Historical Analysis of Curriculum Construction Effort of the Pre-Independent Nigeria

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Abstract
Curriculum development in Nigeria has gone through various stages, each stage of the curriculum development process being an effort to better the previous stage. This paper therefore examines the different efforts by colonial administration to develop a workable curriculum for the Nigerian state. The paper however showed their failure to recognize the importance of indigenous education which is closely integrated with cultural reproduction. The critic's analysis and evaluation of the goal and practice of education however pointed out the irrelevance of the curriculum to the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian society, because it isolate the formal school system from the social realities of the Nigerian society. Finally, the paper draw conclusions based on the fact that indigenous education, even though is not contained in any document, it is still functional and relevant to the needs of Nigerians.

Introduction

Societies through ages have one form of education or the other, whether indigenous or western education. This is because education is as essential to man as life itself on this planet earth. However education varies from place to place and from time to time. In fact it is a very important means of developing any nation. The concept of education has not lent itself to any strict consensual definition as it depends on the perspective from which one view it. It can be considered as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and the cultural norms of a society by people to transmit this life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society.

The concept of Education has attracted different definitions by scholars, and this definition varies from one scholar to the other as perceived by each one. In the word of Adesina (1985), he noted that since education is always related to variables such as purpose of learner, the aim of the teacher as well as the technological problems of the society, it will be difficult to pin the concept down to a particular definition. He therefore, defines education as;

> 'The tool for the integration of the individual effectively into a society so that the individual can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological process'.

The above definition thus, shows that education is aimed at developing a learner in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. On the other hand, Akinpelu (1984) sees education as an enabling agency by which the Africans could restore their self-confidence, and make those who doubted the humanity of Africans begin to revise their views and learn to respect Africans. Education is also the transmission of accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society from one generation to the next and also to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society in which they find themselves (Nyerere, 1982). According to the Encyclopedia Britanica, education is the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of a society. While Adeyinka (1985) describes education as the process of transmitting the culture of a society from one generation to the other. Since education is a process of cultural transmission, it means that for any meaningful education to take place there must be something to indicate its content and procedures whether written in a document or not. These content and procedures is referred to as the curriculum, and if a curriculum is defective, the whole process of education will also be defective.

Curriculum has a significant factor in the process of impacting knowledge; it is therefore not possible to have a meaningful education without a curriculum, which is the framework that determines what happens in the process of education. And just like education, there is no particular definition that one can pin down on curriculum. One can say that the definitions of curriculum are as many as the scholars of curriculum. However, this is unconnected with the amorphous nature of the concept. Some are broad, while others are narrow.

Dada, Kolawole and Arikpo (2003) defined curriculum as the 'what' and 'how' of any educational enterprise. 'What' is the content or body of knowledge and 'how' is the procedure of methodology to be adopted. According to Rigg (1947), curriculum is the life and programme of the school, an enterprise-guided living; thus the curriculum becomes the main-stream of dynamic activities that constitute the life of young peoples and their elders. Foshay (1961)

noted that curriculum is all the experiences a learner has under the guidance of the school. Brubacher (1969) asserts that a curriculum is the ground pupils and teachers must cover in order to achieve the goals of education. Bobbit (1969) sees curriculum as the series of things that children and youths must do by way of developing abilities to do things that make up the adult life.

For Fafunwa (1974), curriculum means, a good environment in which education takes place; that is the child, the teacher, the subject, the content, the method, the physical, and psychological environment. He further provides a criterion definition as:

1. It must have a definite and dynamic objectives based on the value of the society and the need of the child as a citizen and a skilled individual
2. It must be flexible and must provide growth that is essential in order to meet the stated or implied objectives.
3. It must have built into it a process of constant evaluation to help determine the extent in terms of end product. While Tanner and Tanner (1975, p. 45) defines curriculum as:

The planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal social competence.

However, it is obvious that these varied conceptions and definitions of curriculum stems from scholars' views on the role of the school or any educational enterprise in achieving the educational goals of the society. And for any nation or society to make any remarkable progress, it must make a properly designed curriculum its priority. It is important therefore to note that the curriculum is intricately interwoven with the fabrics of the educational system. This is because society establishes school to ensure its survival: schools educate individuals to solve societal problems. That is why those prized culture, attitudes and skills of the society were integrated into the school curriculum through its content and process of education.

These are reasons curriculum is seen as the instrument through which the school performs those essential functions entrusted by the society, hence the belief that the process of education at any level cannot be fully described without a meaningful and workable curriculum. A good curriculum both in content and design will always help

in the achievement of any educational enterprise. Little wonder Kolawole (2012) described **curriculum** and **education** as **'Siamese twins'.** Curriculum is the means through which education is transmitted. Without curriculum, education has no vehicle, nothing through which to transmit its values. Curriculum is at the heart of the educational enterprise and it is used as an instrument with which to implement societal educational goals. This discourse will look at the following:

- Indigenous Education
- Islamic Education
- Pre-Independent Colonial Education Curriculum
- Pre-Independent Colonial Education and its Curriculum

Indigenous Education

Curriculum development in Nigeria is as old as the education enterprise itself. Every society, whether simple or complex has its own system for training and educating its young ones, therefore, education for the good life has been one of the most persistent concerns of men throughout history. Before the coming of the Europeansin the pre-independent Nigeria, there existed an indigenous system of inducting the young ones into the society and preparing them for adulthood. That was the indigenous educationwhich, in the words of Fafunwa (1974, p.15-16), emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values. Children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, initiation, recitation and demonstration. They were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking carving, knitting and so on. Recreational activities included wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, racing etc. While intellectual training included the study of local history, legends, the environment, poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, story-telling, story-relays etc.

The curriculum though informal, provided the people with basic instrumental skills, knowledge, attitudes, value systems and thought patterns deemed necessary for survival and for the maintenance of society and its culture (Ehindero, 1986). Fafunwa (1974) outlines the aims of traditional educations which among others were;

i. To develop the child's latent skills
ii. To develop character

iii. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authorities.
iv. To develop intellectual skills.
v. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards labour.
vi. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
vii. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Traditionally, this type of education was predominantly a community affair. The adult members of the community, individual or groups were expected to teach the child. Fafunwa (1974) also explained the methods adopted in the informal curriculum. The pervasive teaching learning options were participative apprenticeship system in which the learners watched, observed, practiced and demonstrated, while others were instruction, initiation rites into adulthood, games, role playing, peer teaching and self-tutoring (Meziobi, 1996) in Onyemerekeya (2004).

However, the apprenticeship system involved attaching the child to a 'master' craftsman in any craft of his/her choice where he/she stayed to learn the craft for a prolonged period of time before branching out on his own to become his/her own master. By being an active participant in the village square discussions, also children learn from the adults about their laws, culture, norms and traditions, children were initiated into adulthood through series of initiation rites. With these, they acquired vocational skills to be self-reliant citizens. Though this type of education is indigenous to the people, its traditional education curriculum was described as functional and relevant to the society.This is because it helped indigenous children develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and abilities which were meant to practically solve real life problems of the learners as well as that of the society as they arose at that time.

Islamic Education

The establishment of Islamic Education in Nigeria preceded the coming of the Europeans. As confirmed by Fafunwa (1974, p. 70). "Islam predated Christianity in Nigeria by over 300 years". However, since Quaranic education is synonymous with Islamic religion, this invariably meant that Quranic schools predated the 1842 landmark for the establishment of Western education in the pre-independent Nigeria.

Islamic education was offered in two types of schools, the tablet school and higher school. The tablet schools were meant for beginners and it is usually owned by individual proprietors; however the period for classes were not well defined because it varies from teacher to teacher. Lessons were held in open air and the content of the curriculum was not uniform. The pupils do not wear uniforms and the teachers' qualification also varies. Some had minimal education, while others were versed in Islamic studies alone. The curriculum emphasized the teaching and memorization of the Quran, Arabic Alphabets and language.

The learners however graduated from the tablet schools to higher schools where they were taught comprehension of the verses of the Quran they had memorized. Other subjects like writing and Arabic were also taught at this level. The predominant method of teaching at this level was grammar translation method. The Islamic education of the time however was relevant and functional to the Muslim communities even at that time.

Pre-Independent Colonial Education Curriculum

The year 1842, which was assumed to be the second encounter with the European in this direction, marked the real activities of the missionaries which made a significant educational impact on Nigeria. It however, began with the arrival of Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman and Mr. and Mrs. de Graft of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in Gold Coast (now Ghana). Also, the church missionary society (CMS) established a mission and a school upon arrival in Badagry from Sierra-Leone in 1843 and as well established a mission and two schools. These activities were later extended to Abeokuta where they built a mission, church and a school. The American South Baptist Mission in 1853, the Roman Catholic Missions (RCM) in 1868, the qua Ibos and Primitive Methodist Missions in about 1890, and the United Presbyterian Church in 1946. Each of these

missions built churches and schools in different towns in Nigeria. There were stiff competitions among the churches in this area, even though the programme of the mission varies to some extent; the curriculum of their schools had fairly uniform aims and objectives.

One major objective common to all the missions according to Fajana (1978) in Onyemerekeya (2004), was that missionary education aimed at converting the children to Christianity. Invariably, mission education was to give religious instruction to win people from 'paganism', emphasizes the development of native languages, and the identification and training of evangelical leaders according to (Taiwo, 1980). In addition to literacy education that was religious in content, vocational training was also pursued by the missions. The goals of Missionary education have been organized as follows by Omieibi-Davids in Onyemerekeya (1997) as follows:

1. To prepare the soul of Nigeria for life after death
2. To create new social conditions by eradicating superstition and old social order.
3. To provide general education in English
4. To train boys in various vocations such as carpentry, tailoring and painting.
5. To give systematic training for teachers and Pastors.

However, there was no common curriculum among the missions. Each missionsand indeed each school within certain missions, followed its own devices, based solely on the teacher in charge. The basic curriculum in all the schools consisted principally of the Four (4) R's Reading, Writing [A] Rithmetic and Religion. Religion however was either central or supporting theme in all facet of schooling. The Holy Bible and the Quran were used as the major textbooks. However, with the curriculum providing for local needs and culture, girls were taught sewing and farming for boys. At the primary school level, the content of the curriculum in addition to the 4Rs included vernacular, singing, nature study and basic handicraft, while at the secondary level, subjects taught consisted of scriptures, Greek, History, Roman, History, Philosophy and Recitation.

In discussing the missionary curriculum in Nigeria, Ehindero (1986) asserted that 'the curriculum was narrow, shallow in scope and limited in content. He stated that the most dominant factor of the curriculum was

its cultural irrelevance to the lifestyles and environment of the people.

Pre-Independent Colonial Education and its Curriculum

The missionary had the sole responsibility of determining the contents that were taught in Nigeria at different levels of education before 1882. However, the colonial government finally intervened openly in educational matters through ordinances that were promulgated to control the proliferation of mission schools, the poor curricular content of the mission schools, poor quality teachers and quality of teaching were the main reason for the 1882 Education Ordinance, which was an important Landmark in curricular development in Nigeria. The 1882 and 1887 Education Ordinances which covered Lagos and Gold Coast colonies were aimed at standardizing the curriculum to ensure quality and relevance. This ordinance sort to achieve among other things;

i. The establishment of a board of education to supervised the activities of the schools.
ii. Stipulation of subjects to be taught.
iii. Specifying the language for school, instruction and
iv. The quality of teachers to be engaged.
v. They marked the beginning of a defined relationship between the missionaries and the government.
vi. They provided recurrent grants based on the system of payment by result, which means grants were given based on the abilities of pupils to pass examinations.

Furthermore, to ensure compliance, only schools that adhered to the above were given financial assistance in form of grants. This created two types of schools, assisted and unassisted schools. The ordinance also identified subjects that are important part of the curriculum content, subjects like; reading, writing, English language, arithmetic and needle work for girls. History and geography were regarded as electives. However, the status of religion was de-emphasized in government schools, while in government assisted schools, pupils were not to attend religious functions against their will. Parent consent must be sought before students could take part in religious instruction.

It must be noted that in spite of this commendable move, the curriculum was still narrow and defective as it did not reflect the

needs and aspirations of the learners as well as that of the society. The medium of instruction also became a controversy, while the missionary schools regarded vernacular as indispensable instruction for evangelization, the colonial government however saw vernacular as potential danger that should be eliminated from the schools.

The Phelps-stokes report of 1925 had criticized the type of curriculum the missionaries presented to African pupils, noting that the curricula were bookish, irrelevant, and classical because it reflected the values, norms and ideas of the missionaries (Hindered, 1958). He argued that the content of the subjects taught in schools came straight from Britain and America, little or no attempt was made to use local materials in the teaching of such subjects, most especially history and geography.

And so, the report handed in by this commission emphasized the need.

> To adapt education to the mentality, aptitude occupation and tradition of various people, conserving as much as possible all sound and healthy elements in the Fabric of their social life …

According to Urevbu (1990) the Phelps-stokes report attempted to relate the content of the school curriculum to the background of the learners, using local materials in teaching subjects like history and geography. Also, the report insisted that secondary schools' curriculum, whose content has been scripture, Greek, Latin, Roman History, Philosophy, Recitation, European geography which emphasis a rote memorization (development of the intellect) (cognitive development) should now focus on academic, vocational, agriculture and technical education and more importantly the report of the commission recognized the importance of local languages in education.

The Phelps stokes report and the 1925 memorandum introduced new dimensions into the curriculum.

a. They advocated for a balanced and diversified curriculum as opposed to irrelevant and Europeanized content of the Elite schools.
b. They emphasized the introduction of vocational education into the school curriculum so that learners can be developed in all ramifications (cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor).
c. They provided guidelines for the planning of the curriculum.

However, despite all of these curricular reforms, the curriculum according to Nigerians was still defective, irrelevant to the experiential background of the learners. With the attainment of Independence, criticisms of the inherited colonial and missionary education curriculum in Nigeria increased. Through public debates, seminars and worships, Nigerians brought into focus the inherent weaknesses in the colonial education which consequently resulted in to the September 9th – 12ths, 1969 curriculum conference, which marked the beginning of efforts by Nigerians to develop a locally relevant curriculum in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Conclusively, therefore, every society whether simple or complex has its own system for training and educating the young ones and such, education for the good life has been one of the most persistent concerns of man throughout history. However, because indigenous education failed to conform to the ways of the Western system of education, it is assumed it does not have a curriculum. If education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or the young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are positive value to the society in which he lives. Then, all educational system whether traditional or western-oriented, seeks to achieve the same goal, which is to integrate an individual to be functional members of their society. Irrespective of curriculum contents, methods, organizations and evaluation methods designed for the purpose. And so, they all operate within the confines of a particular curriculum whether it is documented or not. Woolman (2001) outlines some specific school practices in the area of learning methods. 'Indigenous reliance on field experience, active discovery and close observation reflects a progressive pedagogy and seems more likely to promote retention of learning than classroom-based book and test methods that dominate Western Schooling (pg 31). Since education all over the word is the key to development, and the curriculum is the heart of education. No society ever develops independently of her educational processes whether formal or informal, and since both education and curriculum are Siamese twins (Kolawole, 2012). In the pre-literate society, education that was mainly informal marked the degree of socialization. In the literate era, education is formal and held behind a wall called classroom in a school and was largely systematized and was largely

complemented by the socialization process. It must therefore be noted that the engine for firing development in both literate and pre-literate societies is the curriculum.

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