Abstract

The African indigenous education has been in existence before the arrival of the colonial masters and their missionary activities in Africa. The Africans then had one occupation or the other which sustained their daily existence. The introduction of the missionary and later Western education systematically paralyzed the African indigenous education. The Western education which the colonial masters introduced into Africa was not according to the needs and aspirations of the people because it was academic-oriented instead of functional. The problem is that Nigeria has been advocating for self-reliance education but adequate effort and facilities have not been put in place to make it a reality. African indigenous education stresses on the acquisition of practical skills for self-reliance. It is relevant to the needs of the society because it imparts the inherited knowledge of practical skills, beliefs, values, traditions and elements of culture of the people from one generation to the other. However, its characteristics were examined as follows: It is community-oriented and functional in nature. The implications were also examined and it was discovered that it led to the teaching of social and civil education in Nigerian schools. It also led to the teaching of general studies courses in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The following recommendations were made. There should be regular training and re-training of general and vocational education teachers. Technical and vocational subjects could be made compulsory in Nigerian schools. Finally, African indigenous education has influenced modern education system in African countries such as Nigeria and Tanzania.

Indigenous Education in all the African Nations has been made an object of ridicule and mockery due to its methods of using the Oral medium and imitation to impart knowledge to the learners which are quite different from the methods used in Western education. While the indigenous Education is informal and used Oral medium in the transmission of knowledge to the learners, the Western Education is formal and uses the school system such as; primary, secondary, universities and colleges to transmit knowledge to the learners through the use of modernized methods and equipment, ranging from the mass media, and electronic systems and laboratory equipment. One of the methods the Western education has adopted in this era of modern education to impart knowledge through the use of electronic system is the computer system. At this period of computer age, whatever one wants to do in the education system is through the use of computer. This is the reason why the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) introduced the use of computer system during the JAMB examination while universities introduced Aptitude Test to ensure that brilliant students are admitted in Nigerian universities. It is therefore mandatory that candidates sitting for these examinations must have the knowledge of computer.

However, whichever method the education bodies (JAMB & University authorities) may use, both of them have the same philosophy and educational goal to achieve as they are working towards the
transmission of knowledge and the training of the individual child to live a meaningful and good life that will enable him to contribute effectively in the development of the society. As a result of these facts, Olumati in Okaba, (2008:158), emphasizes that “it is often forgotten that the process of education in all societies, whether traditional or modern, capitalist or socialist, are essentially the same”. The aim is the transmission of wisdom, knowledge and culture of the society or people from generation to generation. This in essence means that both education systems have the same objectives of transformation and transmission of knowledge.

Finally, having stated this so far, the concepts of education, African indigenous education and the philosophical bases for African indigenous education shall be analyzed and later its implications for Nigeria education will be discussed.

The Concept of Education

The concept education is very complex and difficult to define. There are several definitions of education as there are many educational philosophers and educationists. The reason is that education is always changing emphasis and is adapting itself to new demands and new problems. This makes it to have a multiplicity of definitions. In view of this, Bebebifiai, (2008:90), asserts that, “education does not only change with years but also is sensitive to place and time”. It is as a result of this attribute that its meaning often differs from one country to another, even if it is not the same with the urban and rural dwellers in any given country or society.

However, Fafunwa (1974:17), emphasized that, Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives; that is to say, it is a process for transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both.

The above concept means that all educational systems, whether traditional or Western oriented, seek to achieve these goals irrespective of the curriculum, methods and organization designed for the purpose. Kosemani and Anuna (1996:2), define education as, “the systematic socialization of the younger members of the society into learning about the religion, morals, values, and beliefs, feelings of nationality and collective opinions of all kinds”. On the other hand, Osaat (2006:19), asserts that, “Education is a process of developing and transmitting the culture of a people from generation to generation, and as an organized and systematic body of knowledge”. He stresses that the products of education are intellectual, economic, socio-political and moral development. Osaat (2006:19) emphasizes that the definition of education revolves around the major functions of education. The educated man; that is one who has really passed through the walls of education should reflect the main functions of education. He further defines education as the “process of preparing an individual for the good life. It is the acquisition of knowledge or power when one claims that knowledge is power”. Castle in Osaat (2006:19), defines education as “all that happens to us from the day we were born to the day we die”. This means that education is a continuous process since one continues to learn from the day of birth to death. This definition takes education process beyond the shores of the classrooms.

Osaat (2006:19), maintains that, “education is a process of socialization or acculturation, that is, when considered as a way or process of transforming culture, norms and mores from one generation to another”. This definition according to Osaat (2006:19) is
based on the culture and socio-political view of a
given society. Hence, Durkheim in Osaat, (2006:20), defines education as, “the systematic
socialization of the younger generation by which the
later learn religious and moral beliefs, values,
feelings of nationality and collective opinions of
all kinds”. Also Okafor in Osaat (2006:20),
defines it as, “a process of acculturation through
which the individual is helped to attain the
development of his potentialities and their
maximum activation when necessary according to
right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect
self-fulfillment”. These definitions according to
Osaat, (2006:19), regard education as “a
conscious experience, a process deliberately
planned and pedagogically implemented”. 

Education in this case, leads the child beyond his
immediate environment. Education can also be
defined in terms of what it can or ought to do. It
is based on the norms of the society as in formal
education.

Thus, Rousseau in Amaele, (2010:23),
defines education as “the development of the
individual from within (educere), by interacting
with the natural environment with the aim of
fitting properly into the society”. Thus
Rousseau’s definition of education has
strengthened the etymological foundation of the
word, educere, which means, “to lead out from
within”. This educere is derived from the Latin
word. Here Plato and some other idealists believe
that the learner has innate ideas, which need to be
squeezed out, pulled out and be expanded.

Rousseau in his usual radical approach to
education, sees the child at birth, as innocent and
incorrupt but born into a corrupt society. He
holds that education should help the child to
develop his innocence and good qualities that are
inborn in him so as to sanitize the already corrupt
society. He stresses that the child’s early
education period of formation should be through
interaction with his environment or personal
experience and not through a teacher.

Another Latin word from the
etymological definition of education is “educare”. This view as held by John Locke
and other realists in Osaat (2006:20), means “to
form” or “to train”. They believe that the
learner’s mind is “tabula rasa”, (blanksheet), on
which to write, fill it with information and
knowledge. Based on this, O’Connor in Osaat,
(2006:20), sees education as, “the process by
which society through schools, colleges,
universities and other institutions deliberately
transmit their cultural heritage”. It could be
deefined as the regulation of the process of
coming to share in the social consciousness,
reconstruction and the adjustment of individual
activity on the bases of social changes.

Finally, education could be defined as
the process by which society through schools,
colleges, universities and other institutions by a
morally acceptable manner transmit
knowledge, norms or elements of cultural,
values, and skills from generation to generation
(Osaat 2006:21). He (Osaat) maintains that the
contents of the curriculum, aim and intention of
the educator, method of transmission and
consequences of education are vital and
necessary to produce the educated man in the
real sense of it.

The Concept of African Indigenous
Education

African indigenous education has been
in existence before the arrival of the colonial
masters and their missionary activities in
Africa. Ochoma, (2006:35), asserts that the
African indigenous education, “is the education
given by parents and elders of a society of their
younger generation”. This implies that African
indigenous education is the type of education
through which the elders and parents of a
society impart knowledge and skills to their
younger generation. Ochoma, (2006:35),
maintains that “the values, norms, behavioural
patterns of the people and skills are being
imparted to the individual first by the immediate family circle”. The individual also learns by imitating people around him through good moral behaviour and skills necessary for good membership.

Nwaenyi in Ogbondah, (2002:116), stresses that African indigenous education “is a training allegiance, mutual interest and interdependence, the content of which is the community’s values, beliefs, traditions and vocations which have been cherished and practiced over generations”. This means that African indigenous education involves transmission of the societal values, skills, beliefs and traditions from generation to generation.

Mushi (2009:39) stresses that African indigenous education, “is a process of imparting the inherited knowledge, skills, cultural traditions, norms and values of a tribe to the tribal members of a given society from generation to generation. Generally, African indigenous education can be defined as the form of learning in African traditional societies in which knowledge, skills and attitudes imparted were relevant to the socio-economic activities of an individual. It was provided for immediate induction into real life in the society. As a result of this philosophical bases, learners learnt by observing, imitating and during initiation ceremonies. This makes the learners to be self-reliant in their life through the skills they have acquired as they will have one occupation or the other practically doing to earn a living.

Communalism is another philosophical base of African indigenous education. Thus in African traditional society, learners learned and acquired a common spirit to work and live and that the means of production were owned communally. The education was also an integral part of culture and history. For example, children upbringing was a whole community’s role and responsibility. For instance, if a child misbehaved in the absence of his or her parents, and adult member of the community was responsible to correct him or her on the spot because the child does not belong to one person in African society.

Furthermore, Holisticism and Multiple learning are also philosophical bases of African indigenous education in which a learner was required to acquire multiple skills that will help him to be self-reliant and earn a living. In these

Philosophical Bases of African Indigenous Education

African indigenous education did not develop in a vacuum. It had its own philosophical bases on which it was built. Based on this, philosophical bases can be defined as “the philosophical foundation which is based on the way one thinks about how things are or how things are based on one’s own reasoning about phenomenon”. It is through one’s philosophical perspectives that the historical, sociological and psychological foundations are perceived, built and applied.

African indigenous education has the quality of preparedness and preparationism in which it is philosophically based. This implies that the role of teaching and learning was to equip boys and girls with the skills appropriate to their gender in preparation for their different roles in the society. For example in most African traditional societies such as Tanzania and Nigeria, most girls were taught how to become good mothers and how to handle their husbands soon after marriage, how to fetch firewood from the farm, how to draw water from the well or from the river and the boys were prepared to become hunters and warriors, farmers, good fathers, (the heads of family) and other male dominated occupations.

African indigenous education also has the quality of functionalism as its philosophical bases in which the knowledge, skills and attitudes imparted were relevant to the socio-economic activities of an individual. It was provided for immediate induction into real life in the society. As a result of this philosophical bases, learners learnt by observing, imitating and during initiation ceremonies. This makes the learners to be self-reliant in their life through the skills they have acquired as they will have one occupation or the other practically doing to earn a living.

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Furthermore, Holisticism and Multiple learning are also philosophical bases of African indigenous education in which a learner was required to acquire multiple skills that will help him to be self-reliant and earn a living. In these
philosophical bases, learners were either not allowed to specialize in a specific occupation or very little room for specialization did exist. When a learner learnt about a certain skill, say farming, he or she was obliged to learn all other skills related to farming such as how to prepare farms, weeding, food preservation, how to fight diseases attacking crops and so on.

Finally, another philosophical base for African indigenous education is perennialism. This ensured that the traditional communities in Africa use education as an instrument to preserve the status quo of the tribe. In these cases, the learners were viewed as passive recipients and could not contribute anything to the learning process. They just accept the knowledge without questioning. In addition to the above philosophical bases, it will be worthwhile to state the characteristics of African indigenous education.

**Characteristics of African Indigenous Education**

The characteristics of African indigenous education include the following: African indigenous education is community-oriented and is geared towards solving the problems of the community. The instructional activities were therefore directed towards the social life of the community, so as to prepare the learners to fit into their community.

The African indigenous education was informal in nature because the learning experiences were made orally and the knowledge was stored in the heads/minds of the elders. The instructors were carefully selected from the family or clan. Their task is to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes to the young, informally at the didactic and practical levels. Based on this, Ochoma, (2006:36), emphasized that, “it is not documented”. It is mainly oral in approach and was not in print but depends largely on speech and initiation. Therefore, it lack documentation since the knowledge that are transmitted to the learners or the younger generations are not printed in the form of books or in papers for people to read as it is the practice in the formal system of education. It implies that uniformity will be difficult to maintain since it has not been written down. However, for the fact that it has been a common practice consistency is possible. Hence, uniformity can be maintained to some extent.

The African indigenous education also has a closed nature because the practice in many vocations, such as traditional medicine is closed to outsiders. Any person who is not a member of the immediate family may find it difficult to practice medicine because the transmission of knowledge does not take place in the classroom as it is the case in the formal education. Such knowledge is considered an exclusive preserve of the initiated group. Hence it is likely to be understood only by people with a special knowledge or interest.

African indigenous education is functional in nature because the knowledge, skills and values that are imparted have direct relevance to the socio-economic activities of an individual. For example, the learners learned the skills that were for immediate and long term activities. In support of this, Achuonye (2004:85) asserts that, “African indigenous education aims at functionalism and character molding”. Functionalism in the sense that it is geared towards bringing up the child to become a functional adult who can take care of himself or herself, the family, as well as contribute meaningfully towards the well being of his community and sometimes beyond.

Finally, a lot of vocations are learnt through the apprenticeship systems in the African indigenous education and the training of children for trades to make them acquire skills to live a meaningful life in the society. The skills are acquired through the following methods: learning trade within the family from parents; learning from the extended family
relations and learning from strangers that live within the society. (Olumati in Okaba, 2008). This implies that vocational training or education is given a prominent place in African indigenous education through the apprenticeship systems.

Implications for Nigerian Education
The implications of philosophy of African indigenous education include the following:

1. The philosophical bases of preparedness and preparationism have implications for the introduction of manual labour and Agricultural activities (farms or gardens) in the schools in Nigeria. In this case, the male pupils and students will work with their knives while the female (girls), work with their hoes, thereby each gender group playing their different roles as fathers and mothers in the school. It prepares youths for meaningful adult life.

2. The perennialism has implications for the introduction and teaching of religious and moral education and values in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

3. The philosophical bases on communalism have implications for the teaching of social studies and civic education in Nigerian schools. These subjects impart the knowledge of working together and living together cooperatively as well as collectively. It also imparts the knowledge of unity, love, equality, obedience and justice to the pupils and students.

4. Its holism and multiple learning have implications for the introduction and teaching of general studies courses in the Nigeria Tertiary institutions. It is encyclopedic in nature promoting a good scholarly approach to issues. It gives the learner a general relevant knowledge of immediate and outside environment.

Conclusion
It is obvious from the study that the acquisition of practical skills for self-reliance has its philosophical bases on the indigenous education system. It imparts the knowledge of practical skills, beliefs, values, traditions and elements of culture of the people from generation to generation. The training the child receives at home from the parents and family members equips him or her for his or her future roles in the society. This means that the first training or education the child receives in life is from the home or immediate family members and elders or the parents. It could be by observations or by imitation. Through this, he could learn one trade or occupation which he will be doing to earn a living without looking for white collar jobs. This type of training or education at home makes indigenous education to be informal in nature since it did not take place in the classroom like the Western education.

However, any method the African indigenous education takes to impart knowledge to the people; it should not be neglected due to its relevance to the needs of the society. Its characteristics of preparedness and preparationism, functionalism, communalism, holism and multiple learning as well as perennialism have their implications for Nigerian education. Finally, African indigenous education has been relevant to Africans and even until now influencing modern education systems in African countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania and others and therefore should be practiced.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made from the philosophical bases for African indigenous education.

1. Skill acquisition centers should be established in the rural communities in Nigeria so that those who could not attend the conventional education can learn one skill or the other to be self-reliant.

2. The teaching of technical and vocational subjects should be made compulsory...
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in Nigerian schools to promote functional nature of African indigenous education.
3. More emphases should be made on the regular training and re-training of technical and vocational education teachers in Nigeria.
4. The practice of indigenous education in some vocations such as the traditional medicine should not be closed only to the members of the immediate family that practice it rather it should be made open to outsiders who may be interested in learning such skills or trade.

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