mechanism backed by the laws of the society. Schooling denotes the totality of efforts put in place to help teachers impart knowledge to learners (Dorgu, 2015). The process of getting children and adult schooled requires that they first attend schools (Huda, Yusuf, Jasmi & Zakaria, 2016). School is all about helping learners grow and acquire knowledge through systematic approaches (Samson & Collins, 2012; Brackett & Rivers, 2014).

It is mutual (Fisher, 2011; Khamkhien, 2010; Ololube, 2006) to agree that the ways students' behave in classrooms are recognisably different from the conducts of students' behaviour in other social interaction situations. Classroom interaction is a sequence of directive and compliance through which classroom participants work interactively towards the visible completion of a task through the production of answers (Ahiauzu & Princewill, 2011). In this directive-compliance sequence, the teacher gives a directive and selects a student as respondent, the student responds, and the teacher denotes whether or not response complies with the directive (Austin et al., 2005).

Recounting this situation is to accomplish teachers and students goal of simply acting out a predetermined script, rather they are attending to the immediate context of what has just been said (Uriah & Wosu, 2012), heard and understood in the light of a taken-for-granted background understanding about society, how to interact, knowledge and learning (Niemi, 2016). The hierarchical relationship between the categories of students and teachers is an aspect of schooling that neither teachers nor learners can ignore (González-Humanéz & Arias, 2009; Ololube, 2009).

TYPES OF SCHOOLING

Formal Schooling: A formal schooling programme includes the training and developing of students' knowledge, skills, mind-set, and character in a structured and certified way that takes place in school settings. Formal schooling is classroom-based and teaching delivered by qualified teachers. Generally, formal schooling refers to the structured educational system administered by the public and private educational system for children and youth. In most countries, formal schooling systems are fully state-financed and operated. However, in some countries, the state licences and certifies private schools to provide a comparable education alongside public schools. As such, formal schooling includes elementary school, secondary school, and post-secondary schools (Ololube, 2013).

Informal Schooling: Informal schooling takes place outside of the classroom environment, at home, in after-school programmes, community-based organisations, museums, and libraries (Jayeola-Omoyeni, 2013). Informal schooling is the learning that goes on in citizen's daily life. Parents and other caregivers may show children how to prepare family food, dishes or tie their shoe laces. Friends may encourage each other to talk about things that have happened in their lives through which they learn how to process their feelings and devise appropriate actions and reactions. Informal schooling also includes the learning that comes from being involved in youth and/or community organisations (Akubuilu, Okorie, Owuka, & Uloh, 2014). In some of these settings there are trained workers/educators whose job it is to inspire and motivate people to think about experiences and situations (Ololube, 2012). For instance, friends or parents may respond to what is going on. However, as professionals they are talented at eliciting special insights and ways of working (Jeffs & Smith, 2005).

Non-formal Schooling: Non-formal schooling refers to structured education that takes place outside of a formally organised school setting. Typically, non-formal schooling refers to adult literacy and continuing education programmes. It also means any organised and sustained schooling activity that does not correspond to the definition of formal schooling. Non-formal schooling can therefore transpire both within and outside of formal schooling and it involves people of diverse ages (Ololube & Egbezor, 2013). Depending on the national context, it covers programmes that impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills programmes, work-skills programmes and general culture. Non-formal schooling programmes usually do not necessarily follow a laid down processes of accomplishment and may have different durations. In most cases, certificates are not issues after learning achievement (UNESCO, 2006; Ololube, 2012).

SYSTEMS OF FORMAL SCHOOLING

Nursery/Early Childhood Education: The Nigerian National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) considers early childhood/pre-primary education to be education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and kindergarten. The purpose of early childhood schooling is to perfect a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare children for primary level schooling; provide adequate care and supervision for children while their parents are at work; inculcate social norms, develop a spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music, and playing with toys, develop a sense of cooperation and a spirit of teamwork, bestow good habits, especially good health habits, and finally to teach children some of the rudiments of learning such as letters, colours, shapes, and forms. More broadly, early childhood education refers to policies and programmes for children from birth through early childhood as well as their parents and caregivers (Briggs & Ololube, 2014; Briggs & Ololube, 2015; Dillon, 2001), the purpose of which are to protect and advance the child's rights to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential (Briggs, Ololube & Kpolovie 2014). Most often this education is provided for children aged 0 to 3 in day care centres and for children aged 3 to 6 in kindergarten and junior kindergarten classes in schools (Uzodinma & Akinware, 2001).

Elementary/Primary Education: Elementary or primary education consists of the first few years of formal structured education for children between the ages of 6 and 11 and up to age 12. This can vary between, and sometimes within, countries. Globally, the majority of primary aged children are enrolled in primary education (approximately 70%), and this percentage increases daily (Briggs et al., 2012). Following the Education for All programmes driven by UNESCO (2000), most countries have committed to achieving universal enrolment in primary education by 2015, and in many countries, it has already become compulsory for children to receive primary/elementary education (UNESCO, 2006). Nigeria's efforts to meet this target revolve around the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes launched in 1999 by then Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The aim of the UBE programmes is to boost school enrolment in line with UNESCO's global aspirations (Ololube, 2012).

Secondary Education: Secondary education or schooling, in most contemporary terms, consists of the formal schooling that takes place during adolescence. This system of formal schooling is characterised by transition from the typically compulsory and comprehensive elementary/primary education for minors, to the optional, selective post-secondary or higher education system. The purpose of secondary education is to impart common knowledge, prepare

students for higher education or train students directly in a profession. Depending on the system, schools of this kind can be called secondary schools, high schools, model schools, colleges and/or vocational schools (Ololube, 2009).

The exact meaning of any of these terms varies from one country and schooling system to another, as does the precise boundary between primary and secondary education. In general, secondary education is comprised of the schooling received between the ages of 12 and 17. In the United States and Canada, for example, primary and secondary schooling together are sometimes referred to as K-12 education (Staff, 2015).

Higher Education: Higher education, also termed tertiary or post-secondary education, is the non-compulsory schooling level that follows the completion of secondary schooling. Tertiary education normally includes undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programmes as well as vocational training and education. Colleges, polytechnics and universities are the main institutions that provide tertiary education and together are known as tertiary institutions. Tertiary education generally awards certificates, diplomas and/or degrees and it critical to the advancement of national development. The main components of higher education include research, teaching and learning. It also involves the social service activities of universities, polytechnics and colleges. Most higher education institutions in Nigeria generally undertake pre-degree level or foundation level qualification programmes with the intention of preparing those who may have deficiencies in the standard requirements for entry into an institution of higher learning. The provision of quality higher education in developing economies, especially in sub-Saharan African, is more of a myth than reality, whereas, in developed countries, quality higher education has become attainable by a considerable portion of the population (Ololube et al., 2009).

In many developed countries, upwards of 50% of the population now pursues higher education at some point in their lives (Ololube et al., 2009). Comparatively, less than 10% of Nigerians who take the matriculation examination annually are offered admission into universities, a figure considerably lower than the minimum international standard of 16%. This is as a result of the low carrying capacity of Nigerian tertiary institutions - less than 200,000 for the Nigerian university system compared to an annual demand of at least one million. The problem of access to tertiary institutions is further compounded by inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and equipment as well as poor library facilities (Fagbemi & Idoko, 2009).

Adult Education: Adult education, which can take many forms, is common in most countries. It is the practice of teaching and educating adults and ranges from formal class-based learning to self-directed learning and e-learning. This type of schooling can take place in the workplace, through extension or continuing education, or at colleges or universities. Adults frequently apply their knowledge in a practical fashion to learn most effectively and often have expectations that the knowledge gained will help them to further their goals (Ololube & Egbezor, 2012). The adult student population can include primary and secondary school dropouts who return to complete general education requirements, working adults who have the freedom to quit their job and attend school full time, or workers who attend colleges and universities that offer evening or weekend classes (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Educating adults differs from educating children in several ways with one of the most important differences being that adults have accumulated knowledge and experience which can enrich or hinder their learning experience (Cranton, 2006; Ololube, 2012).

Alternative Education: Alternative education, also known as non-traditional education or educational alternatives, is a broad term that refers to all forms of education outside of traditional

educational structures for all age groups and levels of learning (Aron, 2006). This include forms of education designed for students with special needs, like pregnant teenagers and those with intellectual disabilities, as well as those forms of education designed for a more general audience which employ alternative philosophies and methods. Alternative education can manifest as charter schools, alternative schools, independent schools and home-based learning. All of these forms vary significantly from country to country, though in most places alternative education emphasises the value of small class size, close relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of community (Ololube, 2013).

Indigenous Education: Indigenous education is the inclusion of indigenous methods of schooling people as an alternative within formal and a non-formal schooling system, which has come to represent a significant factor in the success of the people of indigenous communities who choose to access these systems of schooling as students or learners and as teachers or instructors (Hamilton-Ekeke & Dorgu, 2015).

As an indigenous method schooling, the insertion of indigenous ways of knowing, learning, inculcating, teaching and training, has been viewed by many scholars as important for ensuring that students/learners and teachers/instructors (both indigenous and non-indigenous) (Abah, Mashebe & Denuga, 2015) are able to benefit from culturally sensitive education that draws upon the utilisation, promotion and enhancement of the awareness of indigenous traditions (Santoro, Reid, Crawford & Simpson, 2011).

This system of education is important for indigenous students/learners and teachers/instructors because the inclusion of these methods often enhances educational effectiveness and learning outcomes by providing education that conforms to their perspectives, experiences and worldview. For non-indigenous students and teachers, this system of education uses such methods that can increase awareness of the traditions and collective experiences of indigenous communities and peoples, thereby promoting greater respect for and appreciation of the cultural realities of these communities and people (Hamilton-Ekeke & Dorgu, 2015). Multicultural education and the inclusion of the historical perspectives of local indigenous communities are good examples of this approach (Ololube, 2012, 2013).

SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

Schools are social systems and they are important organisations that prepare children for adulthood and there are strong working mechanisms that have effect on the quality of education (Bozkuş, 2014). Systems theory was first formally proposed in the 1940s by biologist von Bertalanffy (1934) and was furthered by Ross Ashby in 1956. von Bertalanffy was both reacting against reductionism and attempting to revive the unity of science. He emphasised that real systems are open to, and interact with, their environments, and that they can acquire qualitatively new properties through emergence, resulting in continual evolution. Rather than reducing an entity (for example, the human body) to the properties of its parts or elements (organs and cells), systems theory focuses on the arrangement of, and relations between, the parts which connect into a whole. This particular organisation determines a system, which is independent of the concrete substance of the elements (particles, cells, transistors, people, and so on). Similar concepts and principles of organisation underlie the different disciplines (physics, biology, technology, sociology, etc.), providing a basis for their unification. Systems concepts include environment, boundary, input, output, process, state, hierarchy, goal-directedness, and information (Berrisford, 2016).

A social system is a group of elements and activities that interact and constitute a single social entity. This statement implies that a social system is creative because it has properties and purpose over and above its parts and relationships. Educated individuals are, for example, the output of the constituent parts of a school. A social system, more specifically, is composed of subunits, elements, and subsystems that are interrelated within relatively stable patterns of social order and is distinguished from its environment by a clearly defined boundary (Longress, 2000). In other words, it is an assemblage of various elements that have linkages, which constitute a recognisably delimited aggregate of dynamic elements that are in some ways interconnected and interdependent and continue to operate together according to laws and in such a way so as to produce some basic characteristics (Ololube, 2013). Applying the system theory to the school system entails the following basic features:

- The school system is viewed as a single home because the component parts work for the good of the system;
- The interdependence of the component parts is often put into focus, thus no part works in isolation;
- There is recognition of the need for compromise and trade off among the various components in the school system; and
- The problems within the school system are defined in systematic terms. Thus, the school system follows a systematic analysis in decision making and problem solving.

System approach to school administration views the school as a unified and purposeful organisation. In other words, the administration of activities within the school system as a whole involves the various departments and divisions in the school (Ahrweiler, 2011). The following are the characteristics of an open system (See figure 1):

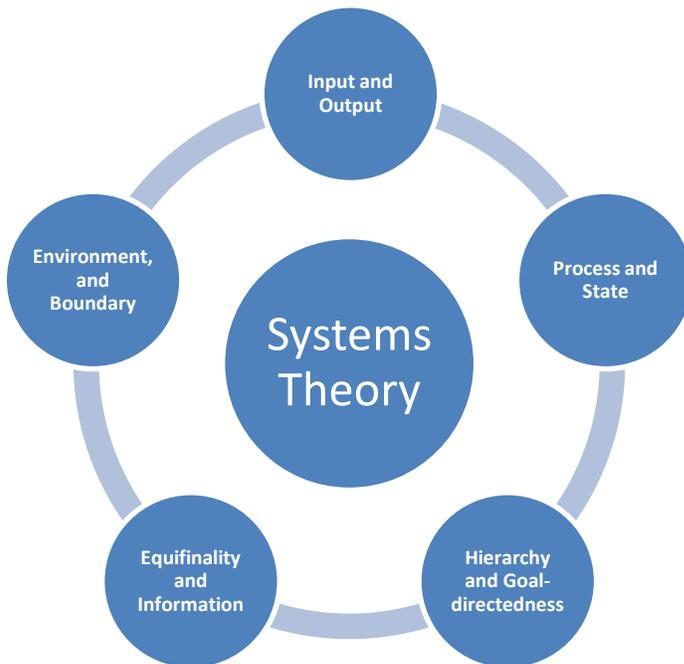


Figure 1: Component parts of a social system

Environment: Schools as open systems exchange matter and information with their environment. That is, they have inputs and outputs that have the potential to affect all or part of their environment.

Boundary: This is the more or less arbitrary demarcation of units that are included within and those that are excluded from the school system. It is the boundary that separates the system from its environment and filters the inputs to, and output from, the system (Senge, 2006).

Input: These are the entrances or changes that are inserted into a system, which activate or modify the system to perform certain activities or processes. Inputs are elements that enter the system to enable the components to interact or affect the way in which the components interact in meeting their goals.

Output: Denotes either exits or changes, which leave a system and invariably activate or modify the system or process. Outputs refer to all that a system produces either by design or accident. For example, schools admits students as inputs and processes them over the years through lectures, assignments and counselling and these students exit as graduates (outputs) (Ololube, 2013).

Feedback Process: Schools maintain equilibrium through a feedback process or that portion of a system's output that is fed-back to the input and affects succeeding outputs. Feedbacks help to adjust future conduct by reference to the past.

Steady State: A steady state occurs when a constant ratio is maintained among the components of the system, given continuous input to the system. A burning candle is often used as an example of a steady state. When lit the flame is small, but it rapidly grows to its normal size and maintains that size as long as the candle and its environment exist. It is also self-regulating. In the above illustration, a sudden draft will cause the flame to flicker, but with the ceasing of the draft, the flame regains its normal characteristics (Whawo in Ololube, 2013).

Hierarchy: Open systems display progressive segregation. This is a process that occurs when a system divides itself into a hierarchical order of subordinate systems that gain a certain independence of each other either directly or indirectly, and either vertically or horizontally

Goal-directedness: The most important innovation of a system is its explanation of goal-directedness. A system can be characterised by the fact that it pursues its own goals, resisting obstructions from the environment that would make it deviate from its preferred state of affairs. The goal determines a process which could influence the present and the future. A classic example is a room in which the temperature is controlled by a thermostat. The setting of the thermostat determines the preferred temperature or goal state.

Equifinality: Is the principle that a balance can be maintained in a system so that an end state can be reached by many potential means. Equifinality in a school system can be likened to the case of two babies, one who is born premature and the other at full term. The babies may look very different initially at birth and may be in different stages of development, but with few months they generally attain the same level of development.

Information: An open system receives information, and the information received is used to interact energetically with its environment (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015). Openness increases the likelihood that it will survive and prosper (Mele, Pels & Polese, 2010).

SCHOOL AS A FORMAL ORGANISATION

Another pertinent question needs to be asked, how does school act as a formal organisation? To answer this question, formalisation is derived from the bureaucratic structure of rational systems. Within formal organisational systems, there are hierarchies of authority, division of labour, work specialisation, rules and regulations which guide their activities. All these are typically associated with the characteristics of bureaucracy. Every formal organisation requires obedience to clear rules and regulations for goals to be achieved (Bozkuş, 2014). In many respects, a great deal can be observed about today's schools when they are viewed as an example of a formal organisation, similar to the factories, hospitals and business firms. Like other organisations, schools do not operate autonomously as they are influenced by the forces of the teachers, potential students and government policies (Schaefer, 2005).

It is simply not possible for a single teacher to transmit culture and skills to children of varying ages who will ultimately enter diverse occupations. The growing number of students being served by individual schools and school systems, as well as the greater degree of specialisation required within politically, sociologically, religiously, educationally and technologically complex societies have combined to foster the bureaucratisation of schools. Max Weber in Schaefer (2005) noted five characteristics of bureaucracy all of which are evident in the primary/elementary, secondary, college and even in the university systems. These factors are summarised as:

Division of Labour: Specialised experts teach particular age levels and specific subjects. Public primary/elementary and secondary schools now emphasise the employment of teachers whose sole responsibility is to work with children, for example, with learning disabilities or physical impairments.

Hierarchy of Authority: Each employee of a school system is responsible to a higher authority. Teachers must report to head teachers, vice principals, principals and may also be supervised by heads of departments. Head teachers and principals must answer to education supervisors who are hired by the education board or the Ministry of Education.

Written Rules and Regulations: Teachers and administrators must conform to the numerous rules and regulations of the education systems in the performance of their duties. However, this bureaucratic trait can become dysfunctional in that the time invested in completing required tasks could instead be spent preparing lessons.

Impersonality: As class size increases at schools and universities, it has become more difficult for teachers to give personal attention to each student. In fact, bureaucratic norms may actually encourage teachers to treat all students in the same way despite the fact that students have distinct personalities and learning needs.

Employment based on Technical Qualifications: At least in theory, the hiring of teachers is based on professional competence and expertise. Promotions are normally dictated by written personnel policies and people who excel may be granted lifelong job security through tenure.

THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Education institutions that once provided quality education programmes are undoubtedly in crisis in Nigeria. Many of these institutions have misplaced their goals and allowed social and political factors, such as poor public financing, to create crises in their academic community (Olujuwon, 2003). Most teachers and lecturers are now employed on a contract basis, that is, supplying

goods and services to schools or engaged in commercial business within and outside the school to the detriment of their academic purposes. Some teachers and lecturers, for example, have turned their offices into commercial centres for typesetting services or engaging in the buying and selling petty goods. Some have turned to selling cars—that is helping people to bring cars across the border and ferry them into the country. Many argue that they have had to resort to this “moonlighting” to augment their meagre and irregular salaries.

These institutions, established to promote intellectual excellence and good virtues, have deviated from their original obligations of teaching, research and the development of a qualified workforce. We are faced daily with reports of students caught in armed robbery, rape, and assassination. Researchers and commentators are now regularly noting that all of these factors are leading to dwindling standards in the quality of education received and lower-quality graduates. The inability of most Nigerian secondary school and university graduates to communicate effectively in written and spoken English is an obvious sign of the declining quality of education. Umoh (2006) accurately describes the situation, “I am not an English language master, but it baffled me hearing these kinds of uncommon gaffes in English grammar from people who had passed one examination or the other in institutions of higher learning, or is this the kind of language the teachers and lecturers right from secondary school to higher institution normally use to teach and set examination for them? And which language have they been using to answer questions and pass to qualify them to be employed as senior staff by public offices and multinationals?”

This is apparent as well in Okeowo’s (2006) argument in which he warned that the low quality of teaching in public schools might hinder the development of the country if not tackled swiftly. According to Okeowo, the phenomenon of mediocre teaching in our public schools is staging an obvious sabotage against the further expansion of the democratisation of education. He noted that the poor quality of teachers and their teaching has contributed to the high level of failure in public examinations, and this is a major problem in the country’s educational sector. He adds that the dropout rates in schools have also increased. Okeowo stressed that regular, efficient and effective teaching builds a nation while irregular, minimal, and incompetent teaching can destroy it. Likewise, Umoh (2006), Ololube (2012) and Olujuwon (2003) noted that poor student performances on the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) are an indication that the nation’s education system is indeed failing. They attribute it to several factors ranging from examination problems, lecturer factors, the increased role of authorities within the system, and, most importantly, poor teacher preparatory programmes (Ololube, 2009; Olujuwon, 2003).

CONCLUSION

The theoretical examination carried out here revealed a whole lot of scenario when discussing school as a formal organisation. The successes of schools as a formal organisations depend on the internal and the external mechanisms of a typical social system. Systems theory exposed to view how school and schooling systems works, which is driven by the bureaucratic structure of rational systems. The systems theory has an all-encompassing perspective to explain the working of the school systems. Academics, scholars and stakeholders have options in considering the many aspects of the school as an organisation, which are full of social problems and failures Nigeria.

The decline in the quality of Nigerian school systems has become far too glaring over the past 20 years not to be noticed by anyone aware of the central role of school and schooling in the social and economic transformation and development of society. Therefore, all levels of school systems in Nigeria should be systematically planned to foster positive behaviour changes in both the students and the teachers to enable them fit into and contribute to the country's developmental agendas. At the same time, school curriculum should be a true reflection of the needs of the country. The school system concepts: environment, boundary, input, output, process, state, hierarchy, goal-directedness, and information should be particularly organised to determine educational goal achievement.

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