Comparative Analysis of Nigerian Educational System

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Abstract

Education can be effective when it relates to the past, present and future of the society. It has to bear practical relevance to the socio-cultural background of the people. Therefore, the philosophy and sociology of the community or nation must be informed by the cultural beliefs, tradition and shared norms of the people. This study tries to cast indigenous education in retrospect from the pre-colonial era to present. Historical development of every society particularly the developing countries are incomplete without the recognition of traditional system that prevailed before the advent of the western system of education. The paper compares the roles and objectives of the new and integrated (6-3-3-4) system of education with the colonial system of education. Emphasis was on functionalism, social responsibilities, job orientation and educational empowerment. Finally, the study was carried out to ascertain the influence of basic skill and functional vocational education through integrated curriculum.

Key words: Functional Vocation Education, Traditional Education, Indigenous Education,

INTRODUCTION

Education may be regarded as a method of leading people out of ignorance. It is a means of socializing human beings. It involves the brining up of a child in the community and constantly training him to adjust himself to the changing world around him. It is a lifelong process. Education is varied in its content and method as there are different societies in the world. The aim of education varies from time to time and from place to place. What one age cherishes as wisdom may be regarded by another as folly. The aim of education is a country should therefore be a reflection on the national aspiration of the people. This can be based on the experience gained from the past history of the people and their future expectations of themselves.

Fafunwa (1974) cited by Sarumi (2005) stated that for education to be effective, it has to relate to the past, present and future of the society. It has to bear practical relevance to the socio-cultural background of the people. Therefore, the philosophy and sociology of the community or nation must be informed by the cultural beliefs, tradition and shared norms of the people. According to Nduka (1975) Ocitti (1994) and Omolewa (2001) education is a process of cultural transmissions using culture to embrace the peoples art, music, literature, philosophy, religion, commerce, political, organisation, science and technology as well as other ideas and values implicit, that permeated a society and bind its people into recognizable unit. Education therefore, is very important in every nation and attracts considerable attention both in the past and in the present dispensation. Hence, education is linked with culture and the culture of a people is linked with the level of its educational attainment. Consequently, the crusade for Education for All (EFA) which is aimed at removing inequality and inequitable distribution of wealth according to Triebel (2001), Sarumi (2005).

Empowerment

Empowerment is the act of acquiring power, authority or control to do something. It is the ability to acquire power. Therefore, it enables the individual to become powerful in his environment. Education stands at the centre of the developmental activity, as it is a lifelong process used to uplift and sustain the individual in the socio-political and economic environment. Therefore, empowerment through education is the bedrock of industrialisation. The society's industrialisation is invariably measured through the technological advancement which education provides.

Evolution of Traditional Education in Nigeria

Traditional education has been with the Africans since the inception of the black man right from the neophytic age. Every society whether white or black has its own system of training and ways of education its citizen.

Fafunwa (1994), Omolewa (2002), Osokoya (2003) opined that every society whether simple or complex has its own system of training and educating its youth, and education for good life has been one of the most persistent concern of men through history.

African traditional education emphases social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values. Traditional education is a lifelong education and also functionalism was the main guiding principle. Functionalism refers to practical-oriented, felt-need education that is aimed at identifying and providing solutions for societal needs as well as empowerment of the educated.

African societies regarded education as a means to an end and not as an end. Fafunwa (1991) stated that Children and Youth learnt by participatory education through demonstration, recitation, ritual ceremony and imitation. In traditional African education, the method of teaching was practically oriented. The subjects are for instance wrestling, dancing, drumming, racing, local history, proverbs, riddles and storytelling. The traditional system of education was integrated in such a way that unemployment was minimal. Wagner (1999) stated that the indigenous education in Kenya, Nigeria and other African countries brought about skill acquisition and apprenticeship training system began as a part of wider education process in which the African indigenous societies passed on their cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The skill owned by a family was highly valued and in some professions such as native medicine, secrets were zealously guarded as they are indeed today. Learning a craft often began with personal service to the master. Young boys would become house servants to a closer relative who would feed and clothe them and after some years of promising usefulness they would then gradually be introduced to the craft of the guardian. In view of the above, education being of great importance to all nations of the world is not an invention brought to African from Europe as claimed by the Europeans, Omolewa (2001) Osokoya (2003). Education has always been a prominent and permanent feature of life on the African continent in general and Nigeria in Particular.

Indigenous Education and Western Education

Formal education was introduced into Nigeria in the 16th century, before its introduction, indigenous education was being practised. This was non-formal and non-certified in terms of competencies, an took place at various stages of a child's life, knowledge was presumed to be static and the pedagogic techniques used were basically memorization and the strict imitation of adults behaviour, questioning the logic, meaning or analyses of knowledge was discouraged as children were to be seen but not heard Lesourd (1996). In spite of the shortcomings of the pre-literate African societies had holistic training and education for all members of the communities. The education is lifelong which satisfied the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the individuals.

However, Western colonial education which was introduced in Nigeria had ideas and practises similar to British colonial education. The aim of British colonial education was to train clerks for administration and for commercial activities. Christian missionaries later established schools which were tailored towards the British structure, curriculum and organisation. British colonial education therefore inculcated into Nigerians foreign ideologies, culture and values. In the same vein, learning was tailored towards teaching and mastery of specific subject and one's level of ability was determined by the capacity to memorize and reproduced facts from these subjects. According to Blege (1996) colonial educationists believe that schools and colleges must help their pupils solve only mental problems while educational functionalists believe that school is an integral, functioning part of the society, vital to its continuation and survival and therefore academic knowledge is useful only if it can be applied to solve societal problems or otherwise it becomes detrimental to the society. Whitty (1991) stated that British colonial education laid no explicit emphasis on social and political education. No wonder in Nigeria vocational and practical training were regarded as suitable only for people of low academic ability and most parents strongly objected to their children going into apprenticeship or vocational schools instead of academic institutions because of the colonial mentality that linked status to academic qualifications.

For education is supposed to transform a society from pre-literate to contemporary nationhood, however, the sort of transformation that took place in Nigeria could not help the country revolutionalize and modernise the economy to meet the demands of the growing society because the education system did not emphasise the teaching of life employed nor self-employed as they lack skills for any profession. Historical hostilities and rivalries among many of the peoples agglomerated within Nigeria accounted for some of the conflicted sense of common national identity.

The colonial legacy contributed significantly, however, to furthering the collision of loyalties in the new nation. For instance, the structure of British colonial administration of the artificially drawn territory restricted development of a national consciousness within the broad expanse of Nigeria's borders. Britain's practice of indirect rule in colonial Nigeria perpetuated separate ethnic and local identities. By using traditional native institutions and tractable tribal chieftains as their functionaries in exercising the doctrine of indirect rule that colonial administrator Frederick Lugard fashioned, the British sheltered the parochial political patterns of many ethnic groups. Particularly in the north, where Hausa-Fulani tribal leaders resisted European education, indirect rule contributed to the persistence of isolated tribal identity.

British regional government further compounded the persistence of separateness. Although united under a governor, colonial administration from 1906 to 1922 divided Nigeria into the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, which included Lagos, and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. That administration was further fragmented into the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions maintained from 1922 to 1957, with the Federal Territory of Lagos created in 1954. These regions became essentially self-governing in 1960 at the time of Nigeria's independence as a tenuous federation. The colonial structure maintained ethnic isolation and reinforced it with regionalism--a situation inherited by the independent nation. With the larger ethnic groups dominating the separate political regions, the colonial experience provided little basis for fusing ethnic groups in any common sense of nationalism. It certainly fostered no history or tradition of national community. The education was therefore, found to be ineffective and inadequate to the needs and aspirations of Nigeria society.

The Relevance of the integrated Curriculum

Nigeria being a developing country and in the process of developing her socio-economic base after centuries of colonization, needed skilled and semi-skilled intermediate level manpower in particular for the industrial sector. Unfortunately, the education system did not provide such empowerment for the people and hence did not enhance socio socio-economic development. It is against this background that the 1969 National Curriculum Conference with the National Seminar on Nigerian Education in 1973 coined out a new system of education, which brought about the new National policy on Education known as 6-3-3-4 system. This system of education imbibes both vocational and pre-vocational subjects in the new curriculum are to develop in the students' aptitude for technical and manipulative skills, inventiveness, self-reliance and dignity of labour. Abe (1999), Osokoya (2003), Dada, Kolawole, Arilkpo (2003).

The curriculum was constructed in such a way that six years is stipulated for primary education. Three years in the junior secondary schools with curriculum consisting of academic and pre-vocational subjects. This means that students will offer basic subjects that would enable them acquire knowledge and develop skills to choose a future career which is in line with their abilities, aptitude and interest. The book keeping, typing, agric-science, mental work, technical drawing, wood work and auto-mechanic. It also offer purely academic subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, English. Also, the tertiary education is stipulated for four years.

However, it has been observed that the goals of the educational system are yet to be achieved. The educational system has not been able to transform the individuals and society. Obemeata (1995) observed that the Nigeria educational system has failed to meet the objectives of its existence. The objectives of making an individual self-reliant through the new educational curriculum have been elusive. Isiugo Abanibe and Abe (1997). This is so because the ugly head of the old system of education is still rearing its head in the academic process of the new educational system. It has been observed that pre-vocational subjects are seen as subjects' technical educational where people believe that it is education for the low class, unintelligent people in the society.

Assessment of the New Curriculum

It has been observed that parents prefer to send their wards to senior secondary schools instead of enrolling them in technical or vocational schools. This is due to the negative attitude of parents who believe that technical education is for the under-privilege and therefore an inferior education. The government and private sector would prefer to fund science and liberal education rather than investing in technical education. Teachers are not properly trained to handle the equipment and this in effect affect the quality of students produced and sine quo non affect the society in general.

The content of vocational/technical education is too broad and in-dept in scope that teaching learning process and time frame hardly correlates and therefore, cannot achieve in students what it suppose to achieve. Alade (2004) stated that the aim of vocational education is to:

a. Utilize tools, machines, materials and processes safely, confidently and with a measure of skill.
b. Make decisions regarding careers for entry into a vocation or profession.
c. Gain an in-depth understanding and appreciation of technology in the society
d. Experience applications of Mathematics, science, economics and transfer knowledge to everyday life situations.
e. Solve problems involving advanced enterprises, manufacturing, mass transit, computer-aided design.

The curriculum conference was held over thirty-five years ago. Hence, there is the need to meet again and assess the extent to which the curriculum has achieved the set goals and objectives.

The education sector in the past three decades has witnessed neglect in the areas of adequate funding and teachers' welfare. Thus this is why, Nwabueze (1995) stated that the nurturing of sentiments of patriotism and other civic virtues on our educational system has been totally neglected.

Recommendations

- The society should be enlightened on the benefits of vocational and technical education. This can be achieved through conference, workshop, and seminars. This is in order to change the negative attitude towards vocational education.
- *The government should improve the implimentation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education which is based on technical and vocational education. The system should be adequately funded and the vocational aspect of the curriculum strictly implemented.*
- The vocational educational is more goal oriented than occupational oriented. Hence, the curriculum should focus more on general topics and practical experiences.
- The curriculum planners should make a clear cut occupational distinction between practical skill and theoretical practice. Thereby endeavour to correct the overload of the curriculum.
- There should be a regular National Curriculum Conference. In order to enable the stakeholders assess the level of performance of the curriculum and also ascertain the level of achievement of the educational goals.
- Teachers should be encouraged and motivated through regular payment of salaries and incentives.

CONCLUSION

Although, it has been observed that the some of the objectives of the new curriculum has been met Obemeata (1995), Abe (1997), Salami (1997), the new curriculum has gone a long way to empower students in all spheres of life and most of all in technological advancement. Technology being the bedrock of industrialisation is a product of man, which could only be obtained through the introduction of vocational and technical education. Vocational/technical education according to Osuala (1995), Oni (1995) is that education that prepares the individuals for employment in any industry through specialised education for which there is societal need and which can most appropriately be acquired in school. Vocational and technological education is particularly relevant to the needs of industrialisation in Nigeria and therefore the integrated system of education if properly implimented will empower the society into making a rapid technological advancement.

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