



Philosophy of Education and National Development: The Nexus

Justine Ukaeju Mbagwuⁱ

Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria
justymbas@gmail.com

Dominic Chiosom Igbegiriⁱⁱ

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract

This work aims at bringing out the relevance of educational philosophy to national development. It clearly stated that the development of any given society is the brain work of a good educational system of that society. Consequently, for one to rate any educational theory and practice to be of great value and worthy of standing the test of time, it must affect positively the lives of the individuals in that society. This also translates that such system (education) has been garnished with the vital philosophical tools relevant for national development. It is on these bases that we talk of the Nexus between education and National Development. The paper critically analyzes the contributions of philosophy of education to the development of modern nations of the world. Recommendations were also made based on the findings.

Keywords: Philosophy, Education, National Development, Nexus.

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INTRODUCTION

The position of education as the bedrock of any society's development is indubitable. And as Abiogu (2014) rightly stated, Education "is considered as the cornerstone for meaningful and sustainable growth development and achievement in art, science and technology". Indeed, it

is due to this all important role of education in the society that the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2004) in her National Policy on Education clearly revealed that Education is an instrument par excellence for achieving national development.

What this stand to mean is that no meaningful development can take place in the society without a proactive educational system, which indeed must be grounded with philosophical instruments analyzing and giving meaning to the basic concepts found in the field of education. The reason is that an educational system devoid of the vital philosophical tools will make no meaning to the people and as such will lose its purpose and value. It is on this premise that Abiogu (2014) assert that “any such education without a philosophy may not achieve its envisioned end for national development”. The reason is that philosophy as a discipline has greatly influenced the development of leaders, their education, as well as their pattern of rule. It delves into their (the leaders’) mind of thought.

Consequently, with its alliance with education, philosophy impart in the people the necessary materials it takes to stand as a well-equip person rational enough to fetch for him/herself and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the society which he/she inhabits. From the following it becomes pertinent to conclude that the purpose of studying educational philosophy is to make education and its process be tailored to the needs based life and society.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section the following concepts will be analyzed for proper handling of the topic:

- Philosophy
- Education
- Philosophy of education
- National Development

Philosophy

The word philosophy is derived from two Greek words i.e. ‘phileo’ (Love) and ‘sophia’ (Wisdom). Blending these two together, philosophy etymologically comes to stand as a discipline which aim to pursue wisdom. Indeed various ages has devised different thoughts and speculations concerning the origin of certain things and events which they are yet to arrive at the ultimate truth. It is man’s quest for the ultimate truth that led to the origin of the discipline-philosophy.

In its earlier stage, philosophical activities were carried out by great thinkers who in their quest to solve man’s challenges using religious interpretation. This was the case until the 6th century BCE when the ancient Greece thinkers were comparatively secular. It was considered secular probably because their inquiries were done through reason and observation as against traditional or revelation as was earlier conceived.

However, in contemporary time, philosophy has evolved to function as a discipline of secular inquiry into basic issues of life. Based on this outlook Nikunja (2015, p. 3) describe philosophy as “a critical examination of reality characterized by rational inquiry that aims at the truth for the sake of attaining wisdom”. Consequently, there have risen different schools of philosophy depending on the various aspects of life and the issues they seek to solve. In recent times, we discuss issues in areas like; educational philosophy, social philosophy, political philosophy, economic philosophy, and so on. In doing this, philosophy works in different branches like; Epistemology, Metaphysics, Axiology, etc. Also worthy to mention is the different philosophical approaches used by the discipline in tackling vital issues as;

idealism, realism, naturalism, pragmatism, materialism, to mention a few. These various schools of thoughts in philosophy makes the discipline a fortified one; able to handle issues from various perspective. It is on that note that Plato stated in his “Republic” as cited in Nikunja (2015, p. 3) that “he who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied may be termed philosopher”. The above assertion of Plato portrays the fact that philosophy delve into diverse areas of human venture relevant to his existence in the society. No wonder Prof. D. Elton True blood speaking on the essentials of philosophy to man stated; “until we are clear on what man is, we shall not be clear about much else” (Nikunja, 2015, p. 3).

Based on the foregoing, Okoh (1998), made it clear that the study of philosophy should further be seen as a method of reflective and constructive thinking and reasoned inquiry. The above view run pari-pasu with that of Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2007) who posits that philosophy is a complete enquiry into the foundation of thought in every activity of human in the field of arts, science, religion, and education. But Oroka cited in Abiogu (2014) made it more explicit when he states that philosophy is a philosophic wisdom and activity concerning the existence of things around us. However, Abiogu affirmed that as a discipline, philosophy distinguishes reason from evidence of things, and give purposeful direction to life. The foregoing construe the fact that philosophy is vital in the field of discipline and should not in any way be discarded. As a matter of fact, philosophy by its position should be regarded as a strategic pillar to national development.

Education

The understanding of education should go beyond schooling. Scholars and other writers like R. S. Peters are of the view that education serves to bring a change in behavior in a morally acceptable manner. According to Plato, one of the earliest moral philosopher of education insist that the discipline should be transmitted in a high moral perspective that will result to the development of right conducts among the receivers (Amaele, 2017). It therefore means that the process of educating individuals is simply the act of developing in them sound mind in a sound body; to make the individuals contribute to the development of his society.

Rousseau agrees to this assertion in Ezewu (1993, p. 29) that “education is the development of the individual from within, by interacting with the natural environment with the aim of fitting him properly into the society”. From the above it becomes obvious that the essence of education is to assist the individual to develop effectively to unleash his natural potentials. Indeed, education helps the individual to function effectively in the society he is born into or exist. From this sociological perspective of viewing education, it becomes clear that education build in the learners the norms and values of the society.

Viewing it from the etymological perspective, education is drawn from the Latin word ‘Educare’ and ‘Educere,’ grant one an insight of what education stand for in any given society. ‘Educare’ means to bring up, to lead out, while ‘Educere’ mean to develop (Sharma, 2007). Both terms (Latin) in education simply means the process of the development of individuals in the society. It there means that education deals with the total development of the entire being of the individual; cognitive, affective, and the psychomotive domain.

Another thing common about the process of education according to Peters (1966) is that it must involve the transmission of what is worthwhile, that should be carried out in a morally acceptable manner. We should also understand here that the purpose of education is for total transformation of the individual to be useful to the society. This is where the concept (education) runs contrary to that of ‘training’. While training focus on making the individual fit into a particular job, education involves the positive transformation of the whole being. Peters view of education as an instrument to reform the entire human being; building in him

certain characters desirable not just to make him, but for him to also turn the society for better. Educations serving as instrument for the development of the individual, it remains, according to Peters the process of education does not only affect the cognitive (intellect), but the entire character. To have obtained education means that one has been transformed for the better. Hence Peters considers it as an anathema to say that anyone is being educated and still named among evil practitioners. This also translates that a good and effective education should be capable of erasing evil in the society and fostering sanity among the people. Corrupt practices and immorality by this understanding are products of ineffective educational process/practices. Hence, Peters consider the venture of education as an initiation into worthwhile activities (Peters, 1966). The above stand in line with popular view that education should be considered as a social process that should stand to modify the behavior of the learners in a social desirable direction through a well-planned learning.

Akinkpelu (1981, p. 184) summed up the view of Peters that an educational process must involve:

- A conscious effort to bring about a desirable change;
- A change that is intentional, deliberate and purposeful;
- Knowledge and understanding; and
- A method of transmission that is morally acceptable.

When education is examined on a wider perspective, we consider it to be the entire experiences that affect the individual from birth till death. It is based on this wider view of looking at education that Dewey suggest the education of the individual to be comprehensive enough; all-round drawing out of the best in the learner, body, mind, and soul. Dewey did not deviate from the position of Aristotle who advised that education should be an agent to create a sound mind in a sound body. The essence according to him is to develop man's faculty specially his mind, so as to enjoy the contemplation of the supreme truth, goodness, as well as beauty (Nikunja, 2015). Being a pragmatist, John Dewey did not see education as a preparation for life as some may do, but the living itself. With such spectacle, the educational thinker posits that education is the process of living through the reconstruction of experiences which he believed the individual have accumulated. These experiences will empower him and make him not just useful to himself but even to his environment.

In line with the above, Franken cited in Amaele (2000, p. 16) defined education as “a process of acculturation or socialization of the younger by the older” members of the society. The above definition making it clear that education is a process, and that it passed on from the more knowledgeable to the less of the society. Above all, it is to equip the individual to function effectively in the society.

In same vein, Emile Durkheim, looking at it from the sociological perspective added that, Education should be seen as the systematic socialization of the younger generation through which the later learns religious and moral beliefs, feeling of nationality and divers collective opinions (Okeke, 1989). Emile Durkheim's understanding of education reveals that Education is very relevant to the society. No wonder, nations adopt it (education) as an instrument for National development.

A critical analysis of the concept of education as we have tried in brief to examine above depict that education is very vital in any human society and should be given its first position. Although, it is a complex discipline, but be it complex or simple, the goals of education and its method of approach differs from one society to another (Ololube, 2009). For instance, among the Ancient Greek, the Athenian perspective of education differs from that of the Spartans. The various national objectives of any nation affect their kind of education for the people. The Ancient Romans placed emphasis on oratorical and military

training, and so was their education system tailored to. The present American system of education that inclined to pragmatic has also boosted the modern American economy. Education in any one society undertakes these giant strides through its traditional roles as we shall briefly examine below.

It is indubitable that education had played a vital role in our society, and has continued to do so. It is due to these roles which education carries out in the society that scholars and writers have both described it as a social force. Any nation's educational theories should be derived from the people's philosophy of life. Consequently, education stands to serve among other areas, in the following capacity; as an Instrument for; Moral Development, National Integration, Political/National Consciousness, Manpower Development, National Development, and many more.

Education as a vital instrument in any society functions in the above various areas of the people's life. It should also be taken that for the fact that the mental growth of an individual which is the focus of education, translates to the growth of the society. It is based on this, that a nation's educational policies must address the people's national goals. Education by this understanding is the basic tool used by any society to establish her national goals.

According to Ololube (2012), "education is meant to help students grow and develop, provide them with desired skills and professional abilities, assist them in acquiring the necessary understanding, concept, values and attitudes to manage future tasks" (p. 25). If this assertion of Ololube is something to go by, it means that such skills imparted through an effective educational process will be translated to different areas of the economy for national growth and development.

Plato, the great educational thinker of ancient Greece clearly taught that class or social placement in society is one of the essential role undertakings by education. In his theory, he spelt out that some are born with gold in their composition; while others are made of silver, yet others are born of brass and iron. Plato asserts that a good educational attainment has the ability to reposition one to a privileged class in the society (Curtis & Boulwood, 1977).

Philosophy of Education

As mentioned the concept of education, we did mentioned that the essence of education is to equip the individuals with the necessary skills and the required knowledge that will grant them access to define and to pursue their own goals in life. It should be added here that education should be able to empower the people to be involved in the life of their community as full-fledged autonomous citizens. This therefore translate that the survival of the individual citizen as a member of the society depends to a great extent on the solidness of the educational institution of that society. And as Dewey did state that when a society is shaken by crisis, it is often taken as a sign of educational breakdown, education and educators to this effect become scapegoats. It is due to this important social position of education that has attracted the attention of philosophers for donkey years to delve into the field of education. More importantly is also for philosophers to make into those complex issues in education that may tend to hinder the effective educational process of any given society. Based on the foregoing, we have philosophy of education. We should at this point state clearly that education and philosophy are closely inter-related and inter-dependent.

Many writers are of the opinion that without philosophy education would be a blind effort, and without education philosophy would be crippled. No wonder Dewey in his study made it clear that, education is the laboratory in which philosophical direction becomes concrete and tested (Nikunja, 2015). The position of John Dewey is confirmed by J. S. Ross when in (Nikunja, 2015), he asserts that virtually all aspects of education has philosophical

base. Drawing from educational aims, curriculum, methods, text books, discipline, teachers, and many more, has philosophical coloration. It is this 'eternal marriage' between philosophy and education that has called for great philosophers also standing as great educationists, not just in modern time but even in the past. The likes of Dewey, Froebel, and Rousseau, down to John Lock, Plato, and Socrates were all considered as renowned philosophers who were also great educators.

Philosophy of education captures issues and questions of how learning is possible, what it is to have learned something, etc. All these and many more is the business of philosophers in the field of education. In a nutshell, philosophy of education provides direction to education as well as a theory of knowledge for education to work upon. This confirms the position of Spencer in Nikunja (2015), that only philosophers can give a practical shape of any educational system. In line with this, Abiogu (2014) made a concise statement when he posits that philosophy of education is at the very centre of the whole educational enterprise. Indeed, it is indubitable that education and philosophy are symbiotically related. Both subjects according to Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2007) developed similar ideas in their areas of topical interest.

Philosophy operates in three main areas/branches namely: 'metaphysics, 'epistemology' and axiology. When these basic tools beam its light into the discipline of education, it guarantees a good educational process. For instance; Metaphysics which investigates principles of reality is concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world. It talks of the nature of things. Metaphysics addresses such questions as who is man. What type of society 'is best for man? How is man to be treated? Etc. when the educational system is built on this framework, it is obvious that the society will positively be affected. In same manner, epistemology in philosophy deals with such issues that concern knowledge; the purpose of knowledge and how it is acquired the difference between knowledge and belief, the sources of knowledge and so on. An adequate application of this tool in the education process also stream-line how the teacher is to transmit his lesson and be sure that he achieved his objectives in the teaching-learning process. Axiologies, another basic tool of philosophy focus on value system. It asked such questions as; are values absolute or relative? Does man determine all values? What is justice, and how can it be measured? (Amaele, 2017). Axiology in education guarantees the people the act of laying priority to vital things of life and positioning them their rightful place.

The above line of argument projects the importance of education in our society, and went further to explain that the presence of philosophy in educational issues (philosophy of education) is to sharpen the educational process. A well programmed educational philosophy is a sure way to accessing national development. The question then is what is National Development?

National Development

To understand the concept of national development, we have to know what 'national' means. The term **national** is coined from 'nation'. The Wikipedia Encyclopedia revealed that the word 'nation' came to English from the Old French word nation – meaning "birth", "place of origin," which also originates from the Latin word, 'natio' literally meaning "birth". The word nation is sometimes used synonymously for **state** or **country**. While state has to do with a government which controls a specific territory that may not be associated with a specific ethnic group, a country is considered as a geographic territory that may or may not have an affiliation with a government or ethnic group.

Agi cited in Ozumba et al. (2012) made it clear that the concept of "nation" is more difficult to analyze than that of a 'state'. The reason according to them is because to sort-up

for its meaning has resulted to blurred, that no central agreement among scholars to its meaning. They argued that no one person has been able to come up with a water-tight definition of what a nation is. Consequent to the above, scholars devised some criteria associated to a nation. A nation is said to involve feeling of affinity, shared identify and common destiny. Based on the above criteria, Rupert Emerson in Ozumba et al. (2012) sees a nation as a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future. According to Ward and Eden (2009, p. 2), “a nation is a collection of people who identify themselves as a social community with language and culture: they might live in a particular geographical location, but for historical reasons might scatter across the countries”.

In modern time, some social scientists had argued that there are two types of nations. These according to them are ‘the civic nation’ and ‘the ethnic nation’ and France standing as the example of the former, while German an example of the Later. Johann Fichte the German Philosopher in Wikipedia described the Ethnic nation as group of people sharing a common language, religion, culture, history and ethnic origin, which has made them unique from other nations and traceable to the French Revolution (a period of far reaching social and political upheaval in France and its colonies between (1789–1799). The central ideal and criteria of this types of nation—civic nation is centered in a willingness to “live together” as postulated by the French philosopher, Joseph Ernest Renan.

Therefore, the term national has to do with person, issue or anything concerning the nation. It is based on this that we speak of a national character, national sports Festival, national development, to mention but few. All these have to do with matters about nation; issues relevant to the entire nation.

Development

Development in the national realm simply means an improvement in the country’s economic and social conditions. What this translates is the way or method a country manages her natural and human resources to improve the people’s living condition. This understanding of development therefore encourages a country to take the necessary conditions and steps that will help in the realization and improvements of potentials of human personality.

Nwogu (2013) stated clearly that ‘development’ like National, is not an easy term to define but its concept can best be understood when the characteristics of a developed society is been listed. This means that the term development is not just an easy or straight term to define but can only be analyzed when its characteristics are unveiled.

Osokoya (2008) affirm this when he insist that development is a multi-faceted concept, hence, we talk of economic, social, human development etc. Shah Shelly (2017) stated clearly that social and human development requires a concerted approach, integrating the economic and social components in plans, policies and programmes for people’s betterment. The writer added that the purpose of development in any setting should be to develop man and not just to end with developing things. Hence, Shelly advised that its (development) goal should be focused and vigorously pursued.

Again Holtz cited in Soares Jr. and Quintella (2008) argued that the discussion of individual well-being simply talk of human development, which is directed towards the individual’s quality of life; health and happiness. Closely related to the issue of discussion is that of sustainable development. It’s a new concept (sustainable Development) in the family of development. Becker in Soares Jr. and Quintella (2008) describe the term “a transformation process in which the exploitation of resources, direction of investment, orientation of technological development and institutional change are reconciled and

reinforces present and future potential, in order to attend to the needs and future aspirations”. This definition so far has continued to stand as a base to explain the concept – sustainable development by scholars.

In his attempt to dissect what development is all about Furtado cited in Osokoya (2008: 93) advances three criteria that will lead to the understanding of the concept:

- An increase in the efficiency of the production system of a society;
- The satisfaction of the population’s basic needs;
- The attainment of the objectives sought by various forces in a society, which are linked to the use of scarce resources.

From the criteria of Furtado above, it is certain that development should be seen from the angle of increase in the Gross National Product (GNP) which is directly related to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This becomes pertinent from the Furtado criteria especially when development is viewed from the angle of economic growth. Again, development has to do with increase in percentage of the living condition of the people in the society. This has to be on the two aspects of the basic needs of the people; food, water, energy, and shelter, on one hand, and education, security, and communication, on the other hand.

National development therefore should simply be seen as an improvement of both human and material infrastructures in all areas to increase the living condition of the people in the society. The foregoing argument translate that development of any system (National development) should be dimensional; it should be all round, not focused on a single aspect. Succinctly put: National development should embrace the economic, political, social, and all aspect of the people/society. Consequently, an effective education system is considered as the catalyst that can carry out such role.

The Impact of Philosophy of Education on National Development

In our discussion of national development, it was understood that the concept is multi-dimensional; involving physical and mental aspects (Uduigwomen and Ogbinaka, 2009). The reason is that anything done (physical or mental) in the nation to uplift the standard of living of the people are considered as national development. A country’s national goals aim at improving the life the people. Consequently, philosophy of education not only involves in the formulation of the ideas of the national objectives, but also clarifies strategies for implementation of such national objectives. And as it is often argued; National development is evaluated on the platform of how we are able to achieve our national objectives. In Nigeria for instance, the five national objectives which run thus:

- A free and democratic society;
- A just and egalitarian society;
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation; and
- A great and dynamic economy

A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens are stated to enhance the national life, and it achievement can be said to enhance national development. Philosophy of education not only involve in the analyses of the various ideas in these objectives but goes further to make various educational objectives in the Policies on Education that will gear towards achieving the national goals of the country. Through its philosophical tools, it makes policies and programs suitable to enhance the individuals, with regards to the national goals.

Again, it develops the curriculum to absorb such subject or discipline that will inculcate the knowledge/ideas of the country's national objectives. Once more, its role of clarification of concepts and theories (analytic philosophy), philosophy of education makes it easier for policy implementation as it analyses concepts, theories etc. this may not only be economical, but accurate, coherent and systematic. Such role played by philosophy of education is very essential as it accelerates national development in any given society.

However, judging from the various vital roles of philosophy of education in national development, Adaralegbe in Ozumba et al. (Eds.) (2009) advised that our philosophy of education should have a solid foundation for economic political and some form of educational freedom so as to continue in its role to do what is expected of it. He prayed that our philosophy of education should positively affect our morals, values, leadership, economic, etc. as all these are the necessary ingredients of national development.

Furthermore, discussing the impact of Education on national development, we should categorically state that the best can be achieved in a nation when such philosophical instrument is garnished in the discipline of education. It is only then that its weight/impact can be felt. Philosophy of Education is known to perform certain roles in the society by providing the learners a beautiful and functional curriculum. Through this curriculum, skills are imparted to the learners that will prepare them physically, mentally, and possibly spiritually in their journey to a brighter and glorious life. However, Szarowicz (2004) posits two main views on the role of education, the Marxist and Functionalists. According to Szarowicz, the Marxists see education as an unequal and corrupt system that recreates class inequality. The functionalists on the contrary insist that education prepares the people for the world of work and help them develop their individual latent talents to discover whom they are and where they could best function in the society. To the functionalists, education plays these three basic roles in a society; the role of allocation, providing skills, and socialization of the individuals. Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons standing as the leading figures of functionalist theory, while Karl Marx front-line the Marxist view.

From the functionalist view, it is obvious that education colored by philosophy has contributed immensely to the individuals and in turn, aided national development. Educational philosophy transforms and develops the human beings who in turn develop the entire society. An effective educational process transforms the individual and shapes his life towards better direction. When the individual is transformed, he positioned himself as a viable agent of change for progressive society; a society devoid of incessant social ills. Sharma, (2007, p. 38) asserts to this argument when he insist that a good Educational process "must aim at the complete development of human personality". In fact, it is for this reason and many more that philosophers found their way into the field of education. And like the saying, no nation can develop more than the mental ability of the individuals. To be ahead, one should have something positive and unique imparted into him through the educational system. Indeed, education and philosophy (educational philosophy) are both interested in the good life, good society and the good state among other things it does. Scholars has also spotted out that philosophy of education act as guiding, steering, and liberating force, assisting the youths and the entire society to squire up with current issues. It guarantee individuals the virtue of critical thinking necessary to tackle life challenges.

When educational policies are being revised over and over the major reasons is to absorb the needs of the society. Using the Nigerian educational policy as a case study, Wolman cited in Imam (2012) opined "that there is observable relationship between a good educational system and national development in Africa". The reason according to the scholar is that in every society, the primary concern of education is the upliftment of the society. Education functions as agent of cultural transmission and change. In Nigeria for instance, Imam made it clear that the various amendments and revision of the National Policy on

Education (1982, 1998 and 2004) were done so as to reflect the dynamic process of nation building. Again, it is to accommodate the series developmental process necessary to effect positive changes in the society.

CONCLUSION

In relation to the topic on ground our discussion so far has been able to establish the fact that philosophy of education operates between education and national development, as such, philosophy of education must strive to promote the concept of education in analyzing the various concepts, theories, and other essentials in education. It should also look to the various issues and items in the national objectives as to promulgate policies and programmes (using the various necessary philosophical tools) to achieve them. And as we did mentioned, accessing national development is evaluated on the platform of achieving the national objectives. Consequent to this, philosophy of education should be effective and proactive enough to do the needful to achieve the country's national objectives. And for the fact that no nation can rise above the educational level of her society, it therefore become necessary that our educational system should be up-graded to meet with the current challenges.

Priority should be given to the educational system of the country; the educational institutions should be enhanced so that it will continue to perform optimally. Like the popular saying; "A nation that neglects her education neglects her future". If we in any form neglect our educational system or accord it a secondary position, it is obvious that the future is doomed. "A quality educational system will definitely yield a better result" (Mbagwu & Amaele, 2018, p. 197). The above stand to mean that the ills observed in our (Nigerian) polity can be drawn from the serious neglect of the educational system. A timely realization of this truth; that an effective and formidable educational structure is the panacea for national development. So, the earlier we realize this truth, the better for us as Nigerians.

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ⁱ Mr. **Justine Ukaeju Mbagwu** is a Postgraduate student in the Department of Educational Foundations Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He can be reached via email at justymbas@gmail.com.

ⁱⁱ Mr. **Dominic Chiosom Igbegiri** is a Postgraduate student in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.