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## RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: A PANACEA TO THE PROBLEMS OF NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *Education is the quintessence of living. Therefore, there is no gainsaying or vain glory when a nation pursues education with all her resources like a hungry lion pursues its prey with all its strength. However, such an effort should not be an aimless pursuit or chasing the wind. Because it is through education that a nation realizes her aims, goals and objectives through structuring all these needs into curriculum. Curriculum designers should take cognizance of the immediate and proximate needs of the learner and that of the society (Nation). Thus, Responsive Curriculum Development becomes inevitable in order to carry out this important task. In this excursus, Current Nigerian Education System, conceptual analysis of responsive curriculum, The Privation in Nigerian Educational System, Responsive Curriculum as a panacea in Nigerian Educational System and Implication to National Development were X-rayed. This is to unravel the need of responsive curriculum development to Nigerian Educational System.*

**Keywords:** *Responsive Curriculum, National Development, Educational System*

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the quintessence of life. Without education, life would not have been enjoyable as it is today and it's meaning worthless. It is through education that the saying "necessity is the mother of invention", becomes a truth. Education functions as the conveyor of peoples' heritage. It is the function of education to pass on the inherited view of man and society, and its main task is to perpetuate such ideas as the dignity of man and common beliefs in what is good (Taba, 1962). Therefore, without education, life itself will get amiss.

However education must have to be structured according to the need of the society and individuals. Every society has a need different from the other. Akubilo (2014) posits ...that if



there is more comprehensive assessment of needs, the curriculum development process will be more responsive to both the desires of individuals and society. It is this need that forms the bases of curriculum development. Curriculum designers or experts galvanize both the societal and individual need during the curriculum development process. Offorma in Akubilo (2014) maintains that subject specialists claim the ability to compile a wealth of human experiences to form knowledge or subject matter and organize them in the most systematic, coherent, logical and sequential form. This forms the body of knowledge ingrained in the curriculum development which the society imparts to the learner through learning processes. Emeruwa (1984) in quoting Smith and colleagues maintains that “in primitive societies, the individual learns the habits, ideas, and attitudes and skills characterizing the adult members of his society, the individual does so informally from association with the adults in the daily activities. But in literate societies the scholars contrasted, instruction in group ways becomes partly a specialized function.” Thus, this results in establishing institutions because the school is charged with the responsibility of teaching.

### **CURRENT NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The educational system of Nigeria has pass through evolutions to emerge. In 1973, after the National Curriculum Conference, a seminar of experts drawn from a wide range of interest groups within Nigeria was convened. The seminar, which included voluntary agencies and external bodies, deliberated on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be, National Policy on Education (2004). After this seminar, the outcome was drafted into a document call National Policy on Education. Over the years this document has under-went metamorphosis in accordance with the changes of the society. Nevertheless, the fourth edition was necessitated by some policy innovations and changes, and the need to update the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of 1998 (NPE 2004). Presently in this 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Otteh and Akumah (2011) writes that the innovative elements of the new system can be viewed in terms of its structure, curriculuar provisions, the model of assessment and provisions made for access to education.

Formally, Nigeria system of education was based on 6-3-3-4 structure of education but with introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE), which stipulates that every Nigerian child is required to have nine years of continuous schooling, comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The nine-year Universal Basic



Education has been structured into levels: lower basic (primary 1-3), middle basic education (primary 4-6) and upper basic education (JS 1-3) (Otteh and Akumah 2011). This system according to National Policy on Education shall be free and compulsory. It shall also include adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out-of-school youths.

There are different methods of categorizing types of education. One way is to divide it into *informal education, non-formal education, and formal education*.

**Informal education:** Informal education can as well be called societal curriculum. According to Cortes in Otteh and Akuma (2011) societal curriculum is the massive, ongoing informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, churches, organizations, occupations, mass media and other socializing forces that educate all of us throughout our lives. Informal education is not based in any documented curriculum or organized educational structure. On a continuous basis, we acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, habits through our numerous interactions with other members of the society ( Otteh and Akuma 2011). May be a parent teaching a child how to prepare a meal or ride a bicycle. People can also get an informal education by reading many books from a library or educational websites. Informal education is when you are not studying in a school and do not use any particular learning method (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

**Non-formal education:** includes adult basic education, adult literacy education or school equivalency preparation. In non-formal education someone (who is not in school) can learn literacy, other basic skills or job skills. Home education, individualized instruction (such as programmed learning), distance learning and computer-assisted instruction are other possibilities.

**Formal education:** is usually in school, where a person may learn basic, academic, trade or skills. Formal education begins from elementary school and continues with secondary school. Post-secondary education (or higher education) is usually end at a college or university which may grant an academic degree.

Be that as it may, education is a product of experience whereby different experiences or worldview of a society (value, custom, norm, ethos and taboo, cultural heritage) are structured into fields of studies or disciplines with a view to have a formal way of handing



over these experiences to the younger generation (learner). Thus a responsive curriculum is the vehicle or an instrument that converts the societal needs into learnable curriculum.

### **RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYTIC INSIGHT**

Responsive curriculum is the curriculum that is relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learner. It is based on the occurrence and changes in the learner's world or cultural milieu (Emah, 2009). Curriculum emanates from peoples' life and culture, therefore, a curriculum that takes into cognizance the cultural background of the learner and the societal need, fears and worries of the individuals and the society, the do's and don'ts is a responsive curriculum. It tackles the immediate need of the societies especially in the face of epidemic or natural disaster. Responsive curriculum fills the gap between the old knowledge and the new technology in order to meet up with the progressive and dynamic nature of the global technology. The goals and objectives which the society seeks to achieve are made possible through the aegis of curriculum as the instrument. Emereuwa (1984) opines that planners of a curriculum in a society should know generally about the society's past and present life including its future life expectations. Thus a responsive curriculum is inevitable to achieve such a landmark in the life of any society. In a study of Native student achievement, researchers from Western Washington University and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory found that students are most successful in learning environments that exhibited the following characteristics:

- Recognition and use of Native American languages
- Knowledge and use of the community's social and political customs
- Lessons connecting new material to students' existing experiences
- Curriculum that recognizes the importance of Native spirituality
- Meaningful interaction between school and community

This information is from, Teaching Tolerance, (Culturally Responsive Curriculum at a Glance) [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org). This shows that students learn better in their own culture and language, and not in a borrowed culture. More so, any curriculum that undermines the background of the learner, goals and objectives of the society does not worth it. Culturally valued knowledge has to do with the inclusion of knowledge that is relevant to the student's life. More so, it is through education that development comes to a society. The more educated or learned a society is, the more developed she is. That Nigeria is among the



developing nations of the world is because of gross illiteracy that is found in the country. What then is the problem with Nigerian education system, that since the inception of formal education we are still grappling in gross illiteracy and under development? What could have been the cause of such dwindling situation in the Nigerian education industry? Is it the system, the curriculum or the method of teaching?

### **THE PRIVATION IN NIGERIA EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

The educational system in Nigeria has experienced deterioration since the independent till date. The state of education has worsened to the extent that one can comfortably say that no epoch has experienced the kind of dilapidation in the education industry like ours. Education in Nigeria has experienced over the years quantitative growth without complementary quality. Thus, it is faced with myriad problems as written by Hon. Aiyamenkhue Edokpolo in a paper presentation titled, "The Challenges of Nigeria Education system and the way forward". According to him, paradoxically, in spite of her enormous natural and human resources, Nigeria's education system is bedeviled with the challenges of underfunding and thus poor infrastructure; inadequate classrooms and teaching aids (projectors, computers, libraries, laboratories etc); paucity of quality teachers/ poor or polluted learning environment. As a result of miss-directed attention of stakeholders to issues of quality education for our people and country, our school system is further plagued with numerous social vices like examination malpractices; cultism; and infant- hooliganism (a tendency that is similar to child-soldier in war ravaged countries like Somalia, Angola and Libya; as we are told that cult groups exists in junior Secondary schools and Primary schools). This is to mention but a few (Edokpolo, 2011).

In the Nigerian educational system, the curriculum that is in use does not address the issue at stake or it is not responsive enough to the need of the society. Therefore a concerted effort and a total overhauling towards our Education policy is imminent at this point in time. This factor is very germane in the sense that relevant stakeholders will parley to redesign our policy in such a way that each State or Local Government will have their cherished values embellished into the school curriculum (Edokpolo, 2011). The present curriculum enthrones western culture in our land, thereby, undermining the culture and value of different states in this nation. Our educational system and value have been raped and murdered on the altar of modernization. By now, responsive curriculum that will address



endemic social vices like corruption, intimidation by the so called politicians and government officials, lack of equal right and justice, extortion, bribery, public fund embezzlement and the likes that rear their ugly heads in different ways and in different levels in education industry is quite very necessary.

## **RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM AS A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The Nigeria education system is in trouble. And every day it continues to dwindle and deteriorate in essence, structure and purpose. The extent of damage that has been meted on our education is too alarming. It may not be far from the truth to say that Nigeria is plagued by so many evils today due to her comatose education sector. It's high time we all stopped apportioning blames as to who did what to bring Nigeria's education sector to her knees. Having enumerated the problems to include poor teacher training, low quality education, poor funding, high teacher/students ratio, inadequate schools, curriculum, wrong policies, poor teachers' remuneration, poor infrastructure etc., this is the time to get to work. (Orakpo, 2016). Thus, in the face of this bastardization, former President, Good luck Jonathan convened an educational summit on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2010. During the summit a lot of worrisome issues were raised such as "very poor performance of students in Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and National Examination Council (NECO) examinations, closure of state universities in the South East due to strike action by both academic and non-academic staff, the issue of poor infrastructure and general decay in educational system at all levels were also discussed extensive" (Oyeka, 2010). As Orakpo (2016), rightly posits that "we already know the problems so no need flogging a dead horse. We need workable, practical solutions. Any nation that fails to get it right in this sector is done for". Be that as it may, permit me to posit that among all the problems mentioned, the problem of responsive curriculum development was not mentioned which is the crux and bane of contention. Therefore we need to employ responsive curriculum strictly in Nigeria's educational system. Some of the above mentioned problems have become endemic in the educational system. Hence, the only solution to nib the problem at the bud is to introduce curriculum that will counter the notion created by those social evil. A curriculum that is responsive is one that tackles the problem of the society and gets it solved over a period of time. Moreover, the problem of the society is the problem of the learner. Consequently, curriculum designed to



eradicate those anomalies in the mind of the learner is ad-rem to the messed educational system. Curriculum that addresses nation building, integrity and nobility, a curriculum that will unravel and expose the big elephant (corruption) in the wardrobe of education industry and its system, this kind of responsive curriculum should be introduced as well as mandate it upon every student starting from lower basic to upper basic levels of education. Because early years/Primary education is the foundation so if the foundation is wrong, every other thing will be wrong. As John F. Kennedy, former US president said, 'a child mis-educated is a child lost,' so Nigeria is toying with her future. For Nigeria's Education sector to get back on track there is absolute need to pay attention to the early years and primary levels (Orakpo, 2016). Reference from the above, responsive curriculum should be intensified in our school system. Our educational system is under siege because of the type of curriculum in use. A curriculum that is void of affective and psychomotor domain and upholds only cognitive domain cannot equip student in this era of industrialization. Curriculum according to Idu, as quoted by Orakpo, "Our curriculum is too vague and nobody wants to admit that the reason we are having high unemployment is because of our curriculum. We don't prepare students towards specific industries. So many things are not relevant to the industry in our curriculum. When you leave out the applied aspect of a subject, how do you expect the students to cope at the end of the day? The curriculum should be designed to meet national needs, and we need a working curriculum. What we have now is not workable, it is still way behind and incomplete.

### **IMPLICATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

According to an empiricist philosopher, Francis Bacon "knowledge is power". Knowledge comes from education even though there is innate (derived from constitution of intellect), for one to be knowledgeable he must be educated. Therefore no nation develops beyond the level of her education. Any positive change in the society always comes from the fruit of education. Therefore the curriculum of any nation is the pivot of development because it is through the curriculum that the need (aims, goals and objectives) of the nation is transformed into learning experience. According to Tyler in Oteh and Akuma (2011) the term 'learning experience', refers to the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he can react. In another definition Onyike writing in Oteh and Akuma (2011) maintains that learning experience can be regarded as any activity



that the learner engages in which results in a change in behaviour. Thus the learner is an active participant, who reacts to some features of his environment that attracts his attention and these activities performed by the learner when merged with the content, facilitate the achievement of set objectives.

Be that as it may, curriculum is responsive when it includes the needs of the society and the needs of the learner. To develop such a curriculum theory, curriculum designers should not only define the problems with which curriculum development must deal, but also elaborate the system of concepts which must be used to assess the relevance of these data to education (Taba, 1962:7). Therefore it is the work of curriculum designers to develop a responsive curriculum that will develop valuable human capital that is needed for economic growth and human development (Onyemesim, 2005). It will encourage indigenous production and manufacturing of local goods and raw materials. This will in turn minimize the rate of brain drain in the society. Thus the skilled, experts and qualified professionals will no longer impoverish the nation through exportation of their skill and expertise to other countries.

Corruption is a cankerworm in any society and this has eating our country Nigeria down. A responsive curriculum development should in all ramification address in her structure of learning experience the endemic epidemic in our country. If the younger generations are taught the vices and implications, consequences and penalties of corruption early enough it will go a long way to serve as a deterrent.

## **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria as a nation has suffered so much in the hand of her leaders over these 57 years of her independence. And the most battered sector in her economy is education: ranging from embezzlement of education funds, appointment of unqualified educationists to head the ministry, poor remuneration of teachers, poor infrastructures and lack of teaching materials to the use of foreign curriculum. It is high time we look into our education industry and not only to sanitize the system but also to determine the type and model of curriculum that will be employed in the education system. Responsive Curriculum Development is a panacea to these myriad of problems. The problem of lack of sanity in the educational system can be solved through a pragmatic curriculum. A curriculum that tackles the problem of the learner, the needs, fears and worries of the society is what the Nigerian educational system



needs. This will bring national development because as far as nation's development is involved education plays a major role. The more educated Nigerians are the faster our economy grows and our society civilized, consequently, corruption will be jettisoned to the archive.

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