

# The Effects of Abraham Maslow's theory on the Nigerian Educational System

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**Abstract:** *Modern educational planners and managers need to be equipped and guided by some relevant management theories and applicable principles to successfully manage the modern technological complex educational enterprise. They, therefore, do not need to rely on experience to be relevant. Parents and other stakeholders are making profound remand and expectations on educational system to produce a well balanced educated citizen. Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) in 1959, developed a theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs. This theory has not been explored and developed by Nigerian Educational Administrators and Planners. If effectively harnessed and harvested, Maslow's Theory would solve the educational needs of Nigerian Educational System and put it on higher pedestal. From the foregoing, this author examined Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how this theory would help to address the multi-faceted challenges confronting our educational needs. This paper also examines the inherent benefits of Maslow's Theory and proffers solutions on the challenges of Nigeria's educational system.*

**Key words:** *Abraham Maslow Theory, Needs, Educational System*

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## Introduction

Every country evolves an educational system she taught would benefit the child, the community and help to move the country forward, technologically, economically and socially. In doing this, she designs a workable and functional educational system that would meet the expectations of the stakeholders – parents and the learners. The type of any educational system designed by any country must take into cognizance the cultural and diverse tradition peculiar to that society.

Nigeria as a developing country has designed her educational system, using the platform of the National Policy on Education (NPE) as the bible for all educational system in Nigeria. Before the Nigerian policy on education was designed in 1981, our educational system was dangling from American educational system to British educational system. Till date, both the National Policy on Education and other previous educational policies had not yet taken our educational system to the promised land. Perhaps due to the neglect of much robust and elaborated theories on education which our educational planners had ignored to our own peril (Nwankwo, 2014).

Therefore, certain educational and psychological theories could help to fill the gap in the systems which previous policies and programmes could not do. One of such robust, rich

and oriented – driven theories is Abraham Maslow Theory of Needs. The society is in search of functional and goal oriented theories such as this to be able to meet the goals of education in Nigeria.

**The Concept of a Theory:**

The concept, theory is derived from a Greet word, “theoria”. Anyaogu, (2016), defined a theory as a logical organization of facts derived from scientific process. In other words, facts lead to theory and theories also lead to new facts. This means that a theory is a guide to the collection of facts and a guide to new knowledge. To psychologists, educational administrators and planners, a theory establishes a set of principles upon which action may be predicted and which decision may be based upon.

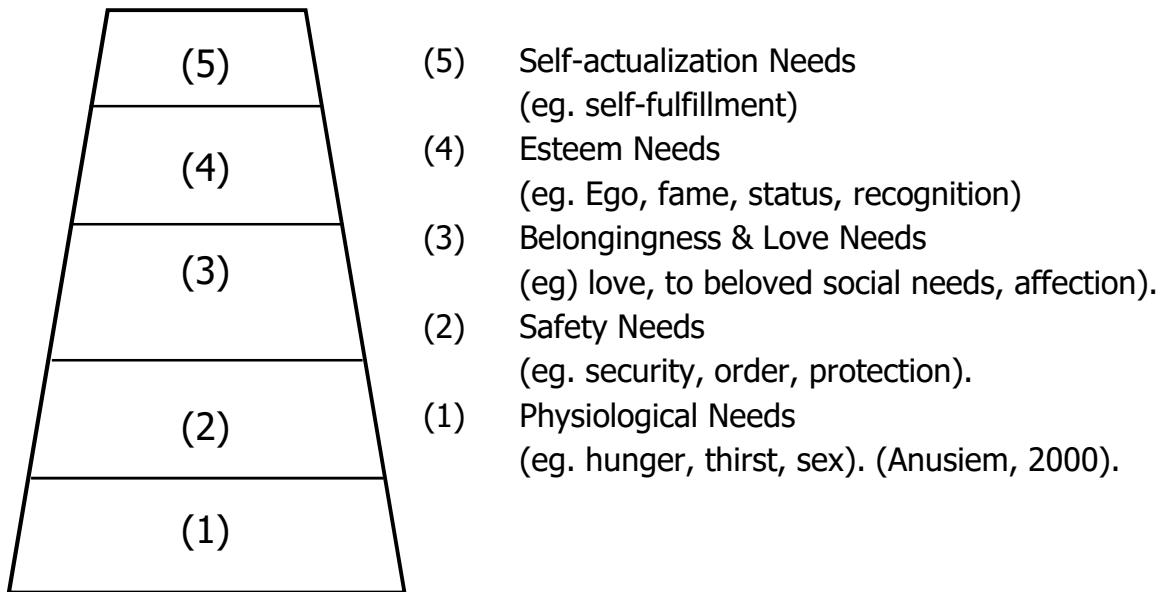
Hence, Walker, (1970), regarded a theory as a hypotheses which has undergone verification and which has potential for explaining and predicting events, and for the production of new knowledge. To Kimbrough and Nunnery, (1983), a theory can be viewed as a set of relevant, internally consistent postulates about a particular observable phenomenon along with definitions to enable the user to move from the abstract to the real in order to describe, explain, predict and advance knowledge.

In other words, education or put succinctly, teaching and learning cannot be achieved without a theory such as Maslow’s Theory. Knowledge too, cannot be advanced and be described or be explained in any form without applying a working theory.

**Abraham Maslow’s theory of 1954**

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) developed the theory of hierarchy of needs in 1954. Some psychologists call it Theory of Self-Actualization; while others see it as theory of growth, motivation, need gratification. In whatever one may call it, it is the theory of needs of the society, which could leverage on the growth and development of Nigerian education. Abraham Maslow belonged to the group of psychologies called humanists.

He later grew to become a professor of Psychology. Anusiem (2000). Maslow maintained that human needs are ordered in a form of hierarchy and the satisfaction of one paves way for the emergence of another need in the hierarchy. He classified man's need into the followings:



### **Physiological Needs:**

These are the basic needs of a learner. A learner who goes to school with empty stomach could hardly concentrate on what the teacher is teaching. The hunger affects his adjustment and behaviour in school. His classmate who come, to school with sweet smelling fried rice with chicken concentrates more than the hungry pupil. He is hungry, thirsty of basic drinks which could result in stealing. A pupil who does not also sleep well because of clustering of the family members in one room could hardly learn well.

### **Safety Needs:**

Safety needs are such needs as protection from danger, threat, accidents, deprivation, physical harm, economic disaster, illness, fire disaster. Educational organizations can meet these needs by providing staff with safe working conditions, job security, regular salary, pension scheme, life insurance, medical services etc.

### **Social Needs:**

Social needs include the desire for affection, belonging association, love, friendship, acceptance by other people. Non satisfaction of social needs may affect the mood and mental health of the staff which may reflect in absenteeism, poor performance, low job satisfaction, cold feelings and emotional breakdown of the individual. Membership of the groups in the organizations such as (school) plays a vital role in fulfilling this (Anyaogu, 2016).

### **Esteem Needs (ego)**

Esteem needs relate to Ego. They are of two kinds: those needs that relate to ones self-esteem such as need for knowledge for self-confidence, independence, achievement and

competence and needs that relate to one's reputation such as status, respect, recognition. Educational organizations and government can satisfy these needs through recognitions awards, promotions such as Head of Department, Director of Academic Planning, Dean of Faculties, etc.

**Self-Actualization:**

This is the highest need level in the hierarchy. It is also called self-fulfillment. This means to become what one wants to become. It involves the use of one's skills, abilities to realize one's potentialities for continued self-development.

**The Nigerian Educational System:**

The National Policy on Education recognized the primary education; secondary education and the Tertiary Education. Kayode, (2006) noted that the primary education begins at the age of six. Pupils spend six years and graduate with school leaving certificate. Subjects taught include English Language, Mathematics, Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic Knowledge, Science, one of the three major languages. The Nigerian education system is 9-3-4 system of education which replaced the 6-3-3-4 system of the Universal Primary Education (UPE). The 4-3-4 system shows that the Nigerian child will spend six years in primary school and three years in junior secondary which is compulsory for all the Nigerian children; could proceed to the senior secondary for another three years and then go to the tertiary which is four years to graduate.

At the Junior Secondary level, the child is expected to do the following subjects viz: English Language, Mathematics, Religious and National Value which include Civic Education, Religious Studies and Security Education. Other subjects include Basic Technology, Creative Arts. The child is expected to write the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). At the Senior Education the child specializes into Arts, Science but must offer the followings at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE); English Language, Mathematics, Civic Education, one Nigerian Language and a Science subject. After this, a child proceeds to any of the following tertiary education: College of Education; Polytechnic or University. (Aderinoye, 2007). The duration differs. For instance while Colleges of Education graduate after three years, Polytechnics and Universities graduates after two years and four/five years respectively.

Education is on the concurrent list of the Nigerian constitution. This means both the Federation and the State governments establish their own secondary and tertiary institutions. They also fund the universities and other tertiary institutions which they established. Primary education is supervised by the various local governments (Nwana, 2008).

### **Inherent Problems in the Nigerian Educational System.**

Abraham Maslow indicated the followings which are lacking in Nigeria's educational system as:

- (a) One strives to look forward towards achieving his future goals. The Nigerian child lacks the intellectual capacity to fully experience life and focus on the future to realize his potentialities. The teacher/lecturer could also not look forward to future to realize his potentialities. Strikes, lack of food, lack of shelter have killed the interest of both the learner and their educators.
- (b) The Nigerian Education system cannot make growth as shown in the hierarchy of needs. There is rather fear choices. The Nigerian child could hardly develop his potentials due to fraught in our educational system. The teacher/lecturer is hopeless. Salaries and allowances of educational personnel are not paid. Gratuity is not paid too.
- (c) The Nigerian Educational system is devoid of one searching for one's talent and values as Maslow propounded. The Nigerian child lacks the requisite facilities and technologies to achieve his talent. Our laboratories are mere shadows of themselves. Most of the courses are cognitive-orientated, rather than psychomotor-based. This means that the society places more premiums on certificates rather than skill and craftsmanship.
- (d) Also, the Nigerian educational system lacks the peak moment experiences – that is moments of joy, ecstasy and personal fulfillment. Teachers are not satisfied with their conditions of service, lecturers are not satisfied with the environment under which they work. Learners and graduate of all levels of education could hardly beat their chest and said they have achieved their aim of going to school. The job is not there, the salary is not there too. There is no provision for job creation by the government.
- (e) Nigerian education could not make their graduates self-assertive and self-expressive as postulated by Maslow. When one is self-actualized, he becomes self-assertive. He commands power, status and authority. He becomes self-expressive meaning he could venture into any profession and succeeds with the prevailing environment. Teachers and lecturers could not be said to be self-expressive. Unions are banned, pressure groups banned. Union leaders are arrested by government agencies.

- (f) The Nigerian educational system does not provide for the physiological needs of the educational personnel. There is danger and fear in the land due to security breakdown. The economy is in bad shape. Prices of commodities skyrocket everyday; thereby taking 90% of workers' salaries. There is no free medical services for teachers and students, no job security, no pension as pensioners die due to non-payment of their pensions, salaries remain same while inflation increases daily.
  
- (g) On Social Needs, there is no provision for sports, picnics and relaxation centres for the personnel. The government budget on education is below 26% as recommended by United Nations. This has affected the personnel's morale and consequently low job satisfaction, cold feeling for work, absenteeism as education is under funded.

### **Solutions/Recommendations**

In the face of the challenges bedeviling the Nigerian education system, the following solutions are proffered; using Abraham Maslow's theory.

#### **1. Motivation:**

The Nigerian educational managers should motivate the teachers to do their work with joy and satisfaction. Teachers and other staff of our educational systems should receive their salaries promptly. Allowances and other benefits that accrue to them should be paid equally so as to motivate them to carry out their responsibilities with diligence and dedication it deserves. Teachers and other personnel could hardly do their work when salaries are owed for as much as thirty months. The system would surely collapse. Pensions should also be paid to pensioners too.

They should be encouraged to work with the necessary facilities provided. A situation whereby there is dearth of teaching facilities do not encourage teaching and learning. Teachers should be given such incentives as car loans to boost their status in the society.

On the other hand, learners should be provided with writing materials, furniture, uniforms, bags and other incentives to motivate them to learn with interest. A situation where the government does not provide all these to the learners hampers learning.

#### **2. Provision of Basic Needs in the Society:**

It is the duty of government to provide basic fundamental needs to the populace. Such basic needs include housing schemes, food, etc. The teachers salaries are too meager to provide for a comfortable shelter and food for the family.

In situations, where government could not provide for these, they could subsidize them for the affordability of the teachers.

**3. Provision of Security:**

Government should provide security in our school system. A situation where students and lecturers are kidnapped and killed does not encourage learning in our school system. In this direction, law enforcement agencies such as Police, army should be provided in our school gates to forestall possible attack by hoodlums and bandits. Teaching and learning should be carried out in a conducive and free environment, devoid of any security threats. The children, the teachers and other educational personnel should be protected to do their work.

**4.** Government should appreciate and respect our educational personnel especially when they discharge their responsibilities effectively well. This they can do by awards, bursaries. When a staff is recognized and appreciated by his employers, he will be moved to do more. Regrettably, our teachers are not loved but rather hated and treated with disdain. This is unfortunate.

**5. Encouraging affection, belongingness, acceptance and friendship:** It is the duty of the teachers and other educational staff to seek affection; love, acceptance and friendship. No man is island unto himself according to Aristotle. Man needs others to exist in order to realize his social inferences. Man needs social acceptance by others.

Regrettably, our governments stifle these needs in our educational organizations. The government most times ban unions on campus. This does not encourage learning.

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