

## **Towards the Domestication of the Nigerian Primary School Curriculum**

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**Abstract:** The Nigeria School system had concentrated efforts on theory rather than practice. The result of this is that most products of the system know only a little about the courses they have read and even graduated in good grades. One explanation to this effect is that the system especially at the primary school level had remained literally tied to the colonial system where pupils were prepared to take up jobs as clerks in the offices. In spite of the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education into the country to correct the ills, the system has remained almost the same. This study argues that what is learnt in the school system and how they are taught and evaluated depart considerably from pattern of life of the pupils. The study therefore suggested a type of curriculum that will be of practical benefit to the users a type of curriculum that caters for the needs and aspirations of the people. The methodology of imparting this knowledge in line with the nature of children is also suggested. In this way a proper link between the schools itself is life and not a preparation for it.

**Key words:** Domestication, curriculum, primary school, pupils, knowledge, Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education in most developing countries of Africa and in Nigeria in particular had been criticized for failing to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the people. The reason for the failure of education in this part of the world it is easy to understand. Most countries in regained their independence. The evidence of this is found in the type of courses offered in schools, the content of the courses and how they are taught and evaluate all of which are far removed from the everyday life of the people for whom the education is intended.

Education itself according to Haralambos and Heald (1982) involves the process of harmonization of values, beliefs, practices, skills, knowledge and ideas into a single whole to meet the exigencies of the environment. To this end, the process of education should teach the culture of the people and be able to promote social living.

Mboto (2002) had stated that education helps to ensure the survival of the society itself can only survive if there exist among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands. Without these similarities cooperation, social solidarity and therefore social solidarity and therefore social life itself would be impossible. Okpilike (2002a, b) had suggested that the only way that education relevant to the people. In other words, education in Nigeria must be indigenous and domesticated.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Philosophy of a domesticated education curriculum:** Any educational system whether simple or complex is firmly rooted on some kind of philosophical foundation. Philosophy is the people's outlook on life which involves the way they think, the way they feel and behave and the way they react to situations. Philosophy education varies from one society to another and from time to time in any given society. However, the philosophy of a domesticated education according to Nebonta has remained live and let's live. This philosophy embraces the three components of modern philosophy namely epistemology, ethics and metaphysics. The acquisition of knowledge in instruction, ceremonies apprenticeship and oral literature caters for epistemology. Ethics is achieved through moral and character training which enables people to conform to the norms of the society while metaphysical aspect is provided for in the belief that man is sometimes beyond the physical form (he has a spirit which lives when he might have died). Death in this regard is a continuation of life leading to the belief in the existence of nemesis or retributive justice. To this end, the ideal thing in life is to do good so that one can accumulate invisible treasures which one could plough back after death. Waston and Furley (1978) then concluded that the philosophy of a domesticated or indigenous curriculum is the integration of the individual into his society.

In the Nigerian society for instance, the local warrior, the hunter, blacksmith, the medicine man were all regarded as educated people in the context of indigenous curriculum. Fafunwa (1976) had described education in this regard as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child develops his abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society. The boys for example, accompany their fathers to the farm, hunting expedition and in building or mending family house etc. The girls accompany their mothers to the farms, markets to buy and sell and also help in cooking. As parents perform, the young ones render helping hands and in the process learn and become educated. Even as children play with their peers during the day and in moonlit nights, they sing new songs and tell new stories as part of the education process.

**Objectives of a domesticated education curriculum:**

The objective of an African domesticated education curriculum is geared towards enabling the child to live effectively and efficiently in his culture. The following areas are identified:

**Development of physical skills:** As children move about in their environment some jump up and down, others jump over the fences, others run about, some climb up trees while some attempt to walk or even run on top fenced walls with both hands stretched as balancing games. Some others are busy throwing and catching objects, others playing balls etc. In the night, both the young boys and girls come out in the moon- light either to dance to the tune of the local musicians or to play some hide and seek games. In the modern education programme these are classified under physical education.

**Character and moral development:** Character and moral training constitute an important aspect of indigenous education. Children are taught from the early stages of their lives to respect and greet their elders. This is a law that must be obeyed. For example, a Yoruba girl must kneel down to greet male or female elder, while a boy bow or prostrates. The Ibo boy must stand to greet the elders and must do so with the appropriate prefix to the elder's status. Character and moral training in traditional society is the responsibility of every adult over the child. The child's behaviour is watched in every activity even when eating. Severe punishment such as age grade beating, which accompanies offences like theft, adultery and fornication, reminds the child that he better behaves at any point in time. Virtues such as truthfulness, kindness, honesty, wisdom, dignity of labour are also important.

**Vocational training:** This is the mainstay of indigenous education as emphasis is laid on practice rather than

theory. Children learn by doing and this they achieve by accompanying their parents to the farm, market, expedition etc. Children also learn to carve, weave and may also be sent to understudy a man who knows the art of divination. Sometimes a specialized vocation may rest in a family for instance bone setting.

**Development of a sense of belonging and cultural heritage:**

The child is taught from the beginning the homogenous nature of the community. He is told and learns that everyone is his brothers' keeper. He participates actively in every community project such as clearing the village square, market square, public playground etc. He watches the naming ceremonies, coronation ceremonies and picks the appropriate roles expected of him. Conformity to the cultural norms of the society certifies a child as well educated.

## RESULTS

**How to domesticate the Nigeria primary school curriculum:**

The curriculum that has been properly domesticated is usually closer to the traditional education and may not be easy to identify in the conventional way. However, the child's intellectual and vocational skills may develop both formally and informally. In other words home situation (informal) can be integrated into the school situation (formal) and learning can become more meaningful. All teaching and learning situations in the formal school system could be organized in such a way that the child sees the school as a practical extension of the society outside. The following school subjects which are taught formally can be started in the informal pattern.

**History:** The teaching of history as a subject in the formal school setting can begin as story telling sessions. Stories connected with the exploit of their heroes in community development and in intertribal wars and stories of the founders of the community etc. According to Dewey (1956), the problem of the formal teaching of history is that the course of study met by the children in the school presents materials stretching back indefinitely in time, age and extending outward indefinitely into space. The child is taken out of his familiar physical environment into the wide world yes and even to the bounds of the solar system. His little span of personal memory and tradition is overload with the long centuries of the history of all peoples.

**Mathematics:** There are lots of games to engage the children which involve the application of mathematical principles including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. At home children are also engaged in

counting and sharing rubber seeds, cherry, oranges, playing ludo, ayo game step game, etc. Children also accompany their parents to the farm where they are involved in cutting, sharing seed yams, cassava cuttings, planting melon corn, beans etc. All that is needed in the formal school system is something which will enable us to interpret and to appraise the elements in the child's present putting forth and falling away, his exhibitions of power and weakness in the light of some larger growth process in which they have their place.

**Agriculture:** Children at home are engaged in tilling the soil, planting seed yams, fruit trees like mango, orange, cashew, guava etc. They are also families with family ponds (fishery) family lands and some even have their own mini farms (for those in the village setting). It must be realized that the facts and truths that enter into the child's present experience and those contained in the subject matter of studies are the initial and final terms of one reality. To oppose one to the other is to oppose the infancy and maturity of the same growing life.

**Health education/community health:** The formal teaching of Health education/community health in schools can be built upon the informal knowledge already acquired by children. At home children are engaged in keeping the environment clean. They do this by picking up pieces of papers around the compound, they sweep the rooms, parlour, compound, market places, playground, source of water supply, clear bush around their houses and keeping things in order. On personal hygiene, children are taught to wash their clothes, cut low their finger and toe nails, brush their teeth, wash their faces and feet, bathe etc.

**Architecture/building technology:** As children play in the villages, they engaged themselves in building play huts, moulding bricks with wet sand, fencing walls with palm fronds, mending and redesigning old ones and even go to the extent of building underground houses as they make big hollow in the ground. Present schools studies can use these informal backgrounds to develop interest in this area.

**Music and dance (theatre arts):** This is one of the areas where most children from both the urban and rural settings are already well equipped. Children are involved in organizing and presenting local songs and dances. During festivals children form themselves into dance groups led by some adults. They learn to sing traditional songs and sometimes they engage in concert show for public entertainment.

**Home economics/catering services:** The girls in particular learn the art of cooking from their mothers and sisters.

The art of cooking is formally learnt by children as they play at home. Children are seen making imaginary fire and foodstuff and prepare the food for their consumption and sale. They are seen cooking sand/vegetables and pretend to eat what they have cooked. In some cases one of the children will assume the position of a food seller, while others buy and pay with pieces of wood or any other object. The art of cooking is essential for good home management. Now that most female undergraduate depends on Indomie noodles from their main food, the future of African diet is uncertain.

**Medicine:** Some children at home learn traditional medicine practice from their parents. They also learn names of plants, trees, shrubs and herbs. Although, school education had almost condemned tradomedicalism, evidence abound that many others are returning to the starting point. People now use all sort of plants and leaves to cure malaria while GNLD. Foremore Fore-ever Products, Tianshi etc., all products of natural herbs and plants are becoming more and more popular as agents for longevity. We cannot pretend that the combination of the traditional medicine with the Western medicine will not provide a better solution for both preventive and curative purposes and therefore provide better health care services for all.

## DISCUSSION

The premise on which the domestication of the Nigerian primary school curriculum is based is that the child's life is an integral a total one. According to Dewey (1956), he passes quickly and readily from one topic to another, as from one spot to another but he is not conscious of transition or break. There is no conscious isolation, hardly conscious distinction. The things that occupy him are held together by the unity of the personal and social interests which his life carries along. Whatever is uppermost in his mind constitute to him for the time being, the whole universe. That universe is fluid and fluent; its contents dissolve and reform with amazing rapidity. But after all, it is the child's own world. It has the unity and in completeness of his own life. What then is the problem school education?

Again Dewey (1956) answered the questions; when the child goes to school, the various studies divide and fractionize the world for him. Geography selects, abstract and analyses ones set of facts and from one particular point of view. Arithmetic is another division, grammar another department and so on infinitely. Again in school each of these subjects is classified.

Facts are turn away from their original place in experience and rearranged with reference to some general principles.

### **CONCLUSION**

The plea of this study is for the primary school system in Nigeria to abandoned the notion of subject matter as something fixed and ready-made in its self aside the child's experience: cease thinking of the child experience as also something hard and fast but instead, see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital and we realized that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. We as teachers therefore have no choice save either to leave the child to his own unguided spontaneity or to inspire direction from without.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Dewey finally advises that the child and not the subject matter should determine both quality and quantity of learning. The child should therefore be the starting points the centre and the end. Let the child proceed step by step to master each of these separate parts and at last he would have covered the entire ground. The road which looks so long when viewed in entirety is easily travelled, considered as series of particular steps.

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