

Curriculum and Teaching in Nigeria

Edited by
U M O Ivowi

A Book of Readings in Honour of
Prof. Mrs Akon E O Esu
University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State

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Curriculum and Teaching in Nigeria

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ISBN: 978-978-943-236-3

Published by

Foremost Educational Services Ltd, Lagos.

7 Jaiye Oyedotun Street, Magodo GRA

Shangisha, Lagos, P O Box 11837,

Ikeja, Lagos State

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Abuja: P O Box 4983, Garki, Abuja

Printed in Nigeria by

The CIBN Press Limited

7, Turton Street, off Commercial Avenue,

Yaba, Lagos.

Cover design and page layout

The CIBN Press Limited

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Printed by:

The CIBN Press Limited

7, Turton Street, Sabo-Yaba, Lagos.

Tel: 08063385152, 08057820799

Foreword

This compendium of quality contributions by 23 of Nigeria's most highly experienced academics in the field of Education is a most befitting *Festschrift* to the life and work of our respected colleague, Professor Ason Esu Obukho Esu, widely acknowledged as 'an academic prodigy...a distinguished and formidable beacon in the Nigerian education sector'

The book is in itself a prodigy volume. It covers the specialized areas of Curriculum and Pedagogy in a broad-field sense. Beginning with the basics (The Fundamentals of Curriculum Development) the contributors have dug deep into, and expatiated widely on the specifics of models of curriculum development and curriculum principles as applied to a variety of subject areas and levels of formal education. The book also analyses the major trends in Nigeria's curriculum development experience, highlighting the lessons for theory and practice from our experiences over the years.

Curriculum and Pedagogy are the grassroots areas of the discipline of Education. These are the levels at which high sounding educational philosophies and theories are translated into educational 'do-ables' - the level at which the intended learner-transformation goal of the process of education is engineered and practicalised. The book provides adequate guides to this 'educationeering' process by offering illustrative insights into the general and subject area pedagogy, drawing from the rich practical experiences of the contributors.

Professor Esu distinguished herself in academics, educational management, nurturing young talents and community service. This book has in diverse ways captured these complementary roles of all academics worthy of the name. The 23 chapters have been written in a language that will appeal to a variety of stakeholders, in keeping with the dictum that Education for All (by All, with All) is the Responsibility of All.

Students and teachers at the tertiary level will find in the book an inexhaustible mine of ideas and methodological guides for the further pursuit of research and quality teaching/learning in Curriculum and Pedagogy. Practising teachers and institutional level managers should be able to exploit this invaluable resource in analysing their operational contexts and applying responsive curriculum management and practical pedagogy. For the general reader and other partners in the education development process, the book provides adequate

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CHAPTER 1

PROF. ESU'S LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

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and
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Early Life and Philosophy

Professor (Mrs) Akon Esu Obukho Esu is an academic prodigy, a distinguished and formidable beacon in the Nigerian educational sector, quintessential woman of substance and an internationally trained scholar, who has, for more than three decades, greatly and actively championed the development of education in Nigeria and beyond. Prof. (Mrs) Akon Esu was born on 20 August 1954 into the royal family of late Chief John Ebek Ukpogote of Ukpogote Ebek Dynasty in Oduonim-Oro, Urueoffong/Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. She is number 12 in the family of many children.

Her life philosophy is to render service to humanity as well as direct people to the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour. It is also to live an exemplary and purposeful life worthy of emulation. These have guided her in her relation and interaction with people generally and with particular reference to those in lower segments of the society. This explains her splendid interactions with those who lived with her as she treated them as if they were her own biological children.

Education

After her primary school education at the Methodist School, Oruko, from 1959-1966, she attended Mary Hanney Secondary School, Oron from 1968-1972 where she obtained the West African School Certificate in Grade two. She attended College of Education Uyo from 1974-1977 where she bagged the Nigeria Certificate in Education

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CHAPTER 17

CULTURAL INFLUENCE IN STUDENTS' LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The focus of majority of previous studies on culture was on teaching and learning of culture. Previous studies have shown a symbiotic relationship between indigenous education and culture but there is paucity of research on cultural influence in students' learning in Nigeria. Therefore, parents, students and government should be careful the way they imbibe foreign culture, so that it will not have an adverse effect on the identity of Nigeria as a nation. The traditional culture says much about us and it serves as our identity. It is therefore, suggested that all hands must be on deck so that our traditional culture will not be eroded by foreign culture.

Introduction

The indigenous Nigerian education had been in existence before the advent of the colonialists. In the Nigerian educational system, culture cannot be separated from the system. In other words, every society has distinct culture before the arrival of foreigners. In this system of education, ceremonies and festivals, demonstration, imitation, initiation, practical arts and the host of others are objectives of Nigerian education, but all these are also part of culture in the society (Bolarin, 2009). When we talk of Nigerian education, we must remember that culture and indigenous education are inseparable. In view of this, Fafunwa (1974) in Akingbote, Oduolowu and Lawal (2001) highlighted the following as regards culture:

- to develop character;
- to inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority; and
- to understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large and so on.

Here, it is clear to one that in Nigerian Society, these are expected training to be given to the young ones which is also part of culture in the system. That is, Nigerian culture demands good character, respect for elders, promotion as well as appreciation of our culture.

However, the arrival of the colonialists began to endanger the Nigerian valued culture. Before the advent of the Europeans, Africans valued their culture as a result, Omatseye (2005) intimates that man is a valuing organism because his culture, language, thoughts and emotions gravitate towards certain preferred objects or situation as significant. This reveals that Nigerian culture is rich.

However, the influence of modern communication technology, perhaps modernisation and post modernisation, continue to have effect on culture. This, Steger (2010) refers to as cultural globalisation which means 'the intensification and expansion of cultural flows across the globe' ushered in by foreign culture, which has been imbibed by Nigerian students and this has made them to alienate their preserved and enriched culture.

It is interesting to note that even among educationists who are renowned, scholars have jettisoned/abandoned their local languages. Failure to discuss with them in English language may make one to be labelled with different negative names. At this juncture, English language is not part of our culture but 'just' a language of means of instruction and a white man's language. For instance, both the literates and illiterates want to speak the English language.

There is a story that goes thus: a friend gave his son money to buy something but commanded the son to take a motorbike. Since, he wants to speak the white man's language; he said "make sure you climb a machine". You may agree with the writer that the innocent boy will believe that his father has spoken Queen's English. This, therefore, informs the level at which cultural influence has affected our students at different levels of education. Similarly, Folorunso (2006) exclaims thus:

What is more disheartening is that African (or is it Yoruba?) intellectuals just sit down theorizing and dumping everything that is indigenous as fetish, barbaric and out-dated. They are ignorant of their own culture and sad still; they are not very familiar with imported cultures they run after. They are neither here nor there (p.27).

The excerpt above reveals that intellectuals apart from modern information technology are also masterminds of cultural influence; this also affects our students, either positively or negatively. Thus, we refer to such intellectuals who jettison Nigerian culture as marginal men. At this level, it is imperative to know that culture is not a neutral concept, it is historical, specific, and ideological (Swingewood, 1997).

Discussing further on cultural influence on our students, there is need to mention food, dressing, names, hair-do among others. Observation has shown that Nigerian students make one to wonder if they are going for a party in terms of their hairdo. Also, in Nigeria for instance, the indigenous way of dressing among students is completely declining. To some learners indigenous way of dressing is primitive and not modern, yet to those who dress up in a way to advertise what they possess, they are a little bit better than a naked man or woman. In all, societies are fundamentally tightly knit, integrated organic folk communities which Tonnies referred to as '*gemeinschaft*' – integrated through what Emile Durkheim called conscience collective – such that in societies, each individual knows the traditional culture of every society (Billington, Strawbridge, Greensides and Fitzsimons, 1991).

Cultural Influence in Students' Learning

Meaning of Culture:

Culture has been defined in literature by various writers. A simple definition given by Bolarin (2011) explains that culture means our way of life. It is the way we do things make us to be different from other people. She went further to add that our culture includes our language, our religion, the type of food that we eat, how we prepare our food, our way of dressing, the type of dresses that we wear, the way we greet, the ceremonies that we perform and how we perform them.

Similarly, Akinade (2001) defined culture as distinct characteristics of a group that are transmitted from one generation to another. For example, behaviour, values, attitudes, language, food, dresses, dance and beliefs. A more advanced and elaborate definition/explanation is given by Akinlaye (2003) when he states that culture is what makes man human or civic in the society. He went further by stating that the term "culture" refers to the universally learned and shared ways of behaving. It is a set of ready-made solutions to all the myriad problems that are encountered by individuals living together in a society and as such, culture is a learned behaviour, a way of life or

ways of tackling social problems that arise, and which have been worked out either very quickly or else over a long period of time.

Characteristics of Culture

Akinlaye (2003) identified the following characteristics of culture:

- 1) Culture is inferred from observation of behaviour of individuals in the society.
- 2) It exists prior in time to any given individual and continues beyond one's life span.
- 3) It is acquired or learned by individuals and manifested in their behaviour.
- 4) It includes rules, laws or other designs for obligatory, approved, permitted, disapproved, and forbidden actions or behaviour.
- 5) It is never completely static and uniform, but dynamic in the society.

Culture as rightly pointed out by Akinlaye (2003) is man's social heritage made up of social skills, knowledge, beliefs and customs. It is learned and shared through formal, informal and non-formal education either through imitation and experience through rituals, initiation and apprenticeship. Each society transmits its own specific social heritage or culture to its successive members. Having defined/explained the term culture, it is pertinent to discuss the effect of culture on learning, if any.

Effect of Culture on Learning

Having defined/explained the term culture, it is pertinent to discuss the effect if any of culture on learning especially students' learning. In the preceding paragraphs, it has been clearly mentioned that culture is learned, it is not inborn or genetically transmitted. As a result of this, when people are exposed to alien or foreign culture, the tendency is there for them to imbibe part of the alien culture.

Learning has been defined by many writers. Akinade (2001) defined learning as a relatively more or less permanent change in behaviour or potential behaviour that comes about as a result of practice or experience. It is not caused by health, emotions, motivation or some physiological changes such as weariness, fatigue or boredom, instincts, maturation or the use of drugs. In the same fashion, Bolarin (2010) defined learning as a relative change in behaviour as a result of experience. Every day, Nigerians like most people in other parts of the world get exposed to other people's culture through the television, Internet, telephone and other electronic gadgets. Since culture is learned, it becomes pertinent to say that there is no way of preventing foreign culture from interfering with indigenous Nigerian culture.

However, there is the need to sound a word of caution that as we get bombarded with other people's culture, efforts must be made to ensure that it is not every aspect of foreign culture that will or should be imbibed. Unfortunately, events unfolding show that Nigeria as a nation is becoming a dumping ground for all sorts of foreign or alien culture. Nigeria's cultural values are gradually getting eroded.

Ojo (2014) raised the following questions in his article on the erosion of Nigerian cultural values: How do you identify an American, Indian, a Ghanaian and an Australian? What tells them apart? It is their culture. Their geographical locations, languages, food and drinks, fashion and style, literature, music, names, mores and values, all serve as means of identity. Ojo identified neo-colonialism as an affliction that has made Nigerians to despise their own customs and traditions while upholding American and European ways of life. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been largely identified as the means through which Western world is carrying out its cultural imperialism. Today, Nigerians in particular, students are being systematically and subtly brainwashed to jettison their own cultural identities through the use of all sorts of electronic gadgets such as the traditional media (made up of radio, television, billboard, newspapers and so on) and the social media (made up of YouTube, Facebook, twitter and blogs powered by the Internet). The more our young, especially the students, watch Western films, reality shows, beauty pageants, news, fashion and styles, the more they will like to be like the producers. It is very important to note that cultural diffusion is desirable as no nation is an island on itself. However, efforts must be made to ensure that Nigerian culture is not portrayed as inferior to foreign culture.

Ojo (2014) identified some areas or aspects of Nigerian culture that are gradually getting eroded especially by young Nigerians and to which attention should be focused to ensure that the erosion is halted. They are the Nigerian traditional names, mode of dressing, mode of greeting, our traditional food, our music and movies and Nigerian languages. Although change is inevitable in every society, Ritzer (2000) sees change as an orderly process. We live in an age when change has become a tradition. The learning and teaching activities seem to be the most hit by this turmoil of change and innovations existentially occasioned by the multi-dimensional faces of the info-tech, scientific and technological inventions of our 3rd Millennium age (Stan, 2004).

In the Nigerian society, new things continuously evolve in a variety of ways. There is scientific transformation from primitive to civilised,

modern to post-modern, rural to urban, old to new, analogue to digital and so on. All these scientific and technological transformations cut across every aspect of human socio-economic ways of life, including medicine, fashion, auto-mobile, housing, education, industry and banking. The society goes through development from one stage to another. A change may be recorded through invention and contacts which sometimes have devastating effects or consequences on the entire fabric and lifestyle of the society most especially on the norms and values of Nigerian culture.

Conclusion

Nigerians and Africans in diaspora have an enriched culture that can be emulated and adopted by the Western world. Nigerian students should cultivate the attitude of showing interest in their indigenous culture. The traditional culture says much about us and it serves as an identity. It is, therefore, suggested that all hands must be on deck so that our traditional culture will not be eroded by foreign culture.

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