



CHILDREN'S PROSE AS THE MIRROR OF MODERN EDUCATIONAL CRISES IN ENIOLA F. FAGBEMI'S JAGBAJANTIS HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This investigation examines children's prose as a representation of the crises afflicting contemporary Nigerian education. It applies a close textual reading of Jagbajantis High School by Eniola F. Fagbemi for illustration. Children's literature functions as a socio-cultural documentation of societal realities and man's educational struggles in addition to entertainment and historical recordings. Anchored on sociological and critical literacy theories, the study objectives include probing into how the imaginary environment of Jagbajantis High School acts as a parody that highlights the downward trends in academic principles and pedagogical practices of Nigerian educational sector. It also aims at exposing the systemic ethical rot as well as the depletion of infrastructure inherent in the sector, by identifying and examining its commodification of education, examination malpractice and the emotional impact of stressed school environments on young learners. The narrative mirrors the common concerns about school security, teacher ineptitude, the conflict between modern and traditional pedagogies and the decline of critical thinking skills, turning these realities into a significant story for younger readers. The paper examines how the fictional children's setting replicates the real-world educational disparities, showing the critical need for structural transformation. It posits that the text is fundamental as diagnostic machinery for providing insights into the gap between educational policy and implementation. Conclusively, it acts as a poignant social commentary that insists on a re-evaluation of school settings to achieve a holistic development instead of mere intellectual harvests.

Keywords: Children's literature, educational crisis, *Jagbajantis High School*, Nigerian education, social commentary

INTRODUCTION

The spate of negligent infrastructure, moribund curriculum and pedagogical standards along with the erosion of ethical values within educational institutions has become perennial in the narratives regarding educational development in Africa. The educational settings in modern Nigeria like several developing nations are struggling with these signals of a complicated crisis. Ultimately, these concerns have often come under scrutiny from intellectual conversations of different empirical sociological scholars and policy critics (Assié-Lumumba 2006; Obanya 2010). Furthermore, evidence from several annual and periodic, official and international government-backed reports, including Global Education

Monitoring Report Team of UNESCO (2003), The World Bank Human Capital Report (World Bank, 2004) and Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Multidimensional Poverty Report (National Bureau of Statistics, 2005) confirm the **harsh, enduring deprivation of the modern Nigerian educational scheme**. These reports affirm that the modern reality of Nigerian education is far from being a mechanism for socio-economic progress. It is rather a narrative of serious underfunding, colossal out-of-school populace and ruthless spell of teaming poverty-driven masses.

In its contributions to these societal conversations, literature, particularly children's prose acts as a distinctive reflection of the human cost of these inept disappointments on the

consciousness of younger generation. Hence, it has become urgent to re-validate the role of children's literature in the crusade for the educational renaissance. This study aims at looking at the place of children's literature beyond the educational apparatus for leisure; it is rather conceived children's literary art as a dominant socio-cultural document that embodies the ethical, educational and social realities of every human generation. Consequently in this article, Eniola F. Fagbemi's *Jagbajantis High School* (2004) is read as a touching artistic representation of contemporary educational dilemma. It is a narrative that consciously generates an express critique on the chaotic milieu that characterises many existing schools in current Nigerian world. With its suitable conceptual title "Jagbajantis", which implies a situation of derangement, disorder, perplexity or all-round mismanagement, the text serves as an emblem of the Nigerian school structure, thus, revealing the totally messy crossroads of dysfunctional management, learner disorderliness and public anxieties.

The need for this study is apparent. Fagbemi's *Jagbajantis High School* was first published in 2004, with the artist presenting a litany of problems affecting the educational sector in Nigerian society. This exposition is corroborated by periodic reports by organs of World Bank, UNESCO, the African Union and several local and international bodies. The abysmal systemic deficit in Nigerian education is revealed by UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2003). This report exposes an endemic increase in out-of-school children arising from systemic exclusion. The crisis is linked to many unfavourable systemic factors like dislodgment, worsening security circumstances along with harsh sectional infrastructure breaches. **Nigeria, according to statistics from the report, has approximately 20 million out-of-school children**, which accounts for about 15% of the entire global total of uneducated youth. The report states, further, that Nigeria embodies the highest concentration of out-of-school crisis in African. Most of these problems did not originate in 2004. However, weighing the traumatic impact from the perspective of the narrative, it is quite disheartening and an intense paradox, that **problems complained about in 2004 by the artist are the same problems observed today**. These predicaments have not only remained intact, but have considerably advanced in complexity. Weighing **some educational problems of Nigeria that were visible in 2004 as shown in** the landmark *National Policy on Education* along with its updates as at **present-day educational conditions**, many different gaps are observed, exposing complicating variables along with soaring systemic dilemmas.

Through an interface of wit, satire, dramatic characterisation and appropriate but distressing scenery, the artist goes beyond simple storytelling to relate the impacts of a complete collapse of educational structures on character formation and academic aptitude. The investigation discusses children's prose as an analysis of communal rot as well as a medium for conversation on educational reform through the scrutiny of stylistic devices, thematic pre-occupations and vitality of characterisation. It reveals that the selected text parodies

Nigerian educational system by showcasing its classroom as a compelling emblem of a society in desperate need of educational and ethical rehabilitation.

Purpose of the Study

The paper aims at critically exploring the text as a reflection of contemporary educational challenges. However, the specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. **identify the specific contemporary educational crises** depicted within the selected text;
- ii. **scrutinise the issues of learner psychology and ethical rot** among learners as an express effect of a moribund learning environment;
- iii. **examine role of characterisation and plot** in exaggerating the conflict between pedagogical codes and the veracity of the Nigerian school scheme.
- iv. probe into the role of **stylistic devices** in reflecting the rot of educational policy implementation and the need for reforms.

Theoretical Framework

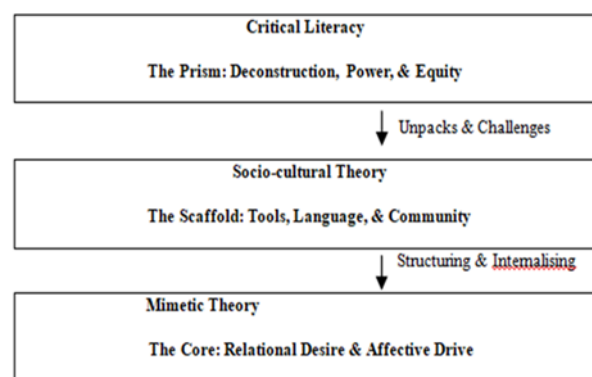
The reading relies on a critical prototype of an **Eclectic Sociological and Critical Technique**. This is not a single monolithic concept but rather an approach that spans diverse concepts and operations agreeable to several prominent sociologists. These experts champion the blending of diverse methods (eclecticism) towards the deconstruction of supremacy and systemic frameworks (critical technique). Particularly, the **Eclectic Sociological and Critical Technique** uses a **three-fold composite** framework involving **Mimetic Theory, Critical Literacy, and Socio-cultural Theory**. Some of prominent proponents include Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein (2010), who proposed and pioneered **analytic eclecticism** in political and social sciences. They opine that scholars should practically merge diverse research structures in order to solve intricate real-world difficulties as adherence to one paradigm such as structuralism or cultural codes may not work in certain situations. Another scholar is Robert K. Merton (1981) whose work is very fundamental in structural functionalism. He passionately advocated for **theoretical pluralism** in sociology, assuming that a closely controlled, eclectic blending of multiple theoretical viewpoints was the most mature condition for sound sociological investigation. Other theorists include C. Wright Mills (1959) who coined term, **sociological imagination**, linking empirical sociology with radical social critique; Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and other outstanding modern theorists who dynamically defended eclecticism; and the Frankfurt School who are the ultimate proponents of Critical Theory. They were highly eclectic in terms of methodology, blending Marxist economics, Freudian psychoanalysis and German philosophy in addressing modern culture and power codes.

This joint methodology permits the exploration of the text not as a mere imaginary construct but as a "mirror" of real-world concerns. First, Mimetic Theory also referred to as Reflectionism or Reflection Theory among **Marxist literary**

critics. These scholars projected the traditional **mimetic theory of art** (the idea that art imitates reality) as a socio-economic framework. The Hungarian philosopher and literary critic, Georg Lukacs (1923/1971), is known for popularising Reflectionism as a critical method states that literature reflects the social realities of its times. Here, it is applied to validate the analysis *Jagbajantis High School* (2004) as a representation of educational concerns in Nigeria contemporary milieu. These concerns range from poor instructional quality to conscious educational management, from infrastructural rot to paucity of necessary learning materials, from examination malpractice to parental abdication of home ethical foundational tasks, and so forth. Ultimately, the narrative is seen as an imaginative illustration of the disjointed and ridiculous (“Jagbajantis”) quality of the educational sector. Second, Critical Literacy Theory supports the investigation in the examination of the text, stressing the comprehension of influential social dynamics, justice as well as the rationale behind the stories narrated. This theory would show selected text as a critique on the power structure of the educational scheme involving school management, teacher-pupil relationships and curriculum relevance. It goes further than the plot to investigate the significant educational disaster. Third, Socio-cultural Theory (Vygotskian Approach 1978), is a theory that speculates that learning and development are rooted in socio-cultural and historical milieu. It scrutinises educational disasters seen as the products of the school environment. This environment is viewed as a society with precise cultural standards such as cheating and teacher impunity, and not a mere setting. It avows that every environment creates its own culture. It also benefits on Emily Style’s (1988) “**Windows and Mirrors**” and R. S. Bishop’s (1990) “sliding glass doors” concepts employed by H. Clingan (2020). Seeing the text as a mirror entails verifying how *Jagbajantis High School* expressly reflects real-world Nigerian educational disasters, divulging collapsed infrastructure, paucity of learning materials, examination malpractice, etc. On the other hand, perceiving the text as a window deploys critical perspectives on teacher competence, student experiences and policy disappointments, which the text presents to the reader.. The reader’s response to the crises benefits from Louise Rosenblatt (1978) Transactional Reader-Response.

It is vital to sharpen the theoretical framework of the study by providing and stressing the conceptual model that shows how Mimetic Theory, Critical Literacy, and Socio-cultural Theory operate differently yet balance each other in harmonising human development and socialisation. The “**Tri-Layered Framework of Meaning-Making**” propagated by the psychologist Dan P. McAdams (1995), with subsequent developments with Jennifer L. Pals (2006) is adopted for the study. These frameworks operate in sequence, explaining **why** an action is taken (Motivation), **how** the tools to think are constructed (Mechanism), and **what** hidden structures regulate man’s (Critique).

The Conceptual Model: The Core, The Scaffold, and The Prism



i. The Core: Mimetic Theory (The Sub-Structural Driver)

This aspect centres on human aspiration, imitation, and motivational origins. It complements by offering the natural and mental glow. Motivation is usually taken for granted by traditional learning and literacy theories. Mimetic Theory shows **why** a human turns towards a definite object, book or authority figure, owing to the fact that they are imitating the desire of a valued model. This situates the self in relational, pre-verbal simulation before official systems are ever discovered.

ii. The Scaffold: Socio-cultural Theory (The Structural Mechanism)

This aspect involves language acquisition, cultural negotiation and social relations, for instance, what does this mean: Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). While Mimetic Theory exposes the *drive* to imitate, Socio-cultural Theory exposes the *system* through which that drive is structured. As soon as a child’s mimetic eye visualises a model, they enter “zones of proximal development”. Society provides the linguistic platforms or scaffolds and cultural devices like signs, books or traditions which shifts the unrefined, explosive mimetic energy to ordered, higher-order cognitive purpose.

iii. The Prism: Critical Literacy (The Super-Structural Evaluator)

This aspect dwells on power dynamics, marginalisation, ideology and agency. The Socio-cultural Theory generates the devices to comprehend the world while Mimetic Theory exposes man’s hidden psychic desirability to it. However, Critical Literacy aids humans in interrogating the duo, hence, it becomes the analytical prism of man. It asks so many questions: *Who is being oppressed by the central narrative of the work? Whose desires are being prioritised in this narrative?* The social status quo remains unchallenged without Critical Literacy. This means that Socio-cultural platforms would remain a tyrannical, mimetic cycles of rivalries and mob mindsets.

In synthesising the theories, **Mimetic Theory** exposes the fundamental anxiety: learners copy the lifestyles, values, aesthetics and trends of models since they search for identity and corroboration. On another plain, **Socio-cultural Theory** anchors on the mechanisms as learners pick on the “language” of digital society, employing precise algorithmic tools, memes

and community relations to partake. The adolescent learners are aided by **Critical Literacy**, offering them the distance to distinguish how policies maneuver mimetic greed for profit. Thus, **Critical Literacy** persuades them to rebuff unrealistic communal codes. In the long run, this conceptual model is will help in depicting the inclusive picture of human meaning-making from its core internal drive through communal platforms to universal autonomy.

Review of Relevant Literature

Obtainable scholarship on children's literature on the Nigerian literary landscape covers a wide range of historical evolutionary periods, thematic investigations of race and gender class representations, socio-cultural values along with the pedagogical functionality of local oral conventions. Universally, literary historians regularly trace the inception of the genre to some pre-colonial oral pedigrees, stressing that folktales, lullabies, riddles, ballads, among other pre-colonial oral forms, functioned as the earliest instructive device for ethical upbringing in different societies. Corroborating this notion, scholars on Nigerian children's literature and indigenous oral traditions illustrate how pre-colonial verbal arts, like folktales, lullabies, riddles and tongue-twisting puzzles and puns excelled as the most advanced among informal educational systems. These genres served as major moralistic devices for socialisation, character development, in addition to spreading societal prospects prior to the introduction of formal Western education.

Major investigations into Igbo orature, especially proverbs, myths, folklore and legends, demonstrate that children's education in ancient times, was tied to different methods and practices involving communal participatory norms. Studies have shown that most pre-Colonial and Colonial era riddles and tales were rendered in memorable sessions after supper as instructional instruments for children's intellectual and ethical training. These integrated notions of integrity, humility, bravery, respect for elders among others. Equally, inquiries into Yorùbá and other ethnic groups' oral arts confirm that minor genres like tongue twisters, lullabies and game poetry launched children to linguistic shades that integrated potential manners. Particularly, most analysis relating to *iwà rere* or good character, reveal that evening folktale gatherings served in the society for the timely ethical training of younger generation. Tales on animal prototypes like "The greedy tortoise versus the hot-tempered lion" were employed in explaining the vital implication of deceit, greed or gullibility.

On the whole, a vast research works exists on the general state of Nigerian education (Ogunode, 2020; UNESCO reports) in addition to the general worth of children's literature. However, few studies have exclusively analysed how modern prose like *Jagbajantis High School functions* as an ample mirror of these crises. Existing literature mainly focuses on the pedagogical value of literature or the policy aspects of educational failure, but not deeply the narrative representation of this chaos in specific, modern Nigerian literary texts. Apart from filling this inherent gap, this reading seeks to classify

specific scenes of teacher absenteeism, poor infrastructure, or exam malpractice in *Jagbajantis High School*.

Reporting on this educational dilemma in Nigeria, the World Bank Human Capital Report (2022) exposes the prevalence of poor foundational skills, failing learning principles and low future economic productivity. Based on a cumulative learning poverty data, **88% of Nigerian children aged 10 are unable to read or comprehend a simple text or story**. The effect is that Nigeria's Human Capital Index (HCI) score has been degraded to a dismal **0.34**, ranking the country 152nd out of 157 nations. The severity of the educational deficit is enormous, implying that a child born in Nigeria today can only expect to reach 34% of their prospective maximum economic output as an adult owing to the intense shortage inherent in the educational structure. Moreover, Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Multidimensional Poverty Report (2022) confirms the claim of low quality of Nigeria educational practices. It finds systemic correlations between inadequate educational infrastructure and localised multi-layered poverty. Furthermore, the report exposes the complicating denigrating of realities across Nigeria's geographical zones. Stressing the fact that **66% of children in Northern Nigeria are not attending formal school**, the report underscores a unique non-existence of formal educational value. It asserts that Nigerians without formal education experience account for a poverty rate of **79.5%**, showing that the deteriorating modern structure aggressively worsens national socio-economic inequality. The forgoing reports from global bodies on claims concerning the rot in modern Nigerian educational system are fully verifiable. Recent scholarly literatures also confirm the correlations between these official reports, or policy documents fictional assumptions and events (Assié-Lumumba 2006; Obanya 2010).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, which relies on an analysis of the selected novella, *Jagbajantis High School* by Fagbemi (2004). This involves a close reading and interpretation of the said text which serves as the primary source of data. The close-reading procedure involves a multi-step method of deep, active analysis where the researcher reads specific passages on educational crisis several times to uncover how an author's specific word choice, construction, and literary devices generate meaning. The first step involves reading for comprehension; that is, reading these passages to grasp literal meaning, noting major arguments, setting and storyline. Here, reading is also done to define unfamiliar or confusing terms. The next step entails a purposeful reading for annotation as well as analysis. Here, the researcher reads to identify specific technical details, tonal transformations, recurring words or phrases, literary or allegorical devices like images, metaphors or irony that capture issues related to educational crises and to verify the author's rationale for word choice, et cetera.

The criterion for selecting this novella is the buoyancy of its textual evidence to **degradation of the educational scheme**

in **modern Nigerian from all facets. This manifests in form of** massive negligent or breaches in infrastructure, the prevalence of moribund curriculum, serious underfunding, unmanaged and worsening security circumstances, as well as many other abysmal systemic educational deficits. All these have dovetailed into a perennial dilemma, leading to human dislodgement and colossal out-of-school populace and ruthless spell of teaming poverty-driven masses. There are also the crossroads of dysfunctional management and inept pedagogical standards that have launched the educational settings into struggling with the signals of a complicated crisis. The erosion of ethical values within educational institutions marked with staff and learner disorderliness, exposing the colossal human cost of these inept disappointments on the consciousness of younger generation. The chaotic milieu of massive derangement, disorder and perplexity of this all-round mismanagement is felt in the fictional society of the narrative, being marked in public anxieties of the real-world.

Hence, the abundant location of the above indicated features in the narrative content is the rationale for selecting the text. However, each extract from the novel should be brief enough to allow for composite, thorough re-readings and analysis. Close reading entails rich layers of meaning and deep analysis. The chosen text does not over-stretch the researcher's abilities since the novella uses simple and straightforward language. The characters exhibit the 'Jagbajantis' or chaotic tendencies of staff and learners in the real-world Nigerian society. They represent vital arguments of the novella.

The analysis reflects an examination of the text, showing how it mirrors cultural shifts in the real-world, its general malfunction and psychological impacts within the school system. Among other things, the analysis involves pedagogical disaster and the curriculum deficit. This is about *what* is being taught and *how* it is being taught, contrasting formal educational goals with the chaotic reality of "Jagbajantis" (a Yoruba-derived slang term implying confusion, nonsense, or low quality). There is also the concern institutional and systemic decay, involving the administrative, structural and physical failures of the school system as depicted in the text. Physical infrastructure entails the components of the school's physical environment such as laboratory rooms and equipment, classrooms, learning materials and other facilities, and how they reflect state or personal neglect. The decline in teaching standards involves the conduct of school authorities and management. Is there any sign of bribery, commercialisation over actual learning? Are teachers motivated, qualified and do they engage in corrupt practices, like favoritism or absenteeism?

The interpretation process will reflect the conceptual framework versus contextualisation, ensuring an establishment of central definitions and real-world parallels that are vital to this study. The premise on which study is built is that children's literature is more than an amusement galore. It is a sociological tool frequently simplifying complex societal issues to expose raw truths. The term "crisis" in the modern

context is relevant to the setting of the text, defining a typical infrastructural decay, systemic corruption, moral decadence, falling standards, exam malpractice, bribery and the commercialisation of education. The interpretation process, therefore involves looking at the educational system through characterisation, particularly, how student-characters exhibit indiscipline, cultism and exam; how teachers dependency show they are unqualified, underpaid, unmotivated, and become complicit in malpractice. The setting involving the physical and social environment of the school is examined to show broader societal decay in form of infrastructural decay, a chaotic atmosphere rather than an academic one. There are other analytical components thematic concerns showing institutional failures linked to management or the government, curriculum disconnect as well as ethical rot shown by the normalization of bribery, dishonesty or cutting corners within the school ecosystem.

ANALYSIS OF MODERN EDUCATIONAL CRISES IN THE SELECTED TEXT

In *Jagbajantis High School*, Eniola F. Fagbemi does not present a children's story for mere entertainment. The narrative is rather a scathing social commentary disguised as a novel. Through its humorous lens, the text portrays the degradation of the academic environment, changing the school into a "Jagbajantis" chaotic theatre. This analysis highlights how the selected prose text reflects modern educational crises, particularly the dysfunctional state of contemporary, Nigerian/African educational system. As the name goes, *Jagbajantis* implies *rubbish*. A term connoting chaos, confusion and absurdity, it is a tag for today's society, world-wide and particularly African, in a state of chaos. This is epitomised by the "phlegm" which Kobaje (a student) used deliberately to pollute the food which Yakub (a teacher) sent her to buy for him (p. 28). Throughout the narrative, anarchy has an upper hand in the operations of the characters. This is true whether it is case of the recalcitrant Mrs. Soden, the history teacher, notorious for being absent to classes (p. 16); or, it is the Examination 'Expo' distribution scene between Bode (a student) and Khadija the shameless 'distributor' and one of his classmates, (p. 53); or, in the case of the *Jagbajantis* under-aged boy, a counselee of Mr. Okonkwo (a teacher) or the girl he pregnant who also disclosed being driven "away from home. I've been sleeping under the bridge for a few days now" (p. 68). These extracts from the text touch on the study objective on the scrutiny of **the issues of learner psychology and ethical rot** among learners as an express effect of a moribund learning environment.

This is agreeably what has been presented in the tiny prose work, *Jagbajantis High School* by Fagbemi. Used to describe the representative school, it captures a systemic educational tradition that is known for infrastructural decay, teacher apathy, examination malpractice and several other forms of moral debauchery. An extremely sarcastic children's literary work, the novella has an under-tone of satire, exposing the unserious attitudes of both students and teachers towards their

educational tasks. It equally reflects on the poor organisation of the school, which stands as a mockery of teaching and learning in the modern day setting. In the novella, the students of the school do not abide with the rules and regulations of the school. They do not conduct themselves well. They neither respect their teachers nor, take to corrections of any kind. They are simply “Jagbajantic” in principle and practice.

The novella, furthermore, records the rising spate of corruption among staff and students of the school, showing the widespread nature of social rot. Teachers are portrayed as a group who has lost their pedagogical focus. They engage more in all manners of extortion. Some of them literally sell marks to their students. Some of the male teachers are culpable in these acts. This shows the **ethical collapse of the teaching profession**, suggesting that educators, who should be the architects of moral character, are instead agents of corruption. They take advantage of female students, engaging in sexual relationship with them. A case in point is the Vice Principal dating Yinka an attractive girl in JSS 2. Sometimes, he came into the classroom to look for her pretending she was his niece:

“Is Yinka in school?” Mr. Akinola asks the class captain. Nkechi.

“Yes, sir. There she is,” she points at her in a corner where her shapely head is lowered moodily.

“Yinka,” Akin cocks an eye at her and breaks into a seductive smile. (p. 19)

The rising spate of cultism and rampant insecurity among especially among the students is another dilemma that faced the educational sector and the wider society as shown in the narrative. The text highlights the encroachment of cultism and violence, with older students intimidating juniors and disrupting the academic atmosphere. Students now channel their efforts towards violent activities, blood-letting, robbery, all sorts of mischievous acts, including rape and having forceful and undue relationship with the opposite sex. These hideous attitudes have become the norm in most public schools. The reading affirms that the text is terse but blunt commentary on the failures of modern educational industry. Students and staff regularly engage in quarreling, gossiping, et cetera. The case of Fatima and Sule demonstrates this point: “You, Sule, should be ashamed of yourself. Can you tell your mother at home to sweep Eh? Dirty thing” (p. 3). Students frequently come to school unkempt and dirty. One junior student is accosted for wearing a dirty uniform to school: “Come here, you! Why are you as dirty as this? Mr. Fate, the English teacher pints a cane at a fulsome stain on a junior student shirt” (p. 7).

Indeed, *Jagbajantis High School* portrays the average school as a home of corruption, seeing it as the breeding ground for people with deviant behavior. The shocking breakdown in moral discipline now begins from a system that meant a place moral probity. In other words, the school has transformed from being a sanctuary of learning into a den of robbers, exposing the crisis of students’ insecurity and safety. The

narrative also relates how students disrespect and plan evil against their teachers. This is seen in the incidence where Yakub who sent Kobaje on errands to buy her food. She got the food but polluted it with phlegm: “Is this not phlegm I’m seeing in the food?” (p.. 28).

Students have lost interest in the educational system and would rather prefer street trading to learning. Some students will tell lies in order to avoid exercise on the assembly ground: like Patou lied to the health prefect only for her to steal her classmate’s food: “‘What’s happening here?’ The Health Prefect runs an eye over her./‘Ma?’ She drops the food flask slowly and begins to fidget.” Moreover, the reading culture in students has deteriorated. They prefer engaging in examination malpractice in order to pass; if a student even wants to be serious, the classmates look down upon him. For instance, Bode who wanted to revise his books before the time of government examination commences:

“Bode: ... Ahh-Ahh! Mr. Bookworm. Look at yourself you are now a yard of pum.”

“Look, Bode, if you want the expo, I can give it to you” says Khadija one of his classmates. (p. 53)

This indicates that students in the modern day society are at liberty to do anything humanly possible to collect examination questions in secret. This is either achieved by sleeping around or paying huge amount of money. However, they risk their lives to avoid being caught in the examination hall. The teachers are rude and rain insult on them when they ask for clarifications during examinations. The following case of Sultan who was confused on the name to write first on his examination booklet illustrates this:

“Excuse me, ma. Em-er- Do I write my father’s name first?” Sultan, in J.S 1. asks Mrs. Adrien.

“No oh. Write your grandmother’s name. Is this the first time you’ll write an exam here? When you wrote it last term, was it your ancestor’s name you wrote? Was it not your surname you wrote first? Ehm? Slow learner.” she hisses and walks off the spot. (p. 57)

With this evidence, it is clear that characterisation and plot play vital roles in exaggerating the conflict between pedagogical codes and the veracity of the Nigerian school scheme, which is one of the study objectives.

One other clear indicator of the degradation of the school’s academic environment is shown by its decayed physical infrastructure. The text paints a picture of school buildings with leaking roofs, broken furniture and over-grown surroundings. This illustrates the spate of **negligence afflicting public schools, highlighting poor educational funding and inadequate maintenance**. Here, the learning environment becomes the metaphor for intellectual decay. This is evident to the role of **stylistic devices** in reflecting the rot of educational policy implementation and the need for reforms, which is one vital purpose of this investigation. Moreover, The description of the classrooms acts as a symbolic representation of the devaluation of education,

showing that the physical space no longer inspires learning. Again, apart from dilapidated physical infrastructure, most public schools lack basic running water, reliable electricity, functional laboratories or textbooks. The text exposes the urgent need for constructing and renovating thousands of basic classrooms, supplying school furniture to innumerable schools. Furthermore, most **public primary schools lack access to computers or digital assets for contemporary technological learning.** This also reveals that adequate facilities have not been in place. This signifies the reduction of chances for effective learning. Added to this, is that students damage school facilities. The few available classrooms are too stuffy; therefore, learning cannot effectively take place.

Both students and teachers always have a vicious disposition towards everything owned by the government. They do not appreciate the basic facilities provided them. They scribble or write rubbish on the school walls, table and destroy the toilet facilities, chairs and various equipment. They do not know how to manage things. The text also exposes how students litter the school environment with refuse rather than cleaning and tidying up such. They keep vandalising and stealing school properties. These habits generally contribute to the dilemma facing the educational institution. Hence, the narrative demonstrates that students conduct themselves badly in the school environment and premises. Most of them are careless when it comes to the maintenance of school facilities. They simply adopt the 'I don't care attitude' or the non-challant attitude towards school properties.

There is also a general abuse of educational opportunity among teachers and students. They fail to apply themselves to the right and natural use of instruction and its innovations, showing their abject loss of fundamental interest in the educational industry. Their chaotic or "Jagbantiic" attitudes towards instruction manifest in the impossibility of attaining effective training. Teaching of a child pertaining to skills in various aspects of life becomes ineffectual in Jagbajantis society of Nigeria, where education is taken for granted. Both students and teachers, including other non-teaching staff deliberately indulge in absenteeism and lateness to the school. Teachers do not teach as at when due. On the part of students, they lack interest in education and pay little or no attention to learning, forgetting the saying that knowledge is power. Hence, both embrace the culture of examination malpractice, signifying the abasing rationalisation of cheating through "microchips" (small papers) or paying for results. This obsession for the acquisition of paper certificate rather than skills remains the bane for modern education. The narrative is hence a sarcastic mirror of the **devaluation of meritocracy**, showing how competence is consciously swapped with "credentialism" coloured by mediocrity.

Apart from parental complicity in the devaluation of examination standards, they are ridiculed in the text due to their abdication of their natural role in child training. The narrative exposes the general erosion of parental responsibility in contemporary Nigerian society. Parents are sarcastically portrayed as being either too busy to train their

children or wards, or complicit in their reliance on unethical "miracle centres" that generate false results. Parents are blame for not adequately investing in the education of their children. Some parents and guardians equally maltreat their wards or children. Invariably, most of them are ignorant of the saying goes charity begins at home. They are oblivious that their first duty towards their wards or children is to generate adequate care for them. The novella exposes how most parents have abdicated this responsibility to cater for, instruct and guild their wards towards the right path in life. Hence, majority of these parents leave this responsibility for the teachers at school. Teachers are expected to do everything in the training of every child.

In the text, the case of Timothy is a demonstration of the abdication of parental duties. The boy barely eats thrice a day, but had a girl friend, at school, who is already pregnant and needs urgent counseling from Mr. Okonkwo. Instead of facing his studies, he took a wrong step early in his life: "Sir, what do I do? My father must not know about it," he cries his eyes out to Mr. Okonkwo (p. 66). This confirms that most parents are non-challant and negligent. Most of them are unduly difficult. This makes their children go wayward and become unnecessarily diverted early in life. Moreover, the young girl who told Mr. Okonkwo the counselor how her mother sent her away is another case of parental irresponsibility: "She drove me away from home. I've been sleeping under the bridge for a few days now," she says grievously hurt by the situation" (p. 68). Among several other quotations, this justifies **the study objective on dissecting learner psychology and ethical rot** among learners as an express effect of a moribund learning environment

The text mirrors the **mental health crisis in the educational system.** There is the apprehensive pressure to thrive in a failing system which fractures the psyche of the learner. That is why at the end of the term the academic performance of most students is poor. However, instead of listening and paying attention to their teachers' advice, they become lousy and despise whoever is disturbing their fun. This is seen when the Vice Principal was giving his speech. Folusho is upset:

"Eh-eh! What kind of principal is this? Is this a party or a campaign? The party will end! Will it end on his endless speech? O pari," Folusho says quietly to his classmate sitting beside him.

Students always misbehave in the school premises. This reflects the way in which students in our society especially in the public school misbehave. They conduct themselves badly, going to school very late. This seems to be a common phenomenon. All over the place, you see students still dragging their feet even at 9am on their way to school. They even feel unconcerned. They appear in shoddy outfits and behave in disarray causing nuisance in the society. As evident from the above quotation, they apply a vulgar language disdaining and disrespecting their teachers and seniors.

One other difficulty that faced the educational sector and the wider society is the shortage of teachers and extreme overcrowding of students in the classroom, especially in the public

schools. The text highlights the intimidating factor of high population in the school which does not help matters. In most schools, teachers are unable to manage their classes owing to high ratio of students to the teachers. With a population of 100 to 150 students, one teacher has a “Jagbajantic” situation as exposed by the narrative. In such a situation, there would be so many lapses on the part of the teacher. It is unlikely that there would not be adequate motivation. It is also noticed in the text that the teaching profession is relegated to the background, being looked down upon. With a high population, students are often idle and not occupied with any meaningful task, while teachers exhibit non-challant attitude. A good case in point is that of Mrs. Soden, the history teacher, who is ever absent to class. When she is even informed about her class period, she gets angry, saying: “Wo don’t disturb me - don’t just come and disturb me again! Even ... I come to your class to teach you, will there be any improvement?” (p. 16).

Sometimes, the whole day is spent at school doing little or nothing. Therefore, they channel their minds to negative attitude. This misappropriation teaching principles creates further disaffection in learners. As a result idleness, the students are unyielding and turned the classroom into a market place, fighting, playing, gossiping, et cetera. This study points out that the novella is a blunt but humorous indictment of the violation of students’ right to quality education. Both the home and the school are sources of social maladjustment. Not relating to life in a calm and organised friendly environment, students are unable to adjust to changes and dictates of daily life. The incidences of inadequate and poor facility in the system make them unable to learn in the school environment. They find themselves in unfriendly circumstances of the dilapidated classrooms with cracked walls and roofs. Moreover, there are no laboratories for experiment and no toilet facilities, et cetera. Since, the society is absolutely corrupt, children find it difficult to adjust to the hazy demands of social changes.

The narrative also underlines the dilemma of misappropriation of funds meant for libraries and laboratories, leading to a lack of teaching aids. This underscores institution-based mismanagement of educational resources, meaning that resources are frequently diverted, leaving learning to be done with no practical knowledge. Due to this neglect in the educational system, most teachers are frustrated and aggressive to their students. Hence, after closing hours, instead of going home to do their assignments, most students especially the boys, preferred playing, throwing caution to the wind in order to play football late into the evening. In the modern day setting, most students also prefer partying and enjoying themselves to studying and reading their books. This is captured by the end of year party in *Jagbajantis High School*. Here, Nkechi whose report card showed that she had the poorest result in the whole school wriggles her tiny waist vigorously to the music and holds her head with both arms, following the recent fashion of dancing (p. 70).

In the long run, the collapse of the great *Jagbajantis High School* is inevitable with the spate of greed and impunity. The

actions and inactions of different stakeholders of educational progress in the society are demonstrated in the lives of students. The case of Fatima and Sule who engage in serious engage in quarrelling and gossiping demonstrates this point: “You, Sule, should be ashamed of yourself. Can you tell your mother at home to sweep Eh? Dirty thing” (p. 3). It is shown in students’ habits of coming to school unkempt and dirty. This is another **proof of the vital roles played by characterisation and plot** in exaggerating the conflict between pedagogical codes and the veracity of the Nigerian school scheme, which is an objective of this study. There is the case of the junior student who wore a dirty uniform to school but was accosted: “Come here, you! Why are you as dirty as this?” “Mr. Fate, the English teacher pints a cane at a fulsome stain on a junior student shirt” (p. 7). Teachers also go on “strike” action and this marks the end of widespread mismanagement of the institution of learning. The school is emblematic of the decline and decay apparent in modern day educational setting where negligence on the part of the students, parents, teachers and government’s insensitivity lead to systemic degradation and destruction. All these

To reflect modern educational crises Fagbemi’s *Jagbajantis High School* employs simple and straight-forward style. The author uses present continuous tense instead of past tense, showing the continuous nature of the dilemma. In certain segments of the narrative, Pidgin English and some forms of abusive or vulgar language feature prominently to indicate as a character or behavioural marker for students and teachers. In some other places, characters code-switch or code-mix. English is substituted for vernacular, stressing the intersection of the Yoruba language and English. All these illustrate the role of **stylistic devices** in reflecting the rot of educational structure and the need for reforms. Furthermore, the application of symbolism is pivotal in the novella. The title, *Jagbajantis High School*, is a loaded representation of a nation’s disorganised educational system.

Conclusion

Jagbajantis High School is a poignant mirror of the crises facing modern education. This study has revealed that novella surpasses a mere amusement. It is a poignant, philosophical representation of modern educational tragedies through the application of imaginary Nigerian landscape. Through satiric description the author exposes infrastructural decay, the collapse of school regulations and immoral practices. By means of a close textual analysis, this reading concludes that the novella acts as an imperative alert on systemic reform.

The lack of basic infrastructure, poor reading environment in the school, inadequate medical facilities, inadequate and outdated laboratory (as shown in the case of Ada and Molue, who complain of the type of medical treatment - a large bandage and a chalky paracetamol), social irresponsibility - the love affair between the Vice Principal, Mr. Akinolu and Yinka, the female student, and the involvement of teachers in examination malpractices, all these truly highlight the weighty nature of the corruption in the society, particularly among the leaders. The final breakdown and collapse of the

Jagbajantis High School signifies the fallen standard of education in our society which, thus, marks the end of the prevalent misappropriation in our educational system.

Among other things, findings from this study disclose that the narrative exploits thematic plot development along with fictional characterisation to denounce systemic fragmentation, underscoring the deterioration of learner's confidence amid the dearth of infrastructural support. One major contribution of this study, therefore, is its expositions of the relatedness of the imagined, disorganised formal educational setting in this prose work and the actual questions of the moribund educational codes, diminishing infrastructure and the irresponsible commodification of learning. Picking the school as an emblem of educational unrest shows novella as a bibliotherapy code that exposes the imperative call for a change to education for improvement rather than education as a dilemma as it appears in contemporary human narrative.

In the long run, this study further affirms that *Jagbajantis High School* is pre-eminently a reflection of educational predicaments. It is of a binary functionality. This means that it functions first as a narrative exhibiting pressing realities of communal dilemmas; and second, at the same time it serve in pushing for critical thinking in young readers about the need for quality and responsibility. With its deep concern about pedagogical matters and poor infrastructural issues, the text is vital for policy makers and educators as a clarion call to refurbish the foundational reliability of the educational structure.

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