

Sick Role in Nigeria Education: The Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the structural functionalism and education institution sick role in Nigeria to understand the challenges associated with education institution system and the extent to which such challenges account for deviant negative or dysfunctional variation to the institution and the society at large. The paper sorted various scholarly literatures on education institution, ASUU strike and policy implementation to explain education institution sick role while Parson's Functionalism Theory was used to explain sick role dysfunctional effect to the education institution to the society. The paper suggested that education institution be managed by private and public proprietors while multinationals in the country should also be mandated to fund the system to reduce undue interruption of academic activities through strike actions. The government should also entrench appropriate legal processes for negotiation and regulation against any financial crime and other corrupt practices that may leads to institution's sick role.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of the very few studies that have investigated the social challenges associated with education institution sick role in Nigeria. The paper contributed a first logical explorative conclusion that education institution sick role poses a great danger to both the institution system, staff welfare, student education process and the society at large, hence, adequate government and union relations is necessary to reduce, if not to curb education institution sick role.

Keywords: Dysfunctional, Explorative, Multinational, Sickrole.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A sick institution can hardly perform its expected function just as a sick individual is regarded as being weak and dysfunctional or predisposed to certain role both to his family and the society at large. Parsons' described illness as a deviance behaviour that is capable of breaking down the general 'capacity for the effective performance of valued tasks' (Parsons, 1964). Thus, a sick role is more likely to disrupts 'loyalty/commitment' toward a particular context both in the workplace and the family.

Parson assumed that illness causes a sick role of disloyalties or inadequate commitment not necessarily because the individual ideally wanted to disregard the expected norms but his/her inability to conform to them at that particular period. Such deviant actions constitute the distinction between illness and immorality or crime (Parsons, 1956). However, it does not matter what motivated the sick role effect on the social system since such individual or group deviant act may likely cause the society to be dysfunctional' (Parsons, 1951). This renders any sick role either from individual or institution as an undesirable/ unacceptable deviance that requires normative rejection.

Education institution should never involve in any sick role that will make it dysfunctional as it product is a vital tool that is expected to bring progress and development to every nation. Scholars have argued that adequate education process provides refined knowledge, attitude, skill, and competence that may likely bring about positive social and economic transformation (Nwosu, Amanse, Oladosu & Adewumi 2017; Ajibola, Lukman, Ali & Hamadi, 2014;). Thus, education is one of the most acceptable modern requirements for development, poverty alleviation, improvement of health and quality of life, discouragement of gender inequality, ethnic and social disparities, and enhancement of economic productivity (Lohnan, 2019). Modern education institution that is expected to contribute to economic growth and societal stability should develop and equip individuals with necessary and useful life skills needed to sustain themselves, their family, and, also the larger society rather than promoting any form of sick role.

Consequently, the educational institutions sick role implication is declining the quality of education in Nigeria at all levels. This has far reaching negative implications on the nation's moral, socio-cultural and economic sustainability, thus be made an issue of national discourse at all levels. Therefore, to proffer a genuine and workable solutions that can revamp the challenges of educational institutional structure and education sick role quality system in Nigeria, it is of utmost importance to understand that discussions on education and its reforms should take a gradual, systematical and a more analytical approach. This according to Orji and Job (2013) will contribute meaningfully to national development rather than involving in a mere politicized propaganda

Orji and Job (2013) opined that proper funding and adequate planning implementation of the educational institution will go a long way not only to improve infrastructure in the primary, secondary and post-secondary schools; but also to reduce brain-drain as research activities will be effectively conducted. This will equally eradicate examination misconduct and contribute meaningfully to national development. Therefore, there is an urgent need to give greater attention to all educational institutions starting from the elementary to higher institutions of knowledge since they are no-doubt the building blocks of society's educational foundation. Based on the above observation, this paper seeks to explore the functional structure of Nigeria education institution and the implication of it sick role dysfunctionality to the institution and the society at large.

II. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM AND EDUCATION SICK ROLE

The first major theory within sociology that was used to analysed the sick role in social life was devised by the functionalist theorist Talcott Parsons (1951) in his book 'The Social System'. Parsons (1975) employed the dominance of the medical model of health to explain sick role. He argued that being sick was a biological condition that affect the expected social role – depriving a set of norms and values assigned and expected to be perform by individual or institution as a role. To the theorist, illness is a form of deviant behavioural pattern within any given society. Thus, sick institution or individual are unable to fulfil their normal social roles and are most likely deviated from the consensual norms.

Parsons argued that if too many people claimed to be ill then this would have a dysfunctional impact on the institution and the society at large. Parsons therefore suggested an ideal regulating sick role mechanism to prevent the situation from degenerating into dysfunctional situation. His 'sick role mechanism' of how ideally a doctor - society- and patient – educational institutions - should interrelate to prevent a dysfunctional sick role. Parsons (1951) posited that the society and every institution had to abide by a number of 'rights' and 'obligations' attached to their respective roles in order to prevent or keep entry into the sick role tightly monitored. The 'function' of this mechanism was to prevent what Parsons called a 'subculture of the sick' from developing. Individuals who claimed the sick role who were not actually ill were classed as 'malingerers'

The founding father of Functionalism Emile Durkheim biggest influence on the work of Parsons was that every institution has an important role to play in keeping society functional and efficient. According to theorist the aim of the society was to keep every institution functional just as Parsons posited that objective of the medical profession was to return a sick individual to conventional social roles (Durkheim, 1933). If this were prevented or denied it would have a negative effect on other institutions and could lead to a breakdown of social 'body'.

Weber (1978) in his interpretive sociology views societal authority as rational/legal authority of how every institution should ideally be run. Thus the society act as a 'gatekeeper' of every institution through policies implementation that keep the institution functional. However, it is the structural policy implementation of the society towards the institutions that determine how effective and functional the institution can maintain it role. Hence, an ill or sick institution will produce a sick role that will no-doubt leads a dysfunctional society. The inability of the society – Nigerian government - to keep and maintain the policies and promises was the reason for the prolong ASSU strike which is no-doubt making the tertiary institution sick and dysfunctional by deviating from their expected functional role.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Education and Youth Development

The hope of most nations is highly dependent on the quality and level of education provided to the youth who are often described as both the wealth, the pride and the future of any nation. Every nation depends on the youths who constitute the potential human resources needed for the continuity and development of society. Thus, to achieve sustainable development in society, the young population must not only be preserved and protected but also be given quality and necessary education (Nwosu *et al.*, 2017). This makes

education a crucial and unavoidable tools in the development and transformation of any nation the world over. However, quality and sound education is never an accident; but a product of conscious intentions, sincere efforts, intelligent mission statement and focused as well as skillful implementation. These could only be achieved through a higher academic standard, vigorous curricula, skilled and seasoned teachers and lecturers, updated textbooks and course materials, state of the arts laboratories and computing facilities, conducive classrooms and lectures theatres, modern buildings and technological facilities for learning, adequate schools and institutions discipline, proactive parents, academics and non-academics staff amongst others.

B. Education Policy planning and Implementation

According to Lohman (2019) and Uwa *et al.*, (2014) human capital development and modern social transformation requires a major educational policy implementation for long-term productivity and development at both micro and macro levels. Thus, Okoroma (2006) posited that every modern society needs to formulate distinctive and adequate policies and programmes that will guide the educational programme to initiate and induce its teaming population into full membership. Hence, the formulation of an educational policy is expected to sets the stage for implementation which, according to Ukeje (1986), is perhaps the most important aspect of planning. Planning is usually an action that succeeds policy formulation but precedes implementation.

The goals of education institutions as enumerated in the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NNPE) was not only to empower the citizenry in the upward movement of the social ladder but also to improve their ability to compete effectively and favourably globally. Unfortunately, viable educational policies and goal attainment has been irreconcilable in Nigeria due to some implementation constraints such as inadequate planning, social interest, political influence, financial and statistical problems. Thus, creating a vacuum-sick role – between the national policy and planning implementation. This no-doubt affect the functionality of most social institutions in Nigeria of which the educational institution is inclusive. The sick role of the nation government – society- through its elected and appointed administrators is seriously affecting and making the educational institutions dysfunctional in it expected role.

C. Functions of Educational Institutions

The establishment of a government-owned University in Nigeria is no doubt geared towards developing a high-level manpower both in educational and other social institution. The continuous increase in population has intensified the need to service the population by both the central and the federating states through provision of essential and qualitative education from the basic, secondary and higher levels (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021). Egbegi and Iheriohanma (2018) argued that educational institutions globally are charged with the responsibility of equipping and enlightening individuals with professional abilities and skills such that is capable of enabling invention in the political, socio-economic and other areas of national and international life.

University is expected to play a leading role in societal education being the strongest tool for the social transformation. The institution should no-doubt employ the modern teaching aids and methods of innovative content. This will enable learners to build an extensive set of skills within the years of formal education more than it used to be in the past (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021). A global reference for use of sophisticated digital technology should be apply since education is been viewed as an arrangement meant for adulthood preparation and its work-related responsibilities (Care *et al.*, 2017).

Societies created educational institutions to share a common culture, occupy a defined territory and with a sense of unity in a unified entity in order to maximize the advantages of collective livelihood for the society and its individual's development (Kumar, 2017). Thus, the University system that is a foremost and notable institution designed to advance and sustain the community standard of living should rather be encourage to maximized it optimal functional capacity by the society as any disruption in the academic calendar often likely stranded not only the students' academic progressive training programme but equally constitute a clog in the educational and other institutions of the society.

D. ASUU and Other Tertiary Institution Organized Body

ASUU was founded in 1978 as an umbrella that covers University academic staff in both the Federal and State-owned University in Nigeria to succeed the former National Association of University Teachers that was formerly established in 1965. ASUU became one of the major four trade unions in Nigerian public universities to champion the needs of the members and the institutions (Ogbette *et al.*, 2017). Others are the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT), and Non Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU) (Alabi, 2019; Egbegi, & Iheriohanma, 2018). Though NAAT is a technical education service provider to students, while SSANU and NASU handle the administration of schools as nonacademic staff. Since the inception, ASSU national executive have involved in series of negotiation on behalf of the State and Federal-owned University between the Union and governments.

E. Causes of ASUU Strike

In the global community, many factors have been identified as causes of strikes. This includes breakdown of bargaining system; imperfect or limited information; low wages, poor working condition, poor condition of service, the crisis of rising expectations; arbitrary treatment of workers by management; and, agitation and agitators (Aidelunuoghene, 2014; Majihosev & Denkova, 2013). Implicitly, the Nigerian government appears to share the larger causes of strike arising largely from poor political leadership, and neglect of the principles of good governance.

Thus, ASUU embark on strike whenever their articulated demands or concerns addressed to the governments were most times unattended to, or are partly attended to and this often make the union down-tool. In response to either instance, Ugar, (2018) argues that ASUU has no option than to apply industrial actions to attract the government's timely response to the educational institutions demand in Nigeria.

ASUU strike in Nigeria are either traceable to increasing workload due to a rising students' population, weak institutional autonomy, poor government funding, and poor policies (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021; Ezeagba 2014). Chijioke (2013) argued that strike is an organized stoppage of work employed by labour union or group of workers to enforce adherence to certain demands made on a particular employer or employers. Contrarily, Ogbette *et al.* (2017) argued that both the Nigerian government and ASUU are both using strike as a medium for fault findings and blame trading rather than using such a critical period for active negotiation with lasting solution to the impending problems.

F. The Right to Strick

The right to strike is a global/universal democratic right for all employees irrespective of where they are employed; and it is also under the control of the International legal instruments of the United Nations (UN) through the International Labour Organisations (ILO) (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021; Majihosev & Denkova 2013). Since the Nigerian Public University education has recorded incessant industrial action by Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) orchestrated largely by inadequate policy implementation on issues threatening the breeding of the needed manpower by both federal or state governments in Nigeria making the education institution sick and dysfunctional. Chukwudi and Idowu (2021), and Majihosev and Denkova (2013) opined that both ASUU and the government appears to be undermining strike effect as they are seeing it as part of the societal norm, judging by its repeated action from the former and the little and late responsiveness of the latter.

Meanwhile, every action has consequential effects and strikes are not exempted. Though ASUU strike may likely enable the benefit of achieving the institution demands either immediately or later. However, its impending danger may likely affect the institution, academic staff, students and society functionality. Thus, a prolonged strike is an unacceptable sick role with a dysfunctional consequence to the society at large.

IV. CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper is to explore structural functionalism and education institution sick role of Nigerian society. The paper identified specific ways by which education institution was expected to contribute to national development by examining education and youth development, education policy planning and implementation, functions of educational institutions, Organized institution's body, causes of strike with emphasizes on the right strike as a contributive factors to education institution sick role which no-doubt is making the institution and the society dysfunctional in their expected role. For education institution to continuously have positive impact on the society, some recommendations have been made and if duly followed, will address the sick role of the Nigerian educational institution.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion above no-doubt illustrates the strategic position of education institution in promoting the course of national development. The sick role in the Nigerian education institution centers on government policy implementation, educational institutions, organized institution's body, causes of strike and on the right strike. Below are some lasting solutions to the sick role bedeviling the Nigerian education institution. Prominent among the solutions is that government should be determined to make proper policy and planning implementation for effective funding of education institution. The Federal Government should endeavour to keep to its policy and programme on education while ASUU and other organized body should not rely on strike as the only tool for achieving its purpose.

Furthermore, education institution should be managed by federal, state, local governments and private sectors inclusion. Private sector can aid research grants, award scholarships with endowment of Professorial Shares in all levels of the education institution. Multinational companies operating in Nigeria should also be mandated to set aside some part of their profits to support the government to finance education and allied

projects. Political leaders should also develop a strong political will to ensure continuity of educational policies and doggedness in prompt response to union needs. Severe and swift punishment should be meted on financial crimes and other corrupt practices in the educational sector.

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