

Effect of Culture on Educational Development in Nigeria: A Reappraisal

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ABSTRACT

Education is the most reliable channel through which society ensures its survival and continuity. It is the window through which culture is developed, modified and transmitted. Education and culture are inseparable concepts. This paper therefore reappraised the effects of culture on educational development in Nigeria. Concepts of education and culture are succinctly discussed with emphasis on the dimensions of culture: cultural universals, cultural specialties and cultural alternatives. The paper reveals that, in Nigeria, culture affects the direction of education, financing of education and the distribution of educational opportunities. It was therefore suggested that curriculum experts should take cognizance of the dimensions of culture in curriculum planning. There should be adequate cultural re-orientation in Nigeria to give education a new direction especially in the areas of science and technology.

Keywords: Culture, Educational Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

The hallmark of socioeconomic, political, scientific, and technological progress is education. As a result, numerous education legislation, strategies, and theories have been proposed by stakeholders in the post-colonial era as to fashion out functional education in Nigeria. In September 1967, Nigerians from all walks of life converged for the first National Curriculum Conference with the intent of re-energizing the superfluous, foreign-based curriculum that was handed down to Nigerians after independence. Thereafter, The

National Universal Primary Education Program was established in the 1970s but due to lack of preparation, this initiative was a massive disaster. Then, the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEP) was introduced in 2004 with substantive education legislation to enable its successful implementation.

In addition, the National Policy on Education, initially published in 1977, was amended in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007, and 2013. Interestingly, the need of adapting the school curriculum to the Nigerian cultural environment is emphasized in each edition of the national policy. This is because education stakeholders have come to realize that the cultural norms and values of the Nigerian society are critical to education and social development. Accordingly, Wheeler in Nakpodia (2010), assert that formal education demands the posing of some simple but fundamental questions such as “What? To whom? When? and How?” The question of what should be taught in school is very important and is determined by the people’s cultural heritage. The distribution of education in Africa and particularly Nigeria necessitates the question of who should be education. it is another is another bone of contention that affects curriculum planning, development and implementation. The level of access to education for boys and girls, young and old is varies from one cultural environment to another. The appropriate age for schooling and the various methods of imparting knowledge in school are significantly affected by culture. This requires some critical examination.

Concept of Education

Scholars across the globe describe education in a variety of ways. This is due to the fact that each socio-cultural group has its own method of teaching its members. Regardless of the many ways in which education is conceptualized, the core message is typically that education is a process that promotes a decent existence in society. Wosu (2017) defines education as a process that helps learners to acquire acceptable societal skills, attitudes, competences, and values in order to live a meaningful life and contribute meaningfully to social progress. Education is a method through which a society's culture is passed down from generation to generation. It is also defined as a procedure that every civilization forms or implements to guarantee that its historical legacy, as well as the ways of life or methods of living that make up its culture, be handed down to the next generation. Education is a lengthy process that begins at birth and continues until death. It pervades every facet of man's existence. Education is continually customized to meet the current and future demands of the people as society continues to change with its complexity. Education is seen as a means of passing down culture from one generation to the next. This term refers to the enculturation process as a whole. Enculturation is the process of introducing a young and inexperienced individual to his society's way of life (Nakpodia, 2010). All civilizations, including Nigeria, have different forms of education which include; informal education, non-formal education, formal education, and teacher education.

Informal education takes place outside the classroom, at home, in after-school programmes, community-based organizations, museums, and libraries. Informal education

is the learning that occurs in man's daily interactions. It is characterized by absence of any form of planning, absence of stated goals, purpose or objectives, accidental learning, lack of awareness of what is to be learnt and so on (Ololube, 2012). For example, friends and acquaintances may share their daily experiences through which they learn how to process their feelings and device appropriate actions and reactions. Parents and other family members may teach younger ones how to prepare certain dishes, lace shoes, wash clothes, sing, dance and play. One may learn a song on a bus while travelling from one destination to another. All the aforementioned activities help to shape the personality of individuals in society.

Formal education on the other hand is a systematic and certified program that takes place in a school environment for the training and development of a population's knowledge, skills, intellect, and character (Ololube, 2012). It is a classroom-based education. It has a well-thought-out curriculum that is administered by qualified professionals. Formal education is based on a person's age. Formal education's goal, organization, financing pattern, management, and administration differ from one society to another. Government, commercial, and volunteer groups own and operate elementary/primary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions.

Non formal education can be explained as any structured learning activity that takes place outside of the regular school system. It is aimed at satisfying the educational requirements of certain target groups such as women, nomads, handicapped people, adults, adolescents, and those who have fallen out of regular schooling. Non-formal education, according to Mbalisi and Ugwu (2016) and Elekwa, Okai, and Okanezi (2014), includes programs for youths and adults outside of the formal educational system, such as vocational and continuing education, functional literacy and remedial education, peace education, cooperative education, community development, aesthetics, cultural, civic, and environmental education.

The national goals of education also vary from one nation to another. In the United States for instance, the purpose of education is to give equal opportunity to all citizens. In China, Education is used a tool to maintain a disciplined society and for technological advancement. Similarly, education in Russia is focused on the development of general intellect and the industrialisation of the country. In Japan, education is a tool for the entire development of students who are mentally and physically healthy (Ogbondah, 2016).

In Nigeria, Formal education is considered one of the relics of European imperialism. Colonial education was aimed at Christianizing Africans whose lifestyles were deemed barbaric. Education was employed as a technique to provide minimal manpower requirements for colonialism. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2013:2), the goals of education in Nigeria in the post-colonial era are the development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic, and effective citizen; total integration of the individual into the immediate community, Nigerian society, and the world; provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system; inculcation of

national consciousness, values and national unity; and development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

Concept of Culture

The term culture originated from a Latin term that means "to cultivate." Culture is a social group's way of life, which comprises acts, values, and beliefs that can be passed down from generation to generation with little changes. According to Offorma (2016), culture is the fabric of ideas, ideals, beliefs, norms, conventions, and traditions, as well as systems of knowledge, institutions, aesthetic objects, and artistic materials. It includes eating habits, dialects, festivals, wedding rituals, thinking styles, and etiquette. It is the sum of a society's way of life as it has been molded by circumstances and environment. This means that culture is dynamic and responds to external forces rather than being static. Culture provides ways of training young members into group ways of society. It brings about regularity of behavior or predictable response. It also provides a source of identification with self and others in similar categories, and also provides a means of communication among which could be through language or symbols (Okujagu in Dienye, 2012).

Culture differs from culture to society, and even within a single group of people, depending on the time period. This suggests that culture is not static but dynamic, manifested via human behaviors, shared among people, and learned rather than inherited. As a result, belief, values, rituals, and conventions are key parts of culture that impact curriculum in Nigerian schools. Culture can only be taught and learned through interactions between members of society, whether material or non-material. Culture is passed down over generations, and it is practiced by a large group of individuals.

Dimensions of Culture

Cultural elements are divided into three categories: cultural universals, cultural alternatives, and cultural specializations. Similarly, formal education curriculum is often divided into three categories: core, ancillary, and electives. In accordance with this categorization, the school allows students to uncover their intrinsic abilities and achieve their life goals. Cultural universals, according to Offorma (2016) and Dienye (2012), are organized as the core curriculum, which every learner must study for example, English, Mathematics, and indigenous language. Specialties are found in subjects required for specialising in various professions and occupations, whereas alternatives are found in optional courses. Further explanations are given below:

1. Cultural Universals: The universals of culture are the foundation of any culture; they are everything that all members of a community agree on. They are the things that bring people together, foster peace, and allow for long-term growth. Language, for example, is an example of societal conventions that are and difficult to modify. Its worth reflects its significance. Every language emerges from a certain cultural context. Culture's universals include people's beliefs and ideals. These widely accepted behaviors are instilled in men

through enculturation, which occurs both at home and at school. The goal is to create individuals who are well-integrated and interactive, as well as to preserve the society's culture (Offorma, 2016).

2. Cultural Specialties: Cultural specialties are the various realms of knowledge or disciplines in which society's members are well-trained to earn a living and contribute to the society's progress. Individuals that belong to this category are trained in the knowledge, skills, and ethics of their profession or vocation, which they are expected to demonstrate in their work. Teachers, medical practitioners, lawyers, engineers, farmers, and potters are just a few examples of specializations. The existence of specialists in society improves labour division and, as a result, the society's long-term development. A group's or class's speciality is determined by their strengths and interests. Their specialization fosters group awareness, which encourages or motivates members to acquire specific behavioral or skill patterns. Because every normal human being has the ability to contribute to society's growth, the educational system should give possibilities for specialization in a number of trades and occupations. This explains why the school curriculum includes a wide range of courses. The goal is to provide learners with a variety of options from which to choose areas of specialization based on their talents and interests.

3. Cultural Alternatives: Different methods, means, designs, and ways of doing things that are accepted in society are referred to as cultural alternatives. Individuals can use their talents to invent products and methods of doing specific tasks, according to society. This is only achievable with people who are extremely brilliant, resourceful, and creative. The inventions are permissible as long as they do not violate the society's ethical, moral, or religious standards. This group has a lot of talent. To perfect their individual talents, they require very specialized instruction. They are held to a higher standard of discipline than regular members of society. These include priests, artists, and philosophers. Their education is more extensive and lasts longer than the standards for general education. The alternatives are for society's most extraordinary, innovative, and gifted members. There are only a few of them. The school programs are structured in such a way that these elements are easily identifiable.

Effect of Culture on Education

Culture and education have a strong impact on each other. In this regard, the impact of culture on education may be regarded in the following ways with special reference to Africa and Nigeria in particular:

1. Direction of Education: Culture has an impact on the sort of schooling that flourishes in any given society. According to Bisong and Ekanem (2020), scientific education, for example, in Africa has remained stunted owing to people's comprehension and explanations of causal linkages (relationships between social occurrences). Due to cultural beliefs, Africans imagine a future in which everything "dovetails into each other" (Ijiomah, 2006). They perceive events as determined by the will of spiritual entities, the

work of automatic forces, and the self-willed activities of man and other animals, which follow in orderly and complete sequence" in this universe (Akpan, 2011: 54).

An African healer, according to Sogolo (2004), may ascribe the occurrence of an event to both a natural and supernatural source at the same time. After that, he may treat the condition in these two seemingly conflicting approaches. This indicates that an African believes in both the empirical (natural) concept of causality and supernatural causation, which is not analyzable in empirical terms, as defined by the Western norms of causation (Asira & Bisong, 2015:24). These degrees of causality were split into main and secondary levels by Sogolo. The fundamental causes of illnesses are attributed to supernatural beings such as spirits, deities, witches, wizards, ancestors, and so on, whereas the secondary causes are akin to empirical causation of the Western kind - bacterium, virus, fungus, and so on. As a result, a typical African understands causality in terms of secondary (empirical) and fundamental (supernatural) causes. It's not unusual to have a traditional healer describe the secondary cause of a sickness as the ingestion of toxic food, while simultaneously identifying the fundamental reason as a wicked spirit or witch who encouraged the sufferer to consume the poison. This tendency to explain phenomena from the transcendental point of view stifles scientific progress in Africa. The rationale is simple: if the cause of an event is the spirit, and only a few talented individuals have access to the spirit world, it is pointless to try to investigate the cause of the event empirically. This inclination to explain occurrences transcendently may be one of the reasons for the slow pace of science in Africa. This is due to the fact that the "ultimate explanation of events based on mythological-metaphysical approach raises an artificial barrier between what is empirically provable and what is regarded humanly impassable (Gyekye, 1997). This empirical perception of worldviews in the Western world is a powerful encouragement to all to explore their world for themselves rather than relying on juju priests and fortune tellers. As a consequence, the West now boasts a plethora of brilliant and terrifying technologies and discoveries.

Africa closed the windows and doors to scientific inquiries with her hands, resulting in the humiliation of being a dependent continent — a land populated by scientific dwarfs. Education, particularly scientific education, has been sluggish in Africa because its people lack the will to turn their interest into practical activities. It is noteworthy to state that most Africans, especially the educated, still believe that airplanes, computers, cell phones, and other modern technologies are made possible by spiritual understanding. This explains why most Africans would never consider developing anything since they think it requires the assistance of the spirits. This mind-set, which has been tainted by people's cultural beliefs, must be changed if Africans are to witness significant improvement in scientific and technological education. The people's culture must be corrected for the implementation of a functional curriculum.

2. Education distribution: As has previously been said, education has an impact on culture. The distribution of education is one manner in which education has affected culture in the past. Females were formerly thought to be just suitable for the cooking and

the bed. They are now in schools. As a result of education's effect, the amount of education has expanded nowadays. This component of culture, however, has not completely vanished. Though women are no longer confined to the house, their education is nonetheless limited by a society that believes that a woman's education would make marriage harder for her. As a result, it is customary for women to end at a Bachelor's Degree level. Due to societal values and norms, the males have greater access to education than the female. Because of the country's unequal educational distribution, women are unable to compete economically, politically, or socially with their male counterparts. This is harmful to society since women play an important part in the economics of the nation; if they are denied equal access to higher education, their contribution to society will be ineffective. This culture, which tends to restrict women's intellectual potential, has to be replaced with one that allows them to achieve high academic heights.

3. Financing of Education: Education at any level – primary, secondary or tertiary is capital intensive. Funds are required for both capital and recurrent expenditure. In Nigeria, the funding of education is more or less the responsibility of the government and parents who constitute members of society. Thus, society's spending culture has a significant influence on the quantity of money available for education. Some societies, particularly consumerist societies, consider billions of dollars spent on educational development a waste of resources. People are the ones who decide how their money is spent. As a result, if the public is uninterested in research and educational growth, the government is unlikely to finance education sector. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has been striking on a regular basis. This demonstrates the impact of society on government. On various times, ASUU has been successful in twisting the government's arms to enhance education spending. If the general public shares this enthusiasm for educational development, they will be able to persuade the government to do so, since it is only through education that society progresses (Bisong & Ekanem, 2020).

Conclusion

Education enables members of society to discover and harness their innate abilities for self-actualization and meaningful contribution to social development. The ultimate aim of education therefore is for all-round development of those that are committed to its pursuit. Education equips individuals with the relevant for solving immediate and future, local and domestic problems. To achieve this objective, the school curriculum should be rooted in the culture of the school community. The increasing rate of unemployment among University graduates in the 21st Century attest to the fact the fact that the Nigerian education system does not reflect the needs and aspiration of Nigerians.

School curriculum should adequately take cognizance of the three dimensions of culture so that individuals can conveniently fit into the education system for useful living. Education is well-known globally as an instrument of social change. The education

system should also be able to influence the cultural norms and values of the people. This will surely encourage equal educational opportunities for the males and females in society. It will also change the people's world view and redirect the Nigerian education system to improved teaching and learning of scientific and technology.

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