

FORMING CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN FORMATORS FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN THE NEW NORMAL: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive study titled: Forming Contemporary Nigerian Formators for Employability and Global Competitiveness in the New Normal: a Psychosocial Perspective. The introduction dealt with the background to the study and the background presents the definitions of major concepts or variables to the study, the problem statement and the purpose of study. On the definition, it defined major concepts such as new normal, psychosocial, contemporary, global competitiveness and employability. The problem statement presents the new norm changes that have resulted in rifts, phobia and labelling while the purpose of study presents the need to form competent formators that will respond appropriately to the changing trends replete in the society. Five major areas where the new normal changes were observed were discussed and they include the following, namely; the social context, moral context, psychological/emotional context, cognitive and cultural contexts. On the social context, it maintained that significant changes that constitute the new normal are visibly seen in interaction/relationship pattern of this era, in the understanding of marriage and the family. On the moral context, changes were noted in moral permissiveness replete in the society, the field of bioethics and changes in religion/spiritual orientation of the present era. The emotional/psychological new normal changes recorded a shift in emotional disposition of the era, the cultural dimension of the new norm changes recorded a loss of identity and root whereas the cognitive dimension presented a strong value shift in academic achievement and mental disposition of the era. Having extensively discussed these new normal challenges, the study went further to look at the implications of the changes and found out among others that there was a strong shift and overhaul in virtually all aspects of human endeavours, a corrosion of values, liberal-conservative dichotomy leading to phobia and labelling, a loss of identity and root, poor academic achievement etc. Finally the study reiterated the need for proper psychosocial (psychological and social) disposition of the formators to tackle the new norm challenges and development of competencies enabling global competitiveness. The following recommendations were proffered as remedial to the strong influence of the new norm changes. They include; stakeholders especially formation centres should ensure proper formation of the formators. There is also the need for proper psychological and social disposition of the formators with respect to the new norm trends. Finally the formators should also have the disposition to treat issues following the ethical trend and norms of the time.

Keywords: New Normal, Psychosocial, Contemporary Formators, Employability, Global Competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Topical in most literatures in the recent time is the term new normal defined by Johnson (2012) as a state to which either a society, culture or an economy settles following a crisis and which differs from the situation that prevailed prior to the crisis. The term new normal emerged sequel to very palpable changes seen in virtually every facet of human endeavours ranging from the world politics, climate change, economy, technological advancement, domain of human behaviour and development etc. Within these areas are observed some evolutionary trends far different from what has been before. These trends that have been before were seen as old fashion, archaic, out modelled and do not fit the mindset of the present age or contemporary era. Nate (2022) views the contemporary time as the current era in the classification of historic period, an era devoid of old fashion.

Unfortunately, some of these apparent old fashion trends stand for the values held by the conservative tradition. While the New norm changes stand for the liberal tradition. One can therefore infer that the new norm trends are values that deviates largely from the orthodox/conservative tradition and tends to the liberal tradition hence the new norm could be seen as a value shift from the orthodox to the liberal tradition.

The orthodox/conservative – liberal tradition has generated an age long debate and friction in virtually all ramification of human endeavour, while the liberals wants new ways of doing things and to be free, the conservatives emphasize orthodoxy and a grasp on those traditional values which according to them are the hub of morality. The obvious consequence of this conservative liberal struggle is a dichotomy of values. While the Liberals see the conservatives as being phobic, the conservatives see the liberals as deviants. Giving this context, a need arises for an inclusive formation that will dispose the formators psychologically and socially to handle the new norm drift. Such formation will aim at achieving the following namely; psychosocial competence, being employable and competitive in the global space. Psychosocial competence or development is defined as adaptive psychological responses to significant social life changes (Mosby,2009; Okudo,2013). Harvey (2015) defined employability as the ability of a graduate to get and keep a satisfactory job while global competitiveness refer to the quality of both human and capital resources produced and supplied by a nation in the global market. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to emphasize the need to form contemporary formators for employability and global competitiveness in the new normal: a psychosocial perspective. The specific objective of this study is clearly delimited to the psychological and social training of the formators in Nigerian Context.

The word contemporary is a household term used regularly and it implies the now, our time, the present, our own period, the moment we are living in, our own era. It is an era replete with innovations, climate change, scientific and technological dynamism, liberal agitations and other social value changes. It is an era characterized by very strong and sophisticated adjustment and a shift from traditional/orthodoxy belief to a high level of attitudinal and liberal cultural value changes. These constitute the new normal. The term new normal was first used in Philadelphia city by Paul Glover in January 2009 while referring to the need for community development. Another usage was in per Jacobson's 2010 lectures delivered by mohammed A. El Erian at the international monetary fund and was titled navigating the new normal in industrial countries. His context of usage of the term new normal was an attempt to move discussion beyond the notion that crisis was not just peripheral but endemic.

Johnson (2012) defined the term new normal as the state to which either a society or economy settles following a crisis when this differs from the situation that prevailed prior to the crisis. The term has also found usage in relation to World War 1, September II attack, 2002 – 2012 global recession, the covid-19 pandemic etc. Apart from the above the term new normal is seen as living a fear free life in a fear driven world. Again Elzoni (2015) proffers that the term new normal is the ability to maintain a balance between individual's right and common good. Diamond and Mcnamee see the term new normal as great opportunities in time of great risk. It can also be seen as current situations, social, cultural, emotional and psychological overhaul different from what has been experienced or done before but is expected to become usual and typical.

Again during and after the Covid-19-pandemic, the term new normal has been increasingly used to refer to changes in human behaviours. Very contrasting changes are seen in the moral development, attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and citizenship education among others. These speak volumes in the society of our time.

Numerous examples could be cited with respect to these new normal changes. A dive into these dimensions of the new normal will reveal the following adjustment patterns/changes especially when viewed from the context of the five major dimensions of human development. Such include the social context, psychological/emotional context, moral context, cultural context and cognitive context.

Social Changes

According to Nico and Williams (2023) social change can be defined as ways in which human interactions, relationships, behaviour pattern and cultural norms change over time. It refers to any significant alteration overtime in behaviour pattern and cultural values and norms seen in a generation. With respect to the contemporary era, a lot of very significant overhaul/changes are notably visible in human interaction/relationship, behaviour pattern and cultural norms. These apparent over haul are readily seen in a high degree in the day to day social encounter of the present era. Concrete examples of these overhaul that constitute the new norm is reflected in the following areas, namely the family, marriage and their human interaction/relationship (Okudo, 2022).

With respect to human interaction/relationships, it was discovered that earlier before now, the human interaction/relationship pattern was altruistic, person centred and communitarian. People reach out for and celebrate each other hence allowing various forms of contact to take place. However, the present dispensation has seen a remarkable shift in interactional pattern as a result of social changes. (Nico & Williams, 2023). The interactional pattern within this era is appraised to be individualistic, object centred and isolated. Because individuals can tour the world in their bedrooms using smart phones, the interactional pattern seizes to be altruistic rather it is individualistic and built around smart phones and consequently the need to gather together or reach out to other persons has greatly been reduced. Through smart phones, virtual gathering, workshops, conferences and seminars are presently held. These have greatly reduced the interactional pattern held among the contemporary generations.

Giving the above circumstance, a direct consequence of virtual social interaction is that these smart phones become the object of focus. Much attention is paid to smart phones than individuals. It is very often discovered that the present generation spends more time with phones than family/friends hence leading to isolated living (Hauser, 2006).

Apart from the above, another strong area of social change very conspicuous in the present era is the redefinition of both marriage and family. Concerning the way, the family is defined in the new normal context, the Chambers Dictionary defines marriage as a state or relationship of being husband and wife, no longer union between man and woman. Similarly, the family is seen as a (nucleus) comprising of husband, wife and children. The above definition has implications that underscores and speaks volumes with respect to moral development, values and attitudinal changes and shift. Put succinctly, the new norm definition was put forward in other to accommodate same sex couples which have become normalized in most societies. The same applies to marriage. The family and marriage has moved from the traditional view of man and woman to man and man, woman and woman or among the trans-genders.

Changes in Moral Standard

According to Churchland (2011), moral standards are values that a society uses to determine what is reasonable, correct or acceptable. Generally, it is believed that some standards are universally accepted while others that are culture bound are not universally accepted example killing is frowned at by all cultures hence it is a universally accepted standard while teenage pregnancy is not frowned at by all cultures therefore not a universally accepted standard. In the recent times however, very significant and remarkable changes are noticeable in the moral values standards of the present era. Such significant shift is seen in the following areas namely Bioethics, high moral permissiveness replete in the society, and religious/spiritual aberration and church proliferation.

One area that the moral standard has seen a significant overhaul is in the field of bioethics. The Wikipedia stated that bioethics is both a field of study and professional practice interested in ethical issues related to health. It covers those issues emerging from advances in biology, medicine and technology. This field of human endeavour has seen a lot of significant adjustments, common among them include the use of contraceptive pills ranging from simple condom to the use of intra-uterine devices implanted in the womb to frustrate fertilization. A critical look at the use of contraceptive pills puts the statistics of adherents to about 80% implying that these adherents see such usage as normal and acceptable. Furthermore, the same domain has also witnessed mercy killing (euthanasia), abortion, surrogate motherhood and the banks for

sperm and ovary. These are recently emerging values that have become accepted institutionalized and are norms to the society.

Furthermore, the moral domain of the present era engages in slight moral permissiveness. According to the Wikipedia, a permissive society also referred to as permissive culture is used to describe a society in which social norms become increasingly liberal. It is usually used pejoratively by cultural conservatives to attack what is seen as breakdown in traditional values. Doris (2010) noted that moral permissiveness is a mild way of using the following terms; immoral, depraved, licentious, dissolute etc. In other words a morally permissive culture or society is one that is immoral, depraved, licentious and dissolute. Such are the terms that properly describe the society of our time. This is because there are behaviours that have been accepted and are lived out as normal/alamode to the contemporary generations. It is without gain saying that this generation tolerates extortion, bribery, corruption, corner cutting, palm greasing, sorting, every person involved syndrome etc. It is a generation where passengers shout at the driver for refusing to give uniformed men (Army, police/road safety) bribe on the road. It is an era that schools collaborate with external examiners to copy into the hall during external examinations. Parents provide phones for their children to cheat at exams and so on to mention but a few. It is an era whereby the moral gauge has been loosened and stakeholder's complicity keeps mute. In the face of the decline and loose moral gauge one can assert that it is a generation permissive in morality.

Apart from the above, the moral dimension of the contemporary era has seen the bastardization of religious and spiritual values (Haidt, 2011). These are concretely manifested in the quest for materialism rampant among the worshipping community and have resulted to attachment in mundane gains. It also resulted in proliferation of churches which consequently have taken away God from the centre of worship and replaced it with honour and worship to the men of God and other idolatrous practices. It is a generation that fears man rather than respect God. It is a generation that has taken the glory due to God, and gave it to men. It is a generation comfortable with magic, charms, talisman/amulets, etc. The consequences of the use of these artificial medium is that a lot of the Christians of the contemporary time lives/are living under the influence of hypnosis, driven by fear, are materialistic and have lost touch of the religious reality. These practices have also resulted in the proliferation of churches and some other secretive practices contrary to faith.

Cultural Changes

Culture is defined as the arts and other manifestation of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively it includes the customs, languages, food, dance, dress code, skills, crafts etc. These have undergone very drastic and significant changes leaving very clear gap between what "use to be and what holds" consequently leaving a new normal. Concrete examples could be cited in the following areas, for example, a very high proportion of the contemporary generation are not proficient in their native dialect, have lost touch with the customs of the homeland such as male initiation into masquerade, age grades, dance steps and patterns. Apart from the above, it is a generation that the dress code has changed to almost nudity, the dance pattern and music is filled with mundane and erotic lyrics, food have moved from organic to artificial (synthetic), crafts and skills are lost to contemporary technology though with its wealth of advantages yet sales obnoxious practices such as pornography, cyber criminality and other wrong values.

Cognitive Changes

Cognition refers to conscious intellectual activity such as thinking, reasoning or remembering. Cognitive changes therefore could be seen as an adjustment in thinking, reasoning or remembering of an individual. The present generation have seen a great and significant shift in the above mentioned variables that defines cognition, thinking, reasoning and remembering. These strong changes are seen in the academic achievement disposition of the generation. Very strong deemphasizes has been noted in this regard. The consequences of the very strong deemphasise noted within this era is strongly manifested in the deviant behaviours and poor academic achievement replete in the system. This perhaps explains the high level of examination malpractices, certificate forgery, sorting and admission irregularities rampant in the system (Njoku; 2015, Ifeako & Akujieze, 2018). It is also remarked that the youths of nowadays seem to have lost touch with mental practices and calculations. The smart phones and calculators have stolen their mental proficiency. Many among them find it difficult to do mental work arithmetic inclusive. Most contemporary young adults will need a calculator or phone to find the product of 11 and 13 consequently reflecting poor cognitive ability and shallow thinking faculty. Among the implications of the cognitive laxity is that we have a generation

that deemphasized hard work and do not use their brain but believes in quick/easy and cheap gotten wealth as well as corner cutting.

Psychological/Emotional Changes

Psychology is the study of the human mind, and its conscious and unconscious activities. Because it is the study of the conscious and unconscious activities of the human person it studies human behaviour since all human behaviour has its origin from the conscious and unconscious actions of the human person. However, our concern here is the emotional behaviours of the present generation. According to Green (2013) emotion is an outward expression of an individual's inner feelings which are aroused by his behaviour or behaviour of others and events around him. Weiten and Lloyds (2007) defines emotion basically as stirred up or aroused state of being. It is something one is basically moved to do for instance we are moved to tears, laughter, to feel sad, angry, aroused, happy etc. concerning the emotional disposition of the contemporary young adults, a lot of significant shift has been observed in their emotional behaviour, Okudo (2022) remarked that the contemporary young adults are comfortable with pleasant actions and tend to withdraw from unpleasant actions even when they are positive and could lead to positive adjustment. For instance, some Nigerian adolescent may enjoy and desire more alcohol and parties at the expenses of very studious moments because of the pleasure inherent there-in. it is a generation known to be touchy in behaviours and dislike pain. This further explains the easy at which they adapt to deviance, disrespect and other cheating attitudes. It also gives credence to reason for which so many among them are giving to corner cutting and the get rich quick syndrome.

Given the above contexts, it will be without much ado to conclude that the young adults of the contemporary time are living in era bombarded by radical changes and these changes had great impact in their day to day living. Therefore, the need arises to form formators that will respond appropriately to these very conspicuous and significant palpable gaps seen in the society. Formators that will respond appropriately to change in values, attitudes, moral developments and cultural aberrations replete in the society.

Psychological and Social training of formators in Nigeria Context:

Formators are those charged with acculturation of basic values to the learners. They are among the vital agents of socialization. (Ugwuegede; 2006). Apart from the family which is the prime anchor of socialization. Formators (teachers) are next in importance as agent of socialization. Sanctruk (2021) defines socialization as the interactional process by which a persons' behaviour is modified to conform to the expectations held by the society.

It is Heraclitus who opined that the only permanent thing is change. Hence it is not out of order that the society is changing and because the society is changing, the agents of socialization (formators) must change in order to maintain consonance/equilibrium with the expected change. Given the above context, the need arises for a psychosocial disposition of formators, a disposition that will enhance competence to solve the generational need and perhaps ensure employability.

Concerning employability, it refers to the ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. Employability in simpler terms is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling job. It entails the ability to have a set of skills knowledge, understanding and personal attributes. The Wikipedia refers to employability as the attributes of a person that makes that person able to gain and main employment hence interest is ensuring that the competencies and careers which aid in understanding and mastery about the world of work are embedded in formation and acquired by formandees' in this regard Harvey (2015) defined employability as the ability of a graduate to get a satisfactory job. He stressed that it is the individual's perception of his or her possibilities of getting new, equal or better employment.

With respect to global competitiveness, it refers to the quality of both capital and human resource factors produced and supplied by a nation at the global market. It emphasizes on the quality of the output be it human or capital resources. Human resources is the amount of competent resourceful, skilled personnel available for employment especially in the global space. Consequently, the formators must be formed especial with respect to their psychosocial disposition.

Concerning the psychosocial disposition Okudo (2013) views psychosocial development as psychological and social aspects of adjustment that pertains to the interaction between social and psychological factors to

produce a positive change. Okudo (2021) defines psychological development as adaptive psychological responses of an individual to significant life changes. This definition is an agreement with Mosbys' Medical Dictionary (2009) which explains psychosocial development as social and psychological impact of socialization to produce a positive change in the individual, a change that could help the individual to be result-oriented, master a situation, produce positive outcome as well as experience harmony.

With respect to the psychological aspect of the formation, the training is expected to impact their self-esteem, image/concept of self as well as optimism. The social aspect of the training will equally impact on their social relation, social status and interpersonal relationship. Anchored on the above is a personality who is socially and psychologically balanced, dynamic receptive and who at the same time has the ability to impact the received values. Therefore implying that the formators will have balanced views of the apparent changes in the tide. They will neither be homophobia nor advocates, but will be counsellors. They will hold modest not extreme position of circumstantial realities facing youths, family and society. They will appreciate and hold modest views of new norm trends such as pornography, homosexuality, rampant separations between family and family education, marriage/gay unions, contraception, negative effect of technological advancement, surrogate motherhood and some other concerns raised by the conservative – Liberal dichotomy.

This understanding will not only deepen and widen the perceptual horizon of the formator in question with respect to the new norm trend but will also impact heavily on the individuals' sense of employability and Global competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

The need to form formators that will respond to the great and very profound changes replete in the society becomes indispensable. These new changes that are institutionalized in the society have radically transverse every facet of life of the present generation to mention (social, psychological, moral, cultural and cognitive) dimensions.

The social dimension has seen the redefinition of family and marriage. It is an era where relationship is object centred, isolated and individualistic. The moral context has seen a significant shift in Bioethics, moral permissiveness and spiritual/religious aberrations that could be described as materialistic, immoral, depraved, dissolute and licentious (Scanon, 2011). Concerning the cultural context, it is a generation that have lost touch with their identity, root and are comfortable with borrowed values. Strong deemphasizes on academic achievement has been remarked, these manifest itself in gross deviant behaviours such examination mal-practice, cheating, sorting etc. (Ifeakor and Akujieze; 2018). Concerning their emotional state, one observes a touchy, lazy and feebly minded generation afraid of pains of hard work.

The above therefore necessitates the need for formal socialization agents (Formators) that will respond appropriately to these challenging changes rampant in the society. Agents with holistic knowledge of the trend that have engulf the society and therefore have the necessary social and psychological disposition to handle the situation. Furthermore, the formation received by the formators will grant them a psychosocial (psychological and social disposition) that will enhance competency, empathy and high level skill/proficiency which will make them employable and compete globally. Hence, this paper titled, "forming contemporary formators for employability and global competitiveness in the new normal: a psychosocial perspective emphasizes the need for psychosocial and social disposition of those responsible for formation with respect to emerging changing trends in the society otherwise called the new normal. Such perfect understanding will grant them the disposition to treat issues following the ethical trend and norms of the time.

Implications of the Study

The new normal with its wealth of advantages have seen a radical shift in virtually every facet of human endeavour. The wealth of advantages cannot be over emphasized because through the new norm trends, communication, health, economy, social amenities that aid lives were improved. However, the same new norm trends have resulted in heavy corrosion of values as such that there is significant moral gap between "what use to be" and 'what holds now'. Doris (2010) described the moral context as immoral, dissolute, depraved and licentious. The implication of the above statement is that it could lead to negative and poor adjustment behaviours in the family, home, school and society consequently the inter-personal relationship remains highly mal-adaptive (Okudo, 2013). This high rate of dissolute and moral depravity permeates in

virtually all ramification of the human endeavour as was observed by the study to wit, the social context, the psychological, moral, cognitive and cultural domain of human endeavour.

Again there is a noticeable/palpable societal value tension between the adherents of the old way (conservatives) and the adherents of the new norms (liberals). Such tension result to phobias and labelling in the society.

Furthermore, the new norm generation have lost touch with cultural trends and values that identified them as a people. It is a generation suffering from identity crises.

Finally, some of these apparent gaps such as loss of identity, immoral and dissolute nature of the society and value deterioration may end up breeding a generation of incompetent young adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Proper formation of formators should be encouraged among formation centers
- ❖ A formation that will encourage the treatment of issues following the ethical trend of the time
- ❖ Proper social and psychological disposition of formators should be encouraged by stakeholders
- ❖ Conferences and seminars are to be organized to enhance proper understanding, advantages and disadvantages of every changing trend.
- ❖ International and local competitions are to be encouraged among the formators.

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