SOCIAL VICES AS HARBINGER OF NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM NEAR COMATOSE: A SOCIO-CIVIC SEARCHLIGHT **OLADITI Abiodun Akinola, Ph.D** 

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## OLADITI Abiodun Akinola, Ph.D

Department of Social Studies,
School of Secondary Education,
Arts and Social Science Programmes,
Emmanuel Alayande College of Education
(now Emmanuel Alayande University of Education),
Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria
E-mail:oladitibiodun@yahoo.com
Tel: +2348033663266

## **Abstract**

The quest for a 'better society' is an indication that the present society does not worth its salt, the same goes for the need to rebrand the nation's educational system that is near comatose as exemplified by a number of indices, economic, political, social, security, health, globalization and modernization effects, societal stance, breakdown of the social structures, among others. The increasing wave of social vices that has crept into the educational sector and the resultant fallen standard of education is of more concern in the present society. Thus, manifestations of social vices in terms of total disregard for norms and values of the society, degradation of societal virtues as well as collapse of the social institutions is becoming harbinger of the fallen glory of the nation's ivory tower. The onus then lies on the academic community to rise up to the task of evolving a better society in particular and a worthwhile educational system as a whole. This can only become a reality through a number of activities especially, in the education sector which for the umpteen time, is described as instrument par excellence for achieving national objectives, better society inclusive. Reason for this cannot be far-fetched, there is symbiotic relationship between the society and the content of education at any point in time since the societal needs and aspirations determines the nature of education to be provided, thus, education curricular are drawn from such needs and aspirations. It was observed from the study that the Nigerian society has derailed from its

erstwhile virtues with grave consequences on the education sector with the society replete of social vices and attendant consequences on education, economic, socio-cultural, political, and national development. It is therefore imperative to evolve a relevant curriculum to drive globally compliant education; ensure increased prioritization of education; total stoppage of watering down of school subjects; rejuvenates the nation's social institutions; pursue value re-orientation; deemphasize over-emphasis on certification, among others.

**Keywords**: Education system; Education and society; Social issues and problems; Social vices; Societal virtues

### Introduction

Globally, the place of education cannot be overemphasized as education underscores virtually all aspect of human endeavours. It therefore goes to say that education is a determinant of growth and development of individual, groups, society, nations and the global community. This perhaps underpins the cardinal position of education in the current global development concern designated Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. Hence, education constitute the fourth out of the 17 Goals and 169 targets of the SDGs aimed at turning around the continents and nations of the world, Africa and Nigeria inclusive in coping with the exigencies of the 21st century.

As a matter of fact, Africa as a continent and Nigeria key into the fourth goal, SDGs-4 having to do with quality and equality education for all and sundry to ousted illiteracy. Thus, Education

Agenda 2030 as well as Africa Education Agenda 2063 is being vigorously pursued. This and other global concern on education is an indication of the esteemed place of education. It has canvassed that any nation that fails to prioritize education is sitting on the keg of gun powder waiting to explode, end result of which is but catastrophe. Little wonder, the success story of the so-called world powers and developed economies of the world is tied to their commitment to the development of education sector. This perhaps explains the UNESCO mandatory minimum of 26% yearly budgeted allocation to education among the nations of the world.

Reiterating the place of education in development, late Nelson Mandela advanced that education is the very leveler, a phenomenon that makes a son of a carpenter to be at par with a son of a professor. It is a powerful weapon that can be wielded in bringing about change the world over. Little wonder, it has been emphasized that one of the cardinal point behind the reviewed of the National Policy on Education, NPE in 2013 is in a bid to find recourse to a number of evolving events pervading Nigerian society in particular, and the global world in general in such a way as to make Nigerian education more relevant to global requirements as well as to remediate a number of naughty issues having to do with the development of the Nigerian society (Ajere & Olorunmota, 2015), corollary of which is the quest for rebranding the nation's educational system to drive national growth as well as sustainable development.

Apparently, the expression of the apex authority on the education sector as observed here is an attestation to the rottenness that has eat deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian nations, culminating in breakdown in the social institutions which are the mechanisms through which the society operates with the attendant perennial social vices of high magnitude in the present day society begging for resuscitation. As such, the Chinese saying, 'anything that is bad, throw it to the school' is a truism in this regard since education curriculum is

a product of the society. As rightly observed by Albert Einstein, 'the world will not be destroyed by those who do evil but by those who watch them without doing anything' and further corroborated by Plato who advanced that 'if you do not take an interest in the affairs of your government, then you are doomed to live under the rule of fools'. It was also the contention of XI Jinping, the China President that 'you cannot depend upon another race to free you that is a basic law of human existence.

From all indication, the assertion of the erstwhile South Africa President, 'Modiba' as fondly called, Nelson Mandela that 'education is the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world further attests to the place of education as sine-qua-non to stable society, economic growth, sustainable security and national development. This lend credence to the position of Hammed (2019) that education constitute the key to changes in knowledge, values, lifestyles and behaviours necessary for sustainability and ability within and among countries as well as ensure democracy, human security and peace.

Similar view was the one presented by Akinyele and Odunaye (2019) who described education as the key that unlocks personal and national potential development. Ajiboye (2021) was so emphatic on this when he submitted that there is no doubt that education is generally regarded as a means to a better life and the uplift of the society. As such, education is a potent instrument for the social, economic and political transformation of the nation (p.56). The foregoing might not be unconnected with the pronouncement by the National Policy on Education, NPE that 'no nation can rise above the level of her education' (Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN, 2014). By implication, no transformation can be possible outside sustainable education, the more reason why the developed nations of the world attached more importance to education sector. The success of education in turning around the nation (Oladiti, 2022), is a function of effective and efficient education which is a product of instructional delivery in the 21st century.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Society, Social issues and Problems

It is pertinent to take a cursory look at social issues and problems as an ambivalence of the society at this point. Society connotes a group of people sharing distinct institution and culture which are transmitted from one generation to another. Society also constitutes a unit consisting institutions and cultures that are exclusive to a group of people. To Akinola (2014), society in general term, embraces human beings, their activities and relationship with one another as well as with their natural and social environment. Thus, society to Oladiti (2018) implies all that concerns people, institutions and relationships. The foregoing description of society makes it the fulcrum of social issues, problems and the attendant social vices with concomitant effects on the educational system in the country.

On the other hand, social issues and social problems in some parlance, are used interchangeably (Oladiti, 2018). This might not be unconnected with the fact that the two concepts are intertwined and produced by interactions in the society which a times, translate to social vices which negates the norms and values governing the operation of a given society, hence, they are said to be society relative. The foregoing is in consonance with the view of Horton and Gerald (1978) who described social problem as a social condition capable of affecting a significant number of people in the society in a way considered undesirable and issues that is seen as warranting finding solution to through collective social action.

Oladiti (2018) corroborated the foregoing by describing social issues as those issues that the society adjudged as capable of preventing optimal function of the society, it is social problems that constitute debacle to the expected functioning of the society, educational delivery and expectations inclusive. Thus, social issues have been found in most cases as going beyond what an individual or a single society or nation can find lasting solutions to, hence, requires a collective responsibility.

In a vivid description of social issues and

problems as well as societal vices, Millicent Kelly identified a four-prong attributes of public recognition of such issues as a problem; issues that run contrary to the expectations of the society with regards to societal values and norms; issues admitted as a valid problem by majority of the members of the society; such issue must be a problem that is susceptible to rectification or capable of being alleviated through general consensus in terms of corporate action of the members of the society with the aid of community resources. Thus, social vices as an ambivalence of social issues and problems (Akinola, 2014), constitutes negative behaviour inimical to the society that requires collaborative efforts in stemming down its untowardness. From all indications, social vices are actions and activities that can be grouped as deviant behaviour which negates the norms, values, right attitudes, moral, acceptable behaviour, rules and regulations held sacrosanct by the society through its social institutions and mechanism. The implications of this for educational system in today's society cannot be over-emphasized.

# Variants and Prevalence of Social Vices in Nigerian Society

Variants of social vices are many and diverse. As such, attempt at listing social vices in the present dispensation therefore is a herculean task considering its seemingly unending list. However, some social vices affecting the present day society include but not limited to the following: social institution breakdown, crime, disregard for constituted authorities, ineptitudeness of government agencies, prostitution, vandalization, youth brigandage, cultism, alcoholism, indecent dressing, immorality, inordinate ambition, degenerated societal values, substance abuse, cybercrime, ritual killings, rape, suicide, terrorism, insurgencies, examination malpractice, injustice, child abuse, domestic violence, gender discrimination, dereliction of duty, parental neglect, changing roles of the family institution, banditry, kidnapping, trafficking in person,

religious bigotry, neglect of civic duties, avarice, laziness, get rich quick syndrome, gangsterism, corrupt practices, violence, disrespect for human dignity, arson, social media abuse, teenage pregnancy, arm conflict, assassination, abortion, husband/wife battering, delinquency, armed robbery, organ harvesting, religious bigotry, the list is unending.

Presenting a reminiscence of the glorious society paraded in Nigeria prior colonization, Lord Macaulay (1835) averred that in his voyage through African society, Nigeria inclusive, no beggar, no thief were in sight but rather a society laden with high moral values, people of reputable character that constitute threat to British colonization bid. However, the said canticles of the then society has been traded for westernization, civilization and modernization, all in the guise of western education and crave for foreign things at the expense of the hitherto spiritual and cultural heritage, traditional education system, as well as the country's rich culture, resultant of which invariably translated to loss of self-esteem and native culture that serves as catalysts for social vices in the present society where native virtues are becoming alien and old school. Reiterating the foregoing, Aladekugbe (2020) berated the neglect of old time virtues when killing a neighbour or fellow human being is seen as a taboo punishable by stigmatization and family legacy but dishearteningly, such practices are already swept under carpet and associated change in culture. In the same vein, institutional breakdown has been canvassed as responsible for the spate of social vices among the old and young in Nigerian society of today.

For instance, family institution debasement manifesting in different forms are all over. Writing on this, Soboyejo (2010) affirmed that family values have been debased with parental neglect of their roles culminating in delinquent and disobedient children that discredit social norms and values. Buttressing further, Oladiti and Adedigba (2016) enlisted indices of family debasement such as loss of family value, disobedient children, family structure, domestic violence, pre-marital sex, violence against women, spate of modernization, advancement in

technology and growth of information technology as well as alarming crime rates as responsible for the increasing social vices in the society.

Endemic corruption is yet another social vices with multiplier effects. Subscribing to this, Babalola (2019) reiterated that Nigeria, the most populated African country ranked high in corrupt practices by transparency International Index and other organizations charged with checkmating corruption level in the country. Recounting the ordeal associated with the nation's level of corruption, the New Nigeria Agenda (NNA, 2016) stated that the country has lost an estimated whooping sum of over \$400 billion in 2012 resulting from corrupt practices. Writing on corruption-related issue, a blogger hosted on whatsapp platform information relating to basterdized economy indicating that the sum of 8 million ponds found in the residence of a Nigerian student studying in London might be a part of the looted funds from Nigeria treasury. This of course is not without effect on the nation's economy.

Government corruption and foreign investment is responsible for citizen's skepticism about the nations ranking among the top powerful world economies projected for 2050. The level of corruption in the society can be seen in the following excerpts: 'whoever wins 2015 will never find it easy to govern, over 30 trillion is mismanaged, unaccounted for or missing...' (Prof Charles Soludo). Over 20 billion dollars unremitted to the federation account, and if nothing is done by 2015 upward, Nigeria will know that economic crisis is (Emir Sanusi Lamido). 'I told them to save ahead of eventualities, but Jonathan had no political will to do so and this is the reason why we are in crisis because we squandered our oil boom (Okonjo Iweala). 'If the amount of money stolen from Nigeria in the last 30 years was stolen from the UK, the UK would cease to exist (David Cameron). Oladiti and Ajogbeje (2019) while enunciating on the factors responsible for the country's inability to be ranked among the developed economies of the world, fingered among others, insincere leaders and looting of the nation's treasury and the associated money laundering.

### Social Vices and Its associated Factors

Just like the maxim, 'there cannot be any fire without smoke', perennial social vices that has engulfed the nation's fabric in all aspects does not operate in a vacuum, a number of factors serves as the propelling factors for its seemingly unabated trend. Summing up issues fueling social vices in Nigerian society, Okunade (2014) enlisted predicament and afflictions confronting the nation and the citizens to include unbridle primitive accumulation, misappropriation of funds, oil theft, unremitted funds, phantom kerosene subsidies, bungled privatization, right violation, abridgement of the rule of laws, illegal killings, disobedient of court orders, among others.

Another factor responsible for the spate of social vices in Nigeria and the global community is the proliferations of social media and its multifaceted platforms. These have been identified as responsible for increasing trend of social vices in Nigerian society. This situation might not be unconnected with the fact that social media platforms in their different kind are being explored for both positive and negative motifs by members of the society culminating in dissemination of fake news to millions of people within a twinkle of an eye (Ewokor, 2021). In like manner, it was the contention of Adeoluwa, Adeyi and Oyewale (2019) that Nigerian society today is a washed with violence, kidnapping, human trafficking, rape, domestic violence, hooliganism, drug abuse, insurgency, gross disregard for human dignity, civil disobedient, decline civic participation, lack of patriotism, care free attitude, impatience, collapse of values, among others (p.30). The implication of the foregoing on the nation's educational system is better imagined than real.

Again, lack of self-reliance skills especially among graduates is associated with a number of social vices prominent among which are crime and terror attacks, murders, political assassinations, prostitution, yahoo fraud, armed robberies, rape, kidnapping, violence of different kinds, to mention few (Lawal & Abdullahi, 2019; Nwangwu, 2006). Politicization of issues cutting across socio, economic, politics, religious, ethnic,

culture, creed and profession are also the basis of social vices manifesting in areas such as revenue allocation disparities, selective anti-corruption crusade, ethnic colouration, federal character principle abuse, among other. A case in point is the case of Dr. Patrick Wilmot who despite his Jamaica origin and oversea education, opted for teaching profession in Nigeria his home country and taught in one of the nation's ivory tower for an upward of 18 years, doubling as political adviser and speechwriter, but was forcefully retired to London through abduction by Nigerian security operatives during the reign of the military juntas. This is a wanton display of fundamental human right violation.

Responding to the above situation, a blogger lamented the pervasive rottenness in the Nigerian society while commenting on Nigerians in Diaspora making news across the globe, citing the case of two Nigerian youths-Kemi Badenoch and Wally Adeyemo, UK Trade Secretary and the US Secretary for Trade respectively who were said to be discussing ways of boosting trade between UK and US. The two of them were appointed into cabinet positions in two of the most advanced countries of the world. The blogger concluded sarcastically by saying 'but the home country Nigeria is growling under Godfatherism, Nepotism, Tribalism/Ethnicity and Favoritism. Such situation is responsible for brain drain and the associated effects on all aspects of the nation, her education sector inclusive.

Presenting a graphical illustration of factors influencing social vices in Nigerian society, Sukumar S. in a satire captioned Telling A Lie' stated thus: 'Telling a Lie is a Sin for a Child, Fault for an Adult, An Art for a Lover, Profession for a Lawyer, A Requirement for a Politician, A Management tool for a Boss, An Accomplishment for a Bachelor, An Excuse for a Subordinate, A Matter of survival for a Married man'. What a compendium of social vices pervading the Nigerian society?

The above prompted an anonymous post on a WhatsApp page captioned 'No matter how good a government we have, Nigeria is never going to become a productive nation as long as her citizens

are in possession of 13-prong vices'. The writer listed among others, vices such as religiosity, ethnicity, entertainment and merriment, crave for titles, materialism, craze for luxuries, depending on government for solution to every problem, crave for foreign goods, sycophantic, disrespect for non-educated people, politics of self-enrichment/aggrandizement, blame shift, corporate begging others to take responsibility.

# Social Vices and Education interplay: A Call for Rethink

Without mincing words, social vices, going by its pervasiveness and magnitude in the society presently is having its tolls on the education system. How do one explain the slogan of 'education is a scam' that has become household slang among students of different academic levels nowadays? The resultant effect is lack of commitment and the resultant abysmal performance at different levels. It is no longer news that many of the students with the so-called brilliant performance in O'Level results are mostly the worst when it comes to post-UTME and entrance examinations to tertiary institutions. Thus, passing buck, blame shifting, dodging responsibilities is a variant of social vices pervading the nation; this is also common in a number of educational programmes that tends to culminate in the fallen standard of education generally.

Buttressing this fact, Familyplug (2022) recounted the ordeal of a 50-year-old Nigerian woman who regretted her parents' action of sending her to oversee. It was the contention of the writer that many Nigerian parents are culpable of having children in Diaspora that they know little to nothing about their well-being but basking in the euphoria of their children being in abroad. The victim captured the ills of such action as follows: 'The koko of this post is this... Now in the UK, we see Nigerian children killing, shooting, stabbing, selling drugs, raping, etc and we wonder why they are ridiculing our darling country's name. Hhhmmmm, it is not the kids' fault, it is the fault of the parents that weren't ready to prioritize their priorities'.

Indeed, Nigeria is passing through a serious

trying period characteristic of its humongous social vices which Goerge and Ukpong (2013) and Atolagbe (2019) identified to include but not limited to vices such as internet crimes, juvenile delinquencies, robbery, poverty, kidnapping, cultism, examination malpractices, dubious admission policies, certification over-emphasis by the society, drug abuse, social media addiction, indecent dressing, plagiarism, sex trade, sex for grade, cohabitation, ritual killings, rape, to mention few. All these are with attendant effects on the nation's education.

Atolagbe (2020) further listed politicization of educational policies, proliferation of ethnic militias, kidnapping for ransom, Fulani herdsmen palaver as well as Boko Haram insurgencies as social vices indices. Media is a washed of a number of scary news about the seemingly tapestries of social vices adorning the Nigerian society in the present dispensation. For instance, Adebisi (2000) adduced that dissent and alien values and beliefs have crept into Nigerian society with associated devastating negative moral consequences prominent among which are gross disregard for dignity of person and hard work, injustice, bribery and corruption, examination malpractices, certificate racketeering, fashion craze, among others. These and many others are a reflection of the failure of socialization agents generally contributing in no small measure to the state of the country's education. Little wonder Adeyemi's (2013) assertion that Nigeria's societal values have become a toothless dog with the society agog with vices such as disrespect, unfaithfulness, dishonesty, indiscipline, corruption, intolerance, inequality, selfishness, corruption, naked disregard for national symbols, materialism.

A gory bizarre of the extent of social vices is the seemingly priceless value attached to human lives in the present day society. A case in point is the report of Tunde Oyekola in the January 6, 2023 edition of Punch Magazine where a son was said to have kidnapped his father and collected a whooping sum of N2.5 million as ransom. Similar gruesome report was the one reported by Alaroye TV of recent where eight people of different categories, gender, age and religion were paraded

for engaging in killing and selling of human parts at a ridiculous price, they confessed to have killed and butchered no less than three female victims in Ijebu Ode environ of Ogun State. Replication of the foregoing is the order of the day in most of Nigerian ivory tower nowadays where materialism and display of wealth is replacing devoting time to serious academic exercise by leaders of tomorrow under the guise of yahooyahoo, yahoo+ and associated money rituals.

Related factors of social vices rocking the Nigerian society among others with multiplier effects on education obtain. Such include but not limited to neglect of civic duties, indiscipline, examination malpractices, connivance as well as collapse of social norms. Identifying apathy and neglect of civic duties and associated social vices, IEFS Election Guide (2021) affirmed that 28, 614, 190 of the 82,344,106 registered and eligible voters participated in 2019 general elections while Eyokoba (2013) fingered electoral malpractices as rife and greatly impinged on election credibility in Nigeria associated with wittingly and unwittingly vices such as impersonation, underage and unregistered persons, multiple voting, possession of illegal voters cards, alteration of voters card, snatching of ballot boxes, stealing, kidnapping, maiming, disenfranchising voter, killings, arson, libel, slander, and to mention few in successive elections in Nigeria safe for the 1993 and 2007 elections adjudged free and fair (Folarin, 2020; Alamu, 2022).

Similarly, Gutuza and Mapoliza (2015) indicated that increase in secondary school indiscipline is a product of the external social environment which of course, is societal underpin. The collapse of social norms with associated vices according to Adeyemi (2022) include among others, moral decadence manifesting in sexual assault, indecent dressing, examination malpractices, male child drop out, early marriage, syndromes as well as declining interest in education by students, hence, the slogan, 'education is a scam. Perhaps, it worth closing this aspect of the study by taking a look at the homily for a better society as enunciated by a Veteran Actor and scholar, Otunba Peter Oladele Fatomilola in the following write up: 'I don't blame those that kill for money' I blame the

society that celebrate success without knowing the source of track record, I blamed the society that respect only the rich, I blamed the society that does not celebrate or encourage hardworking productivity a society where every youth is making money without working'...'

#### Conclusion

A panoramic view of this work has showcase the fact that the Nigerian society in its present state has derailed from those virtues it is known for and this has greatly affected the education sector as an ambivalence of the society. Succinctly, the society is replete of social vices that are of grave consequences to economic, socio-cultural, political, national development, education and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 21st century. This, without mincing words calls for a rethink to set the nation's education on the pedestal of global education capable of producing 21st century citizens and the society at large.

Devolving from the observations from this study and the attendant effects of social vices on the education sector, it behooves all stakeholders to among other things, evolve a relevant curriculum to drive globally compliant education; increased prioritization of education; total stoppage of watering down of school subjects; rejuvenation of the nation's social institutions; value reorientation; de-emphasizing of over-emphasis on certification; promotion of entrepreneurial skills and entrenching the spirit of entrepreneurship in citizens with focus on the youths; institute enduring good governance; ensure judicious use of the nation's resources; advocate citizens' reorientation; entrench moral and character education in the school curricular; provision of adequate home training and resuscitation of family ethos.

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