

Transformative Education for Sustainable Development in Africa

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Abstract

The paper examined indigenous education in Africa and mental magnitude as one of the outcomes of educational process which can bring about desired transformation. The paper went further to explore the process of decolonising education in Africa. In conclusion, it is submitted that Africa's underdevelopment was to a great extent, a result of the imposed type of educational system by the west and Europe on Africa, which has proved to be a mis-fit for most African countries. The paper recommended decolonisation of education in Africa while the indigenous system of education should be accorded recognition through globalisation.

Key words: Transformative education, Decolonisation, Mental magnitude, Indigenous education, Sustainable development.

Introduction

The search for development across the globe particularly, in developing countries cannot be overemphasised. On a daily basis, efforts are made to surpass prevailing level of developments therefore, activities that will enhance social growth and development are planned and encouraged. Several societies have engaged in different activities to achieve development goals especially, in Africa and Nigeria in particular, but have always ended in mere efforts in futility.

The rate of development across the globe has left several countries in Africa behind, this necessitated the clamour for a way out of the predicament. In Nigeria, education is considered as 'instrument per excellent' (FRN, 2014) to achieve desired growth but inadequacies have always bedeviled the process. Inadequacies and issues which include poor/deficient educational facilities, examination malpractices, cultism, banditry, terrorism, religious bigotry, kidnapping, clamour for instant wealth, persistent strike actions by various staff unions in educational institutions, sexual harassment, abuse and immoralities have crippled the essence as well as the process of education in several African countries particularly, in Nigeria.

At different times, educational thinkers have identified various challenges facing Africa and her education. Nnamdi Azikiwe hinted about the manner in which Africans have been mentally

enslaved to decadent civilisation of the Europeans which made educated Africans to chase the shadows of Occidentalism and allows its rays to strangulate them for want of constructive leadership (Temple, 2015). In other words, education was meant to demolish colonial architecture in the psyche/mentality of Africans for total liberation, but it failed to achieve this. Obafemi Awolowo on his own saw the imminent collapse of education in achieving the desired objectives, he therefore advocated a decolonisation of the mind and proposing the idea of the universality of the right to education (Temple, 2005). His idea of mental magnitude becomes imperative in the search for the way out of development challenges facing Africa. An attempt at examining this shall be preceded to by a look at indigenous education so as to be able to grab the essence of mental magnitude in education.

Indigenous Education in Africa

Every society has the process of transmitting her norms, values, culture and traditions from one generation to another, this varies from one society to another. The indigenous ways of educating members is peculiar to each community of people especially, in Africa. Generally, education in African countries is communal in nature; every member of the community is involved in one way or the other in the development of the young ones, it is not done in

isolation. People are taught progressively as they grew in age and become matured, their education emphasised both physical and metaphysical realities (Kwapong, Addae and Boateng 2022; 18). Traditional education in Africa relied extensively on community efforts as earlier stated. According to Moumouni (1968) in Kwapong et al (2022; 18), education in Africa was so structured that from the time of birth to adulthood, the individual is subjected to well thought out plan of inculcation of values, discipline, education and all that are needed to ensure that learner or child becomes an adult who will be useful to the overall growth and development of society. Every child is seen as a member of a solid complex relationships aimed at imparting knowledge. Moumouni (1968) further stated that indigenous education involves psychological and social development of the child when he/she relates with others in games and role playing. It is experimental in nature because children learn by doing and practice until they become adept. Initiation also forms part of the African indigenous education; because it is employed in African education for physical exercises, sexual education, awareness of responsibilities and the harmonious acceptance of the child into the community.

Moumouni (1968) cited in Kwapong et al (2022) identified four (4) distinct characteristics of traditional precolonial African education which distinguishes it from any other system of education, this include; the early emphasis on the development of the child's physical endowments; the high regard accorded to character building and development which made the individual a moral and played a central role in traditional African education; it encompassed both physical and intellectual activities at every stage of the child's training since age groups, age and sex are made relevant in knowledge transmission for the younger generation and lastly; precolonial African education emphasised practical exercises in orature, music, art, history and general knowledge among others. At the end, precolonial African education produces the required artisans to stimulate the local economy, the political, social and cultural apparatus for the success of the various African societies.

Although, there is no outright curriculum however, members were taught progressively

based on their age and each of them matured with their education emphasising both the physical and metaphysical realities (Kwapong, et al., 2022;18). African indigenous education involves development of the child's intelligence psychologically, socially and intellectually. This is usually achieved when the child relates with other members of the society in games and role playing. It is pragmatic in nature; learning is accompanied by doing with a lot of experiential activities. In essence, African indigenous education encompasses early emphasis on the development of the child's physical endowments, the high regards for character building and development, physical and intellectual activities at every stage of child's development through emphasis on practical exercises in oratory, music, art history and general knowledge among others (Moumouni, 1968). This implies that African indigenous education engaged in the holistic development of the child through practical and experimental learning that made education not to be alien to the academic activities of learners.

In social interactions, the required artisans necessary for economic growth are provided. This ensured the employment of every individual in the society thereby preventing any form of unemployment. The system of education in indigenous African societies also ensures that political, cultural and social apparatus needed for smooth administration of societies are put in place. Therefore, issues of authoritarian rule and totalitarian leadership are prevented through the various forms of checks and balances put in place to guide and control monarchical rule in virtually all African societies. Contentment is also a hallmark in the traditional education. Every individual is taught through folklores and other means, the importance of contentment is required to eradicate all forms of contentions. Therefore, no individual is trained to acquire wealth at the expense of individuals and general welfare of the society. Thus, the peace necessary for development and progress are enjoyed in African communities. This is corroborated in the words of Lord Macaulay to the British Parliament on 2 February, 1935 when he stated that;

I have travelled across the length and breadth of Africa and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such

wealth I have seen in country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we can ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Africans think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them to be, a truly dominated nation.

This sums up and confirms that the type and process of education prevalent in Africa before the advent of Western education and European missionaries with colonialism was that which was peculiar and appropriate with the nature of Africa. In the analysis of British education in Africa, Mason (1959) cited in Abiogu (2015) stated that British education was to a greater extent responsible for the socio-political somersault and economic stagnation witnessed and experienced in Africa. Colonial education has its objectives which essentially is not to train citizens for a free nation or people who can think for themselves. This informs that a good education and its process will incorporate the cultural and moral values of the society which will set the recipients of such education apart from others in order to enable them utilise its possibilities. Therefore, societies are shaped by the kind of education they adopt hence, the peculiarities of Africans before the intrusion of colonialism and western education in their peaceful and uncompromising societies.

Mental Magnitude in Education

Nigeria stated the importance of producing learners who are free from ignorance, disease, etc through her process of education in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014). The document emphasised the need to raise learners' consciousness about ignorance, diseases, rights, obligations and the likes. This indicates or raises the issue of emancipation of learners. Emancipation involves freedom or liberation from undesirable situation which Odionye (2015) described as a release from a form of yoke or captivity in which one lives on the dictates of

another at his own detriment which could be political, economic or cultural slavery. Thus, education is to develop the spirit of agitation which must be positive towards self-actualisation of learners and development of the society.

In order to achieve emancipation through the teaching and learning activities, the senses of learners become imperative. Human sense is very vital in the acquisition of knowledge, it can be likened to idealists' notion of the mind and this attachment is essential in the process of acquiring knowledge. When the sense is alive, the mind becomes awake thereby bringing to life mental consciousness in man (Nnamdi Azikiwe in Enoh, 1995). Mental consciousness of learners is necessary in the emancipation of individuals to raise their consciousness for the acquisition and application of such knowledge. Hence, the importance of mental emancipation in the process and practice of education.

Odionye (2015) expressed Nnamdi Azikiwe's philosophy and ideas which strongly asserted the need for an educational system packaged towards mental emancipation in education. This hinges emancipation on the extent of mental consciousness or ability of learners in the acquisition and application of knowledge. Obafemi Awolowo declared that mental aspect of human being is very important and superior when compared to his physical element. To him, the spiritual element in man should have control over his emotions, desires and actions. He went further to state that the extent of mental alertness or consciousness otherwise referred to as mental magnitude is freedom from negative emotions like anger, fear, hate, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed; indulgence in the wrong types of foods and drinks, and in ostentatious consumptions and excessive or immoral craving for sex (Awolowo, 1968).

The advent of Europeans and Christianity in Africa brought another type of education; colonial or western education. The colonial administration in several African countries brought a system of education with the intention of complementing their activities in the new found land of Africa. In the real sense, colonial education was not conceived to develop Africans and their lands rather, it is to adapt Africans to colonial interests (Abrokwa, 2017), ensured dependence

of educational institutions with policies that does not allow the schools to be relevant to their societies and peoples in the colonies (Altbach, 2003). The Christian missionaries used education to evangelise, it prepares Africans to become subordinates in order to interpret, serve as clerical officers, catechists and teachers (Ajayi Ade in Kwapong et al., 2022), it generally devalued indigenous knowledge.

The Africans that had the privilege of attending educational institutions particularly, higher educational institutions, became estranged from their people who couldn't attend schools. They felt they are educated above their traditional culture and people hence, they consider their fellows and cultures as inferior to the cultures of the whites they have come in contact. They preferred foreign names, cultures and practices to the local or native African life style. Prof. Ayansola called them 'Marginal Man', whom he described as people of two cultures but citizens of neither. This is because they did not identify with their native cultures and are neither recognised nor accepted by the western/European culture they claimed to fall in love with. The educated Africans displayed unexpected mentality from anyone that passed through the process of education. Therefore, Obafemi Awolowo asserted that mental aspect of man is superior to the physical element, and this should take control over emotions, desires and actions of man. Obafemi Awolowo therefore, affirmed that every individual that passes through the process of education should possess and develop mental magnitude.

Unlike the colonial or western education, African indigenous education promotes cooperation, communalism, love, generosity, kindness and abstinence from all forms of immoralities which the former did not fully subscribe.

Transformative Education

One of the several expectations of educational system is building, moulding and developing learners to become transformed from ignorance or unrefined ways of life. Meroyi (2007) observed that;

an important expectation of any educational system is moulding individuals that pass through it

intellectually and morally, which results in the transformation of such individuals from ignorance or unrefined ways of life to knowledgeable lifestyle for all round development of both the individual and society.

In other words, transformation brings about change in outlook. Transformation involves change in appearance, form or characteristics therefore, transformation of learners is what is expected from the process of education. Transformative education can be considered as an educational system that picks the learner from where/what he/she is/knows, and works on the individual to make him/her a better or improved individual.

African indigenous education produces learners through the informal and non-formal education which develops learners into a personality the society desires. This is done through imitation, apprenticeship, initiation and participation in ceremonies. It is meant to acquire abilities, fundamental knowledge, skills and right attitudes to life which will help in orientating character and outlook in life. Buttressing on transformative education, Olatunde and Banda (2015) described transformative learning as a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our ways of being in the world. Dirkx (1998) in Olatunde and Banda (2015) x-rayed transformative learning through four (4) different approaches; Daloz's (1991) Developmental approach, Freire's Emancipation lens, Boyd's Extra rational perspective, and Mezirow's Cognitive/Rational approach. Transformative learning is intuitive and involves students' minds, bodies, spirit and social environments.

Daloz (1991) stated that Developmental approach entails learners' expectation of growth and development at their assumption in a school. Therefore, it is intuitive in nature; learners can critically think and develop knowledge that can change or transform them positively with the assistance of teachers. Freire's (2000) Emancipatory approach entails equipping learners with knowledge that can set them free from ignorance and liberate them from all forms of oppressions which prompt them to strive for social change. For Boyd's (1989) Extra rational approach

(cited in Olatunde et al, 2015), transformative learning involves the emotional and soul-filled dimensions of learning which takes into consideration the psychology of the 'self' that leads to a more integrated self. Mezirow's Cognitive/Rational approach or model of transformative learning lays primacy on previously held assumptions about the world to arrive at a new world view (Olatunde et al, 2015). It harps on, reflects on, as well as engage "reflective discourse" (Mezirow, 2000) for the desired transformation of the individual which will lead to social transformation. Thus, experience, critical reflection and reflective discourse becomes the main ingredient in the transformative learning process (Olatunde et al, 2015). All these are apposite to African indigenous education because they are activities that promote student autonomy, participation and collaboration which foster transformative learning according to Taylor (1998) in Olatunde et al, 2015.

Having expounded what African indigenous education is, it is now pertinent to find out how it can be sifted in order to return African system of education to the fore in developing learners to conform to the aspirations, cultures, norms and practices of their native land hence, the need for decolonisation of education in Africa.

Decolonising Education in Africa

In order for Africa to achieve sustainable development, a paradigm shift is necessary. The (over)dependence on theories and principles derived, generated and formulated from foreign lands and people, which is imported into and imposed on Africa must be given serious consideration. Kwapong, et al. (2022) asserted that to achieve the desired socio-economic development in Africa, education must be in sync with the unique challenges, experiences and values in Africa; this is because the problems facing African countries are unique and peculiar, it requires African solutions. Therefore, the continued dependence on foreign initiated systems of education will keep the continent behind others at all times.

The new education in African countries must strive to promote transformative learning. This is a type of education in which learners are free to manipulate learning experiences through participation and observation based on cultural practices and norms of the society. The futile

educational system is obviously attributed to imported theories and ideas forced on an unwilling sets of recipients. The unfamiliar ideas of the Europeans on the strange people of Africa cannot achieve relevant, peculiar growth and development rather, the growth and development will be at variance with the needs and aspirations of the natives.

An educational system based on the metaphysics, ontology, language, practices of African people will bring about developments that are relevant and peculiar to the societies. Japan refused infiltration of foreign cultures and became a super-power calling the shots in technology industry and market economy. This proves primacy of indigenous learning. This should dominate the curricula of educational institutions in Africa. Kwapong et al. (2022) emphasised that an indigenous approach to education should be premised on a collective understanding of the interconnectedness of African countries, their cultures, practices, peoples and the multifaceted problems confronting them. Therefore, a round peg is required in the round hole of Africa's educational system to set them free from the continued stagnation and dependence on foreign aids and rigmarole that has stigmatised African continent as the weeping child of the world.

Conclusion

It is appropriate to state categorically that Africans have been denied the opportunity to articulate their local experiences which they theorised and can be translated as well as interpreted. This is because the educational system and knowledge in Africa are found in their myths, fables, proverbs and traditions which are not extensively explored. This same knowledge and practices are employed by African people to address issues that confront them, these made them to experience peace with no challenges of unemployment, insecurity, hunger/famine, homelessness, which are catered for by their type of education, communal way of life that cares for the good of everyone and the society at large.

Recommendations

The paper has endeavoured to consider indigenous education, the need for decolonisation of education, and the quest for transformative education to address the lingering issues of

underdevelopment in Africa. It is hereby recommended that global attention should be given to indigenous education and knowledge in Africa. The importance of African indigenous education should be incorporated into the system and practice, this should also be globalised that is, recognised across the globe. In other words, Africa's system of education should be allowed to thrive so as not to stifle development aspirations of these growing nations.

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