

TWO NIGERIAN CULTURES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR MULTI-CULTURAL CURRICULUM FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE NIGERIAN YOUTH

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Abstract

This paper has tried a definition of culture as a way of life of a people. Two cultures of Hausa and Igbo are identified, with a brief analysis of both. In the said analysis detailed information is given as to what make up the cultures; including language, philosophy, religion, the belief system and other aspect of cultures. The need for a multi- cultural curriculum is emphasized as a means of ensuring the attainment of national objectives of education, namely, unity in diversity and the inculcation of national consciousness. Five principles for proper development of a multi-cultural curriculum for the education of the youth of the two identified cultures are discussed. Mention is also made of how these principles could be applied in the development of a multi-cultural curriculum. It is hoped that if these principles are recognized and applied in curriculum development, a multicultural education is assured to the benefit of the Nigerian youth.

Introduction

Many social anthropologists and educators have defined culture in different ways. To Nduka (1963), culture embraces not only a people's art, music and literature but also their science and technology, commerce and political organization, philosophy and religion, all ideas and values which permeate the society and bind its people into a recognizable unit. Culture implies all the behaviours of a particular people, what the people have, do and think. In other words, it can be explained as a configuration of learned activities passed on from generation to generation for its perpetuation. Culture can also be explained as people's beliefs, language, customs, traditions and skills that are available to the members of a society. These include their way of eating, wearing clothes, using language and life circle. A more comprehensive definition of culture is by Brameld (1955) who sees it as:

1. A product of the physical, biological, psychological and social levels of the development;
2. A continuity of human experience transmitted through learning and communicating that experience, rather than through biological heredity;
3. A way of life that profoundly conditions the altitudes and conduct of each individual member;
4. A symbol encompassing all humanly built objects;
5. All institutions - economic, religious, political, social;
6. All arts, languages, philosophies;
7. All mores, routine and practices; and
8. All beliefs, attitude, faiths.

From the above definitions/explanations the culture of people is a way of life, touching on all aspect of all human endeavour- attitude, behaviours, belief, the history of a people, art, music, language, religion, occupation, life circle and customs.

According to Ukeje (1977), education is an outgrowth as well as an integral part of the culture of a people. It varies from culture to culture. Again, it is worthy to note that education in Nigeria must aim at a cultural integration. As a result, it should be an instrument for synthesis of the existing cultures and for the blending of the old and the new. In this context, therefore, education should endeavour to accommodate all cultures through a multi-cultural curriculum.

The purpose of this paper, thus, is to identify and analyse any two cultures in Nigeria with a view to developing principles that aid the planning and development of a multi-cultural curriculum for the education of the Nigerian youth.

Two Nigerian Cultures

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with many different cultures. Hausa and Igbo are two such cultures. The Hausa culture dominates the north of the country while the Igbo culture dominates the

east. Each of the cultures is made up of a people bound together by a common language, fairly common custom and outlook on life, a common ancestor, a common territory. Both the Hausa and Igbo cultures possess all the characteristic features of a culture.

The Hausa Culture

The Hausa culture is greatly influenced by the culture of North Africa. The Hausa had their initial contact with the outside world with people from North Africa. As a result their culture was a reflection of North African culture. The Hausa are strong believers in Mohammed and so practised Islam, which was Mohammed's religion. The religion of the Hausas is part of their culture and provides that a Moslem can marry up to five wives, defend and die for Islam as a sure means of going to heaven. This singular belief influences the Hausa to the extent that they find it impossible to see eye to eye with adherents of other religions. Their belief system is centred on their religion with the result that the whiteman's religion had little or no impact on the Hausa themselves or on their culture.

The language of communication is Hausa and this has continued to be used in the education of their children. The language is so rich in cultural heritage that every idea has a word that expresses it, unlike in some other Nigerian languages.

The Hausa woman does not move out freely as in other cultures. There are cases when she comes out only at night and even when seen her head is covered, as well as greater part of her face. The Hausa culture demands that a woman should restrict herself to the home even though that practice has been destroyed, to some extent, by the incursion of Western culture into the North of Nigeria. The Hausa women are rarely seen in politics.

As part of Hausa culture one often asks what the Hausa do for a living. They are an enterprising group, more politically aware than other ethnic groups in Nigeria, thanks to the awareness created by the Islamic laws. They engage in a number of occupations like farming, producing yam, millet, beans, maize, and guinea corn. These products have ready markets down south and even beyond the shores of Nigeria. Some Hausa men, through close association with the Fulanis, also engage in cattle rearing and this makes them travel far and wide, imbibing the culture of other peoples. They work with leather, especially in Kano area and produce shoes, sandals, boots, sheaths for swords and knives. They also work with iron, producing a number of sculptors at the many smelting centres in Fawa in Katsina, Gummi to the south of Zamfara river in Sokoto province, Kungi further east, Aliero in the west, Gidan dan Tsofuwa to the North. Their products mostly exported to Benue lowlands, include spade-hoe, spear points, swords and knives, the joined bar which is placed on the nose and under the chin of a horse, a small bell that hangs from the pony's neck. Glass and bead industries equally exist among the Hausa. They also engage in cloth making and Kano is said to be Nigeria's most celebrated textile-exporting centre. All these provide sufficient work opportunities for the Hausa.

The Igbo Culture

The Igbo have a rich in cultural heritage. Unlike the Hausa who practise Islam, the Igbo belongs to a world of two religions - African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity. It is worth mentioning that among the Igbo there are more Christians than among the Hausa. The reason is the early rejection of western culture by the Hausa. In both religions, the Igbo have a strong belief in the existence of the Supreme Being but while the Christian worship Him through Jesus Christ, His son, the traditionalist worships Him through smaller gods. The Igbo belief system is rich in superstition, myths and legends in spite of the teachings by Igbo converts to Christianity.

For the Igbo, the language of communication is Igbo. The language is not very rich in vocabularies and this accounts for the many Igbo words that are anglicized as a result of the effect of western influence on the language. It has to be mentioned that the Igbo language is not the same all through the Igbo culture even within the same local government. For instance, the Awka dialect differs from other dialects within the same Awka South Local Government Area. That notwithstanding, the Igbo understand themselves when they communicate.

The Igbo engages in a number of occupations for their livelihood. The art of blacksmithing is diffused among the Igbo, Awka, Nkwerric and Abiriba being noted for that. The Igbo equally engage in woodcarving, farm work and pottery. Campbell (1961) aptly summarizes the industry of the Igbo when he writes:

There is not a child among the Akus (Nsukka area) who is not instructed in some means of realizing a living. The men are builders, blacksmiths, iron smelters, tanners and leather workers, tailor, carpenters, calabash carvers, weavers, basket, hat and mat makers, farmers; the women weave, spin dye, cook, brew, and make pots, oil and soap.

The Igbo are known for their hard work and have the strong belief that there is nothing they cannot do except to prevent death. The spirit of hard work sustained the Igbo all through the Nigeria civil war of the late sixties.

The Igbo strongly believe in the creation of new families with the result that any man among them who does not marry is often regarded as useless and of no consequence. The Igbo life circle starts from birth, marriage and terminates in death, with all their attendant ceremonies.

The above paragraphs have been an attempt to analyse the Ilausa and Igbo cultures with a view to developing the principles for a multi-cultural curriculum for education of the Nigerian youths.

The National Policy on Education (1981) specifies some national objectives of Nigerian education. The ones relevant to the subject of discussion include:

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

The philosophy of the Nigerian education recognizes education as the greatest force that can be used to foster the much-needed unity of Nigerian citizenry. Hausa and Igbo are among the many cultures in Nigeria. Thus, there should be a multi-cultural curriculum to cater for these and other groups in Nigeria. The national unity may not be attained through any better means than education. This is also the only means of providing equal educational opportunities for the various groups in Nigeria. In the words of Taiwo (1980), education can bring about self realization, better human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. A multicultural curriculum is thus aimed at the attainment of these objectives for the education of our youths.

Towards a Multi-Cultural Curriculum

In pursuit of a multi-cultural curriculum for the Ilausa and Igbo youths, mention should be made of what the National Policy on Education intends to achieve at the secondary school level where majority of our youths spend most of their time. According to the document, secondary education is aimed at the preparation of the youths for useful living in the society for those who cannot go beyond the first three-year junior secondary level. It is also aimed at the preparation of the youths for higher education for all youths able and willing to continue to the second three-year senior secondary school level.

It is expected and hoped that the best approach to the attainment of the above is only through Nigeria's indigenous or traditional education/curriculum, which is handed from one generation to another. The main objective of this type of education is to enable our youths grow into functional members of the Nigerian society. Subjects taught are ethical principles, religious beliefs, and various occupations. The boys learn hunting, house building, and the art of warfare among others. The education of girls includes activities and duties of womanhood like cooking, mother craft and other associated occupations. In the Nigerian society, one is considered educated based on one's morals, manners, obedience to authority and respect for the customs, superstitions and laws of the land, including unreserved acceptance of the beliefs, values and religious practices. Taiwo (1980) classifies the content of indigenous education/curriculum as follows:

1. Education for living, in conformity with the traditions of the community. This is made up of group history, the geography of the neighbourhood, knowledge of plants and animals, proverbs and riddles, greetings appropriate to each person, values, use of language.
2. Education for occupations and economic self-reliance. Early in life, children are directed to occupational training.

3. Education for special occupations such as crafts, secret organizations, priesthood, divination, medicine and surgery.

The indigenous education/curriculum needs no schools, no trained teachers or textbooks. Teaching is done orally and very often practicalised. Teachers include parents, older siblings or members of peer group. Written examinations are not taken since evaluation is often spontaneous. These ideas are transformed into the secondary school level with the aim of preparing the youths for living in the society for those who may not go beyond the junior secondary school level. For an effective multi-cultural curriculum is very vital, the principles for developing such a curriculum include the following:

1. The identification and analysis of the belief system.
2. The identity approach.
3. Identification and analysis-Unity and diversity among or between the two cultures, including their similarities and differences.
4. Identification and analysis-peculiarities of the two cultures-influence on the curriculum of the people.
5. Historical development of the two cultures-influence on the people's curriculum.

Belief System in the Two Cultures

As earlier mentioned in the brief analysis of the two cultures of Hausa and Igbo, both believe in the existence of the Supreme Being, Jesus Christ and the smaller gods. The Hausa believe in Mohammed as the son of God and Christ as a lesser prophet. On their part, the Igbo equally believe in traditional worship, recognizing some other gods and the ancestral spirits as the agents of the Supreme Being. Both cultures believe in several objects of worship including divination as a means of consulting with the gods. In developing a multi-cultural curriculum, the curriculum planner builds these and other objects of worship into subjects of instruction. Thus, in the subjects like Religion, be it Christianity, Islam or African Traditional religion, people's belief system is incorporated into the curriculum. Even though generally the Hausa youths study Islam religion and the Igbo youths study Christian religion, yet at a higher level of education youths of both cultures are exposed to a multicultural curriculum in the three religions - Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. The basic entry behaviour for the three is acquired at the secondary school level. Since one of the objectives of the Nigerian education is to pursue the unity of the country, an opportunity is created for the youths to study the religions that exist in Nigeria. This serves both as a means of attaining the national unity as well as both sides learning and understanding the culture of the other. Such a curriculum should include the identification of the various religious objects and what they are used for, as well as what they symbolize, making our youth see religion and our belief system as the way of life of Nigerians.

The Identity Approach

The identity approach is the next principle for the development of a multi-cultural curriculum for the youths of both cultures. The identity approach is aimed at developing people's identity in the context of learnings focused on four basic questions of who am I? These are identity questions in relation to the identity cycles as they concern many subject areas. The identity questions help the youths understand who they are and the people they live with in the two cultures. The questions create awareness on the youths in the identification of the elements of their culture. The identity cycles cover a good number of school subjects for both junior and senior secondary school levels to which youths from both cultures are exposed for their all-round education. The identity cycles are made up of the following:

1. Health identity, leading to the study of Health Science and medicine.
2. Cultural identity, leading to a multi-cultural curriculum in anthropology and cultural education including language.
3. Human group identity and a curriculum in sociology and social studies.
4. Place identity and curriculum in Geography and Biology.
5. Time identity and a curriculum in History and Mathematics.

6. Resource identity and a curriculum in Political Science, Government, Civics and Law (Ezegbe, 1991).

A multi-cultural curriculum is developed using the identity approach to cover the various subject areas that are listed above. As school subjects, the curriculum planner endeavours to accommodate the interests of both cultures in planning the content of the curriculum.

Unity and Diversity in the Two Cultures

The Nigerian government has always preached unity in diversity. The obvious reason is that Nigeria is made up of many ethnic groups and multiplicity of languages and dialects. It is hoped that this unity can also be achieved through education. The Hausa and Igbo cultures are both different and similar in various aspects. Few examples may help buttress this fact. Some of the differences are in the areas of religion, language, origin and philosophy of life. As earlier mentioned, the religion of the Hausa is Islam while the Igbo are adherents of the Christian and African Traditional religions. Mainly the Hausas speak Hausa language just as the Igbo speaks the Igbo language. However, there are many Igbo who speak Hausa very fluently just as one can find Hausa who speak Igbo well. There is no other reason for this except the mixture of the two cultures, which must have been brought about by either as a result of business pursuit, education or birth. The Hausa can trace their origin to North Africa while the Igbo claim to have close link with the Jews, besides other stories about the origins of sections of the Igbo culture. The similarities in both cultures are seen in the various occupations, people from both engage in all in the name of means of livelihood. Apart from such occupations as blacksmithing and cattle rearing which are peculiar to the Hausa and Igbo cultures respectively, people from both cultures engage in most of the other existing occupations. In spite of these differences and similarities both cultures had since existed in a united Nigeria. Thus, the principle of differences and similarities can be applied in developing a multi-cultural curriculum. In doing this, the curriculum developer realizes the existence of these differences and similarities. This enables him to develop a curriculum, which even multi-cultural in principle, will cater for the needs of the people in the immediate environment who will be served by that curriculum. Thus, the youths of both cultures are accommodated and the unity of the nation sustained in spite of the differences and similarities. Unity in diversity is maintained through the curriculum. It has to be mentioned again, for emphasis, that both cultures, through the curriculum, expose their youths to the religions in the two cultures and the languages of both cultures.

Peculiarities in the Two Cultures

The principle of peculiarities in both cultures belongs to the specialities of culture, which is one of the facets of culture. In this, there are certain cultural traits that are not common to all that live even within a particular culture. This fact accounts for the various occupations that exists in the Hausa and Igbo cultures. In other words, there are certain aspects of cultures for which people are known. The Igbo in some areas specialize in wine-tapping, smithing, working on wood, to mention but a few. Similarly, the Hausa specialize in cattle rearing and in the production of milk from their cattle. They produce certain farm products like grains and cereals in commercial quantities. These aspects of the culture are built into the curriculum for real integration of both cultures in the mainstream of the Nigerian society. The curriculum, so planned and developed is the type that will provide the youths the opportunity of engaging in these various occupations when they graduate from school.

Historical Development of the Two Cultures

It is said that to deny a people a history means denying them a culture. Similarly, it is not possible to speak of a people without a history because the recognition of a particular culture in its originality is also recognition of the history of the people having that culture (Akaogu, 1999). The historical development of the curriculum of the two cultures under discussion has much influence on *people's vulture in the education of their youths*. Stories are *told* of the efforts of the missions to establish schools in Nigeria in their attempts to spread the gospel. The missions came with their religion and culture to bear on the Igbo culture. The schools they established were only intended to train people who would interpret the Bible to others. No consideration was given as to whether the curriculum and culture, which came with the school, were suitable to the people's way life. According

to Udeinya (1991), that was an imposition because the religious bodies, without any consultation with members of the society and without any regard to the culture of the people, forced a programme of education on our youths. The curriculum of the schools then was very much unrelated to the cultures of the people. The curriculum and the culture that went with it differed significantly from the culture of our people. That gave rise to culture conflicts and the quest for a Nigerian curriculum to take care of the cultures of the Nigerians. The agitations culminated in the curriculum conference of 1969, which was organized by the Nigerian Educational Research Centre. It was the outcome of that conference and subsequent seminars that led to the adoption of a philosophy and objectives for functional education in Nigeria. The cultures of the Ilausa and Igbo thus developed with their curriculum. In developing a multi-cultural curriculum for the education of the youths in both cultures, the developer should be aware of the history of the two cultures as given earlier in this paper. This principle thus guides him in building into the curriculum the culture of the people as grown from their history. In so doing, the facts from both cultures are structured to accommodate the two cultures.

Summary and Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this paper to highlight the various aspects of Hausa and Igbo cultures. The principles that could be involved in the articulation, planning and development of a multi-cultural curriculum for the education of the Nigerian child have also been discussed.

The belief system, the identity approach, unity and diversity among cultures, peculiarities and historical development of the two cultures are all avenues towards the attainment of the objectives of the Nigerian education, using a multi-cultural curriculum. Discussion also centred on the role of the curriculum planner or developer in the development of a multi-cultural curriculum for every principle. A multi-cultural curriculum is aimed at achieving a corporate existence between or among the peoples from the multiplicity of cultures of the Nigerian nation.

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