

## **Innovation in Indigenous Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This work discussed the concept of indigenous education as a significant resource that can contribute to the increased efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the development process in Nigeria. It stressed on the importance of educating the indigenous people within their own cultures and using indigenous Languages to educate them. The work presents indigenous education as a way of protecting, preserving and developing indigenous skills and cultures and a significant step towards empowering indigenous people to participate fully in the developmental efforts of their communities. The paper concluded with the argument that with the proper innovations in place, indigenous education will become a significant step towards empowering the local people and the unschooled, to participate fully in the developmental efforts of their communities. Recommendations were made towards the kind of indigenous education system that can foster sustainable development.*

**Key words: Concept of Indigenous Education, Effectiveness and Sustainability,**

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### **Introduction**

Before the advent of colonial administration in Africa, Nigerians had their own kind of education, which was indigenous in nature. Indigenous education is as old as the creation of man. In Africa, it is the first education that was and is still practiced. It is an education that is first received from home. This type of education is still relevant and practiced widely in Nigeria, (Umar, 2013). Indigenous education specifically focuses on teaching indigenous knowledge, models, methods, and contents with formal or non-formal educational system. The growing recognition and use of indigenous education methods can be a response to the erosion and loss of indigenous knowledge through the process of colonialism, globalization and modernity. (May & Aikman, 2003).

All African societies had systems of educating their young ones, giving them the knowledge, skills and values necessary for living in their societies. Education in Africa has passed through different periods. These are: pre-colonial (indigenous), colonial and post-colonial. At each period, there are important features that need to be understood. Indigenous education as already mentioned, is a system of education that existed in African societies before the coming of Christianity and western civilization. The traditional education system in Nigeria is life-long in nature and it aims at equipping individuals with the necessary skills and attitudes that would help them function effectively in the society. The system had been and is still effective in providing the functional training and experiences in artistry, farming, fishing and other vocational skills, which are needed for the survival of the society.

On the existence of indigenous education in our societies, Ozigi et al (1981) opines that, "there is the traditional form of education which has existed in our own society, as in other societies, for centuries. It has taught our children, formally or informally, how to behave as members of a group (family, clan, peer, community). The cultural values, norms, beliefs of societies (its traditional history, legends, folklore, dance, music); and how to produce certain things needed for the survival of the society (food, clothes, tools, housing, crafts)". All of these had been there before the coming of Western education.

### **Purpose and Objectives of Indigenous Education**

The purpose of indigenous education in Nigeria was to prepare the young generation into a useful and responsible adult in his/her society. The objectives were to enable young ones to:

- Take their social responsibilities as adults in their home, village and tribe.
- Acquire knowledge as adults in their societies.
- Be self-reliant.

### **Features of Indigenous Education**

Indigenous Education in Africa was culturally, artistically, religiously and recreationally integrated with the social life of the ethnic group. Learning of skills, social/cultural values and norms were not separated from their lives. The education fitted the group and expected social roles in the society. Education was utilitarian, preparing members to engage in a particular type of life activity. The indigenous/traditional education had no formal school, building or organization. It took place anytime and anywhere, under a tree, in the bush as people were hunting or collecting firewood or fruits. Girls' education was different from that of boys. Girls were socialized to effectively learn the adult roles of motherhood, wife and other home related skills. Youths were trained to prepare them for military, family, agricultural and cultural activities. The different areas of training included hunting, herding, farming, blacksmiths, carpentry, pot making, and basket weaving, depending on the life activities the particular ethnic group, clan or family was engaging in. These trainings were necessary for making them worthy members of the society, learning survival skills for being self-dependent in their own environment.

Mental and moral training were provided. Moral instructions focused on accepted values and norms such as generosity, diligence, and hospitality. There were no specific teachers, elderly or any knowledgeable person was a teacher. Therefore, there was nothing like failure. Every effort was made, encouragement and incentives were provided, so that every youth goes through, as such, failure was non-existent. This kind of education was for effective adjustment and adaptation to the environment. Individuals learnt about weather, landscape, plants and animals. In the early childhood, the child's education was largely in the hands of biological mothers. Language training was received from the mother and the extended family. The community assumes the greater role as the child approaches adolescence.

### **Methodology Used in Indigenous Education**

The main method used was transmission, observation and imitation. Children observed and imitated their parents' practical crafts and skills who performed according to their capacities. Group instruction, group assignments and age groupings to experience a particular significant event. Private instruction by sisters, brothers or one of the parents were also provided.

Folktales and stories were used not only to amuse and express feelings but to teach children ideal forms of behaviour, morality, inducting the youths into the moral, philosophical and cultural values of the community.

Learning by listening to elders, imitating or emulating them, direct instruction; (dos and don'ts), initiation rites and rituals were cultural devices used to inculcate the spirit of the community into the children. Once children approach adolescence, they learn through myths, legends, folksongs and folktales, proverbs and dances, preparing the child to adulthood.

### **Strengths**

Within this educational system, a child was educated to know, internalize and practice appropriate sex, and social roles. A child was taught to avoid undesirable behaviours. Education met the requirements of the society at that time. Objectives, scope and methods reflected the ways of life or cultural patterns of the community.

Youths learned their own culture and gained ability to live in their own community and so developed sense of belonging to the culture. Education was for everybody, non was excluded. People gained detailed knowledge of the physical environment and the skills to exploit it. It inculcated into children, the sense of togetherness and unity, understanding the rights and obligations of each individual in a particular society. It was more practical.

### **Shortcomings**

- Indigenous education was exclusive of others who did not belong to the particular ethnic group.
- It did not produce scientists, nor did produce great military. That is why Africans failed to resist the invasion of the colonial masters.
- The indigenous education is what led to the present use of the traditional healing and farming, which is not effective.
- It taught strict obedience to elders' rules and authority which were sometimes irrelevant.
- It was not flexible, but conservative and less innovative, resulting to stagnation. That is, it was unchanging from generation to generation.
- It demanded conformity, not creativity or individual uniqueness.
- It was not an education for change, and not well structured.

### **Indigenous Education and Sustainable Development**

Indigenous education, as already noted, is education that people in particular communities acquire from within their local communities which is tied to their believe, culture and tradition. Within indigenous education framework, members of the society/community acquire a lot of knowledge, popularly known as indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is the knowledge that people in a given community have developed over time and continue to develop. It is based on experience, often tested over centuries of use, adapted to local culture and environment. People have an intimate knowledge of many aspects of their surroundings and their daily lives.

Over the centuries, people have learnt how to grow food and to survive in difficult environments. They know what varieties of crops to plant, when to sow and weed, which plants are poisonous, which can be used for control of diseases in plants, livestock and human beings. Indigenous knowledge has been the basis in agriculture, food preparation and conservation, health care, education, and a wide range of other activities that sustain a society and its environment in many parts of the world for many centuries. Therefore, indigenous education is a significant resource that could contribute to the increased efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the development process in Nigeria. It is the basis for community level decision making in areas pertaining to food, security, human and animal health, educational resource management and other vital economic and social activities. This valuable and sophisticated system of education had been validated over time, in a way that is different from the western empirical system, and it makes valuable contributions to sustainable development.

### **Innovation and Sustainable Development**

Innovation is the act of making something new, introducing changes with the objectives of improving the old patterns or ways of doing things to make them more effectual, effective and efficient (Amahi & Okonkwo, 2015). Durando (2014) defines

innovation as a change that creates positive values that makes something better or more effective than its predecessor.

Innovation has become the new buzzword across the globe. The view that innovation is a key driver for sustainable development is widely accepted among scholars, industry professionals, and government representatives. This is due to the fact that sustainable development is a pressing issue that requires immediate action and changes from governments, industry and the society as a whole. It is innovation that can lead to transformations in individuals, organizations, supply chains, and communities toward a sustainable future.

It is the place of the government therefore to help in providing tools and building factories for the indigenous learners in their various fields of learning. Materials for practical works should be provided to such institutions overseeing the training of the indigenous students. There should not be any disparity between the western school system and the indigenous learners, rather there should be a collaborative effort between the different educational systems, so as to achieve good success in educating the totality of the Nigerian populace for a sustainable development.

### **Indigenous Education, Innovation and Sustainable Development**

Most people in the world today have an immediate and initiative sense of the urgent need to build a sustainable future. For thousands of years, human societies have proved that living sustainably – as healthy and happy individuals, within caring and stable families and communities, and in harmony with the natural world is possible. The long-term sustainability of indigenous economic and cultural systems is the result of indigenous system of education which established a human and natural ecology totally at one with each other. Educators around the world have realized that education must be reoriented to once again reflect such a vision of sustainability, one that links economic well-being with respect for the society.

Education for sustainable development is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. Indigenous education provides the foundation for future education and is a contribution to sustainable development in its own right.

Unfortunately, indigenous knowledge and wisdom have been undermined by the experience of colonialism, industrialization and globalization in Nigeria. Indigenous priorities and system of education have been supported by the somewhat narrow view that the indigenous education has nothing much to offer. The consequent disregard for the indigenous education has meant that knowledge, values and skills for sustainable living especially for the indigenous people, have been under played in contemporary education.

The different forms of indigenous knowledge including weaving, hunting, carpentry, carving, leather works, metal works, traditional ceramics and the use of medical plants, are passed on from adult to children in the workplace, where children assist their relatives or serve as apprentices for several years. However, increasing modernity is a challenge to such modes of instruction. Some types of indigenous knowledge are dying out because of decreased need for them and a lack of interest from youths who increasingly leave the village for jobs in the cities. Therefore, there is need for innovation in the traditional methods of education in Nigeria. Scientific ideas should be incorporated within the different areas of indigenous knowledge. This will go a long way to transform the traditional education system.

The prime place of education in the developmental effort of nations has never been doubted the world over. Various nations including Nigeria have for long been making efforts to develop this sector for optimal development. Although much has been achieved in this regard, a lot more need to be done so that the ever-increasing challenges of our time and the future time can be most effectively confronted.

In Nigeria for example, the challenges have been that of poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and general underdevelopment. However, if we are able to tackle these problems, it will reflect on the value and commitment we attach to education, which according to Baikie (2002) is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavour.

Many organizations of the world work to promote indigenous methods of education. A good example is the United Nations declaration of the right of indigenous people, which makes particular reference to the educational rights of indigenous peoples. It emphasizes the responsibility of states to adequately provide access to education for indigenous people, particularly children, and when possible for education to take place within their own culture and to be delivered in their own language (UNESCO, 2002).

Since it has now become clear that the indigenous education/knowledge is important, and indigenous people hold a wealth of knowledge and experience that represents a significant resource in the aspiration for sustainable development, it is therefore needful that everything possible be done to uphold and transform this system of education for sustainable development.

### **Conclusion**

The work looked at indigenous education as a system of education through which indigenous knowledge is transferred from generation to generation. It highlights indigenous education as the basis for community level decision making in areas pertaining to food, security, human and animal health, educational resource management and other vital economic and social activities. The study aimed at providing an indept understanding on the concept of indigenous education/knowledge and how sustainable development can be achieved through the recognition of relevant areas of indigenous knowledge. It has been realized that education must be reoriented to reflect the vision of sustainability, that development should cover all physical realities, and that all institutions (both indigenous and contemporary) must interact to achieve a continuous sustainable development. To this end, the government, policy makers and implementation agencies called upon to rise to their obligations in making indigenous education a viable system for sustainable development.

### **Recommendation**

- The world is undergoing changes due to the present technological innovations. Therefore, it is important that innovations and transformation be extended to the indigenous education sector, for the indigenous people to be relevant in the contemporary world.
- The government and the policy makers should adequately fund the indigenous education system to make it more effective.
- Adequate innovative equipment/facilities should be made available for the promotion of indigenous education, making it more attractive to the indigenous youths, who are moving out to the cities, looking for jobs. With this kind of innovations, the indigenous people and the unschooled will be enlightened and carried along, to match up with their educated equals and change from being inferior to them.

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