

CULTURE, EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY: TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION INTO NIGERIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

By

Imo Martin Obot (*Ph.D*)

Department of Educational Foundations

University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria.

Abstract

Culture and education are inseparable. Effective education then should respond importantly to cultural needs. On the contrary, education in Nigeria appears not to serve most of our cultural needs as it is in most cases incapable of offering effective responses to social challenges. Using the analytical and prescriptive methods of philosophy, this research articulated some elements of culture based education to expose the conditions of Nigerian education. Some basic principles for an effective culture based education drawn from the characteristics of culture in our Nigerian context were outlined attempting to provide answers to related questions raised. The paper concluded that some aspects of our education do not reflect Nigerian culture as the case should be. Some relevant suggestions were made.

Key word: *Culture, education, Philosophy, integration and effectiveness*

Introduction

The researcher severally observes many situations that appear to suggest that our education fails to address many of our challenges. Most of those who are said to be educated lack expected skills and behavioural changes to match with the education received and social role expectations (Obot, 2017). Some school leavers appear to lack the capacity apply skills expected to have been acquired. Thus Nigerians appears to lack necessary capacity to convert their abundant human and material resources into wealth and solutions to our economic challenges.

Again, education cannot curb moral challenges in the Nigerian society. Delinquency among adults and youths are on the increase. These include: armed robbery, prostitution, bribery, violence, kidnapping, vandalisation of common property, stealing of public funds, election, examination malpractices, communal and religious violence (Eyo, 2002).

Many efforts at changing and importation of school systems have not given the desired solutions to the problem (Essien, Akpan & Obot,2015). This includes seeking for education outside Nigeria Education outside the context of its cultural formulation and overall objectives may not be effective (Bruner,1996).

The importance of culture for effective education cannot be overemphasized. Although many theories on education have highlighted this, this is not often effectively reflected in actual practices. This study will contribute significant solutions to these unwholesome situations and related ones.

Culture and education

Culture has been variously defined. Culture can be understood as a people's shared patterns of behaviour, mental constructs, responding, interacting with one another and situations and transmitting same through ideas, language and symbol. It is the totality of a person's outlook (Banks, Banks and

McGee,1989). Damen (1987) understands culture as learned and shared human patterns or models for living including their patterns of social interactions. It is the shared knowledge and schemes of perceiving, interpreting, expressing and responding to the social realities (Lederach, 1995). It is also the entire characteristics and knowledge of a particular society expressed in language, religion, cuisine, social habit, music and arts (Zimmerman, 2015). From the foregoing, culture can be said to be a total of what a people have cultivated themselves to become, their understanding and means of sustainable expression of themselves for future purposes.

As a content to be transmitted, culture relates to a learner in not less than six different ways: (1) It is the totality of who the learner is socially (2) It is the embodiment of the learner's understanding of who he is (3) It is the learner's patterns of communication with his environment (4) It is the totality of the learner's understanding of his environment (5) It is the totality of the learner's understanding of environmental changes and challenges resulting from such changes (6) It is the model and materials upon which the learner constructs his cognitive, affective and psycho-motor energy for application to manage his environment towards developing and affirming who he will further want to become. Culture then is the cultivated social strategies of the learner, using his past to affirm his presence towards the security of his future.

According to Temple (2015), education is a process which people in a particular culture go through in search for cognitive abilities, skill and attitude which enable them to live a worthwhile life within the ambience of their environment. It also a process of reconstruction or reorganization of our experiences in order to acquire and give meaning to such experiences and also increase our ability to manage subsequent experiences (Dewey,2016). Still, it is a process whereby worthwhile activities are carried out by the learner as experiences that build up his cognitive abilities and skills so as to be able to interact positively with his environment for his good and that of his society. For Aderonke (2015); Obot (2015) and Whitehead(1929) education is a process whereby the accumulated knowledge and values of a particular people are translated into a practical way of life of the people such as their attitude, customs, religion, notion of time, traditions and belief. Education can be said to be a process of developing in the learners the necessary skills to interpret, understand, and communicate valuable ideas responsibly through his actions with his environment.

Education relates to a learner in not less than three ways:

- (1) It involves the means by which the learner comes to understand his physical and nonphysical resources, capabilities and the possibilities before him.
- (2) It involves the learner's struggles to realize his valuable social role expectations.
- (3) It also involves learner's psycho-motor experiences as means for cultivating sustainable ways of energy application towards personal and social development.

Culture is a learner's way of integrating his past into his present experiences and developing valuable skills to manage his future for his benefits and that of his society.

From the above, culture and education are inextricably related. While culture creates education by offering the nature of its processes together with the content, education transmits cultural values. Thus, for Aderonke (2015), without the proper integration of the culture of the learner, education cannot effectively accomplish its task. Again for him, it is the cultural beliefs, norms, traditions, needs and

aspirations both of the individual and that of the society that should be combined to formulate educational policies and the curriculum content of any education at any level in Nigeria.

Nigeria, Education and Culture

The importance of culture – base education for the development of a nation can never be over emphasized. According to Aderonke (2015), Culture importantly transmits values which can be adopted for social interaction, peace building and fostering of unity among people of different races, tribes and languages, it specifies language differences, promotes and identifies a people. It is also useful for child bearing, child rearing and family planning. Culture therefore as a content and model of education contains experiences that are inexpedient for effective education for individual and social development.

Over the years, Nigeria has always expressed a high conviction on the importance of culture in education process especially for affective development. As early as 1977, Nigerian educational aims included the inculcation of the right types of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society (FCN, 1977). To make education to be further culture based, the same document included among the aims of education the learner's acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FGN, 1977). This is to say that this policy expected that learning shall be learner – centered (LC) and learning experience together with the aims of the learning shall be picked from the things that form part of the way of life of the learner. Mental abilities, skills, values and attitude are all aspects of culture and their use in education reflects their product as cultural relevance towards learner's ability for social relevance (Vyogotsky,1978;Udoh,2010; Obot,2015).

More specifically the Nigerian National Policy on Education (1981) included as one of the major aims of education the development and projection of aspects of the Nigerian culture such as art, languages and the dignity of labour. Education in Nigeria aimed at developing the learner based primarily on his culture. Education was also shared expected to contribute to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others in our society , bring about national and global unity based on world cultural heritage which includes the universal respect for human life and dignity (FGN, 1981, 2004).

National Policy on Education (2004) emphasized the need for continuous expansion of education and training facilities to respond to the cultural needs of the learner (FGN, 2004). Very importantly this same policy adopted a realists's and pragmatic approaches to education with its emphasis on learner's cultural experiences and learner – centeredness (LC) in the choice of activities in education process as a strategy for the maximization of learner's capacity for self-development and self-fulfillment as part of community needs (FGN, 2004). This is to say that community needs which are mostly cultural should determine education processes and aims. To realize this, this same policy emphasized self-learning as an effective approach to education process. Self-learning, according to naturalists such as Bruner (1966) and Rousseau (1979), foster learning towards culture - based skills and development. Thus it also emphasized that every child should learn in the language of his immediate environment (FGN, 2008).

Aderonke (2015) identified only negligible aspects of the Nigerian culture in the Nigerian education at the colonial stage. Such aspects include only the culture of respect for elders, hygiene, feeding, dressing

and greeting. He is of the opinion that the actual implementation of the post independence education was done with an education curriculum that laid emphasis on literacy and numeracy as a foundation for scientific and western technology.

Some scholars have identified the poor cultural relevance of our education process as one of the causes of the much talked about problems of Nigerian education today, lacking the capacity to effectively provide adequate solutions to current problems in the Nigerian society. For example, Temple (2015) is of the opinion that education has been effective in Nigeria as long as school was seen, planned and implemented as a community which is no longer the case. He identifies this culture based deficiency as a major source of the low effectiveness of our education process as compared to the input.

Characteristics of a non-culture based education

An education that lacks cultural ingredient, Nigerian education appears to lack significantly the characteristics of internal purpose and genuine freedom that should characterize a process of learning towards personal and social problems. By internal purpose here refer to a purpose that aims at an education process which focuses on the interest of the learner himself and not on the interest outside the ambience of the learners' benefit and that of his society. This is no doubt an influence from capitalism on education as such philosophy often desire to tilt educational processes and objective to their needs (Barrow &woods, 1982). The characteristic of an education process without internal purpose may include that which:

- (1) The aim is perennial or essentialist in nature based of the original initiator (Obot, 2015).
- (2) The curriculum lacks contents picked from the learner's personal and cultural needs
- (3) The educational activities do not reflect the learner's personal or culture.
- (4) Learner's culture is not reflected in the choice of the content
- (5) The method and facilities of teaching and learning do not consider the learner's needs and freedom.
- (6) The language of teaching and learning lack the cultural symbols of the learner.

The result of this type of education is often the alienation of the learner from himself. The learner is left to be at constant conflict and disharmony between himself and his educational outcome (Barrow &woods, 1982). Putting these another way Mazon (1959), Abiogu (2015) commented that the British education process in Nigeria resulted in the socio-political somersault and economic stagnation of the learners instead of the otherwise. He went further to point out that colonial education essentially intended to train colonials not citizens of a free notion or people who were expected to develop the capacity to think for themselves. He articulately added that English education is good for the English, while American education is good for the Americans (Abiogu, 2015). Referencing Azikiwe (1934), Abiogu (2015) pointed out that education should be always in service of the human person who is the learner. This can only be achieved through an education that seeks to cultivate in learners the cultural and moral values peculiar to his context. In this condition his society becomes an appropriate laboratory with correspondent equipment to experiment on his experiences towards progress and need satisfaction.

Effects of a non-culture based education in Nigeria

It has been observed that even many educational researches and activities do not relate to the learners. Observing this, British Hillage report (1998) as quoted in Pring (2015) has it that many of such:

- (1) Do not provide answers to questions asked by government which can assist in decision making as alternative policies that are workable on educational problems itself
- (2) Do not after all help or are not very relevant to teachers in their actual practices in education process.
- (3) Are rather fragmented or contain internal inconsistencies which do not create coherence or are not reliable for the needed basis for effective education practices or formulation of effective educational policies
- (4) Are often politically motivated and exclusive.

More specifically, Schensul, Berrero, Garcia (1985) observed that most of the cultivations in educational theories including experts in educational anthropology are not actually used to determining actual educational practices. They observe that most anthropologists who are scholars on human culture and development often do not relate the results of their researchers to the practices of education in classroom and community settings. According to above scholars some of the reasons for these include the use of educational methods that are exclusive of the findings of ethnography which is culture oriented. Instead such methods which include experimental designs, use of quantitative data are used. Also is the detachment of educational researchers from actual daily human activities within learner's life settings. Again, modern studies on man as a learner find it difficult to introduce current ideas about culture, inter cultural communications and the importance of ethnicity as a component of cultural studies into school curricula and even community programs (Shensul Berrero and Garcia, 1985). Where these dichotomies exist, there is bound to be a dichotomy between "the ought" to be of educational outcome and the "is" of it. Can this observation also relate to Nigerian situation?

Nigerian situation is not very different. There is a significant gap between educational theories and practices in Nigeria. This can be seen in many inappropriate use of methods, exclusive experimental designs and quantitative data in education. These often do not really reflect the actual life experiences of the population under study. These also leave much of the theoretical results of educational researches and theories abstract and non-applicable in solving cultural problems.

Traditional education in Nigeria saw education as a product. Education was seen only as an aspect of the entire culture of the people to provide learners with the necessary skills and capacity for their future role expectations (Obot, 2015; Udoh, 2010). It was meant to cultivate in learners intellectual capacity to understand their experiences, develop skills and positive attitude related to them. On the contrary it is not difficult to observe that Nigerian educational outcomes often produce people in different negative categories in relation to skill and capacity building; some without skill, some with skills that are not useful to the learner and the society in addition to the frequency of observable negative vices. These have brought about an ugly situation in the labour market where employers are searching for employees and unemployed are not employable (Udoh,2010).

One of the serious consequences of education not being responsive to the cultural environment can be seen when its outcome cannot contribute effectively to social development. Development involves acquiring adequate capacity to sustainably manage the human and material resources to the benefit of the people (Kellner,2015) . In spite of the significant number of educated people in Nigeria, the ability to effectively manage our resources remains still inadequate. We can say with borrowed words from

Dewey (1916) that education devoid of cultural elements in Nigeria are responsible for the non-responsiveness of our education to our desired level of development as in civilized societies. In the idea of Dewey (1916) education if processed according to our cultural experiences can lead us to where other civilized people are. He believes that an education that limits the learning activities, limits objects of attention or interest of learners to things merely abstract without adequate affinity to the culture of the learning environment cannot satisfy the human mind to bring about practical actions. Conducting Nigerian education according to her culture will assist our learners to see and acquire the capacity to transform adequately our natural resources and other objects in our environment into instrumentations of national development. Without this, our resources would still be seen as end and not means that can facilitate national development.

Again, Nigerian education sometimes appears to produce intelligence without value in most learners. Aristotle had warned against this as Kant (1952) later did same. Kant (1952) insisted that right value and moral should be the significant measure of any training process. Acquired physical excellence or cognitive excellence through education without value and morality leads one to becoming a brute and a wicked man. Culture is the only vessel that conveys value and morality effectively into education.

Nigeria decries today the abundance of negative vices among her citizenry. For example, corruption appears to be on the increase inspite of our education. In addition there is the abundance of unpatriotic actions among the citizenry such as bribery, vandalisation of public property and utilities and other negative attitudes towards our laws and constitution. All these point also to the possibility of a poor cultural base of Nigerian education process especially in practice.

Effective integration of culture into education process in Nigeria

What are the potentials of culture that can ensure effectiveness of education? (i) Culture is not always physical in structure (ii) It may be inclusive or exclusive (iii) It is communal (iv) It is value laden (v) It may be normative or descriptive (vi) It is always problem solving (vii) Intelligible (viii) It is always cumulative (ix) It is always a collection (x) It possesses internal consistency (xi) It is complementary (xii) Orderly (xiii) Purposeful (xiv) Flexible (xv) Democratic (xvi) It has its language and symbols of communication (xvii) It can be transmitted. Effective education should: 1. Involve both physical and nonphysical aspects of learners 2. It should be local but global 3. It should be need sensitive 4. Involve principles 5. Built on and consistent with established knowledge 6. Guarantee learners freedom with meaning.

How can it be effectively integrated? The stages include: (1) During Policy formulation (2) Curriculum formulation (3) Curriculum implementation in the actual teaching and learning process in classroom. Education policy formulation should balance up the social demands and the personal experiences of the learners with cultural values (Bruner, 1966). Curriculum should draw its contents from cultural experiences. The implementation should be sensitive to learner's approach to problem solving.

Some suggested interventions

Thus: (1) There is first the need to ensure that our teacher education equips teachers with necessary skills on appropriate methods, techniques and strategies in classroom practices as part of socialization process (Obot, 2015). (2) Teaching and learning are to be carried out with the use of problem solving and inquiry methods such as discovery method, discussion method, exploratory method, hands on deck,

playway technique method such as are appropriate to learner's culture.(3) Purely quantitative data, quantitative analysis and experimental methods in educational practices should be minimized and used with care. This is because they do not exactly reflect the flexible characteristics of human culture especially in the aspects of freedom and individuation of learning approaches. Scientific truths are useless in education if they lack the quality or relationship to qualitative social applicability. In that same way, if they are not adjusted to the real life of the people, they cannot be socially effective as they should be. Truth of nature exposed through culture assists learners to see nature as instrument for social development and problem solving and not as ends. (4)Team work in the teaching and learning process assists learners to develop the capacity for effective social cooperation and social commitment as aspects of patriotism. Such team work should be towards a common task or problems. This will also assist the learner to see others in the society as collaborators, to develop the life of accepting common challenges and recognizing others as relevant in his personal and common aspirations and interests. (5)Home work is also a good strategy for a culturally based education. This assists the learner to cultivate the attitude of playing his social role with the help of his individual skills and capabilities while developing positive attitude to responsibilities. At the same time, the learner develops a good sense of freedom in task performance. (6)Actual learning in the classroom or outside the classroom including co-curricular activities is culturally effective when the social values of such learning environment are included among the learning objectives. Learning objectives should be culturally biased. However, indoctrination and conditioning should be avoided as much as possible (Fan,2004;Obot, 2013). (7)In addition, the teaching and learning process should be carried out in an orderly manner. Society, human faculties and nature are orderly. This assists the learner to appreciate the orderliness of nature and interrelationship in his environment. (8)Although culture consists of different social activities, each activity compliments the other in their hierarchical manner. In this way, the entire life span of any culture is one and all aspects are seen as being under the same unity. School curriculum and lessons should be accumulative. One lesson experience should lead to the other. Everything should be ordered to the overall social aim of the education. (11)Culture is proactive and for the good of each individual and the society as a whole. It contains free actions based on personal and social understanding and convictions. Education process that is culture based should include the mental cultivation of learners to assist learners' capacity for free rational decisions on appropriate personal and social actions. Such rational cultivation should effectively relate itself to social issues and the underlining principles . It should be based on theories that have social relevance to knowledge construction. The learner will also develop the attitude and skill to participate in social decision making. By this too the learner will see the effective functioning of the society as part of his responsibility. He will also be in a position to see the society and its achievements as identical with his person and development (Obot, Essien, & Akpan, 2014). Possibilities of alienation will be avoided. (12) However, culture itself is flexible and it also evolves. It responds to natural and environmental changes. The teaching and learning methods, techniques and strategies should not be static or stereotyped. The methods of education should also be flexible enough to accommodate changes in the learners' environment (Ekpo, Akpan, Essien, & Obot, 2009). At the same time, the learner will acquire positive models of adjusting to his environment (Obot, 2014, Akpan, Essien, & Obot, 2008). (13) Very importantly, the language of learning especially for children should be that of the learner's environment (FGN, 2004; Obot,2015).

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the study concludes that there exists in Nigerian education elements of non culture based education. Again, the level of ineffectiveness of Nigerian education processes is significantly as a result of of this. Indices of a non culture based education should be avoided in our education processes. Nigerian education should be careful be infused with elements. To make the education more effective, the culture based education processes should be formulated based on the characteristics our culture.

Suggestions

Based on the forgoing the following suggestions are made:

Educational anthropology which specifically studies the roles of culture in education should be introduced effectively into our educational researches and practices.

Philosophers of education in Nigeria should be more skillful in bringing the different needs of effective education into its theories and research practices by their effective analysis and integration of data and information provided by other specialized fields of education and studies.

Teacher education should be more sensitive to the cultural needs of the learner through skillfulness in curriculum implementation, attentiveness to the cultural relevance of learning objectives, choice of learning methods, techniques strategies and facilities.

The need to learn in one's own local language should be more realistically expressed in our educational policies and practices through the nature of admission into teacher education and the duty postings of our teachers.

The different languages should be developed and more text published in such languages.

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