

**PHILOSOPHICAL BASE OF NIGERIAN SCHOOL  
CURRICULAR**

**A PAPER PRESENTED**

**BY**

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## **Abstract**

*There is always the need to fully understand and spell out the rationale behind any step taken in life. This is why the paper is written to analyse the Philosophical base of Nigerians School Curricula. The paper examines the Philosophy of colonial School Curricula. The criteria to be considered in the formation of School Curriculum, the Philosophical bases of Post-independent Nigerian School curricular. An assessment of the realization of individuals' and society's needs, values and aspiration through education is also carried out. Finally, various ways through which the major hindrances to the attainment of society's values through the school curricula are proffered.*

## **Introduction**

Before looking into the Philosophical bases of the curricula of Nigerian Schools, there is the need to examine the concept of curriculum.

Fafunwa (1972) defined Curriculum as "a group of prescribed courses or sequence of subjects required for certification". He further expressed that a good curriculum is the total environment in which education takes place which includes the child, the teacher, the subjects, the methods of teaching, the Psychological as well as the physical environment surrounding the child. Curriculum to many people simply means the essential things that children have to learn in school before they can be regarded as educated beings.

In the same vein, Adesina (1982) saw Curriculum as "the total learning experience, within a school. That is, extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes"

A curriculum can therefore be defined as the total experience of a child within the school. What then is the philosophical base of Nigerian school curricular? The Philosophical Base of Nigerian School Curricular before 1960

The National objectives of any nation are closely related to the needs, values and aspirations of the individual as well as the needs of the entire society. To ensure the realization of the various needs and for the attainment and sustenance of the cherished values necessary workable tools are usually employed.

Education for ages has been identified as one of the major tools needed for the realization of the needs and values of society. However, the colonial era school curricular especially the prescribed courses required for certification at the Primary and Secondary levels were based on the needs, values and aspirations of the Christian Missions and the colonial masters well as the needs of Nigerians as perceived by these two bodies.

The 'why' of education could be explained based on the evangelical mandate of the missionaries. The colonial government saw education as means of producing interpreters and clerks for the government and commercial firms. The aim was to produce men and women that will aid colonial economic. Exploitation and individuals that had a distate for Agriculture and other vocational oriented jobs which were then very indispensable to the country were produced. Colonial education perpetuated elitism.

The curricula then included English Language, European, History and Geography, Literature (foreign stories) that emphasized European values, Home

Management, Bible Knowledge, Arithmetic, Latin and German Language, Rudiment of sciences etc. The values and aspirations of Nigerians were not seriously considered. Hence, all that were made available to the citizens can simply be regarded as literary education. Nothing that favoured functionality was encouraged because the master-servant relationship that existed between the colonial masters and Nigerian was to be perpetuated through education.

Nigerians themselves saw the white men as paragons of humanity and objects of slavish imitation. Manual work was looked down upon and seen as undignifying. The white-man's lifestyle was so much favoured that farmers and labourers were looked down upon as inferior human beings.

As expressed by Banjo (1969), close to the end of colonial era, this slavish position seriously craved for by Nigerians and perpetuated through the school curricula improved a little. But the fact still remained that Nigerians had affinity for literary education and distaste for practical oriented subjects.

Although Nigerian education became increasingly diversified as a result of the various commission's reports which criticized the existing school curricular, yet, before 1960, restrictions from the colonial government persisted because of the determination to protect British commercial interest.

However, as Nigerians became increasingly aware of the need for political emancipation, social integration, the building of a nationhood and self-reliance, the agitation for a more functional and comprehensive curricular mounted. This agitation culminated in the curriculum reformation carried out at the curriculum conference held in September, 1969. At this conference, the review of schools curricula carried out was meant at de-emphasizing the elitist of Nigerian school curricular.

The National policy on Education published in 1977 is an offshoot of this famous conference. The policy document expressly spelt out the philosophical bases of independent Nigerian school curricula. Philosophical Bases of Post-Colonial Era Nigerian School Curricula. Curriculum formation is usually based on certain criteria. These criteria include:

- 1 Consideration of the caliber of people to be produced through education.
- 2 The nature of society desired for the child.
- 3 The types of values cherished by the society where education is pursued
- 4 The types of values that are cherished by the individual child (the recipient of education)

Fafunwa (1969) itemized the basic characteristics of any curriculum:

- 1 It must have definite and dynamic objective on the values of the society and the needs of the child as a citizen and a skilled individual
- 2 It must be flexible and must provide the growth that is essential in order to meet the stated or implied objectives
- 3 It must have built into it a process of constant evaluation to help determine the extent to which the educational process is meeting the goals as stated in terms of the end product.

In line with the views expressed above, Adesina (1982) stressed that the school curricula must be determined based on the values of the society in which the institution exist. The schools are to be seen as a major instrument of society for promoting the development of the existing values.

In Nigeria, the societal values are imbedded in the national goals. These are: the building of:

- 1 a free and democratic society
- 2 a just and egalitarian society
- 3 a united, strong and self-reliant nation
- 4 a great and dynamic economy
- 5 a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Since the school curricula are major ways by which the goals can be attained, the philosophy of Nigerian education therefore is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the formal schools system.

Hence, the school curricula (the totality of the school experience) as spelt out in the National Policy on Education should inculcate the following values into the child.

1. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual
2. Faith in man's ability to make rational decision
3. Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relation.
4. Shared responsibility for the common good of society
5. Respect for the dignity of labour
6. Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children

Specifically, Nigerian school curricula should promote the following: Self-realization, Better human relationship individual and national efficiency effective citizenship national consciousness national unity, social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress needed and aspired for by the Nigerian society.

For the school curricula to attain the above values, subjects taught in Nigerian schools should cater for the inculcation of national consciousness, and national unity. All the values necessary for the survival of the child and the society will have to be taught. The child's mind must be trained for the understanding of the world around him. And provisions must be made to inculcate appropriate skills and the acquisition of abilities, competence both mental and physical needed by the individual to live and contribute meaningfully to the development of his society.

The Policy document recognized the need for all hands to be on deck for the realization of the philosophy of Nigerian school curricula. Hence, Government promised to 'pump' money to education train teachers for the job, provide enough and conducive teaching environment, relating education techniques, encourage a diversified curricula, allow for the teaching of religious studies and the development of good health through the teaching of physical education.

#### Nigerian School Curricula

The subjects being offered at the Primary and Secondary school given below reveal the diversification ensured in the current school curricula and indication of an improvement upon the colonial education.

#### Primary School

1. Nigerian Language
2. English
3. Mathematics

4. Science
5. Social Studies
6. Health and Physical Education
7. Religious Instruction
8. Creative Arts and Handicrafts
9. Agriculture
10. Home Economics

#### Junior Secondary School

All the students are to offer eleven (11) subjects nine (9) of which shall be common to all.

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Integrated Science
4. Religious Knowledge
5. Social Studies and Citizenship Education
6. Health and Physical Education (Emphasis on practical)
7. 2 major Nigerian Languages
8. Agriculture
9. Cultural and Creative Arts
10. Any two pre-vocational subjects

Pre-vocational subjects from which students are to select two are

1. Introductory Technology (wood-work, metal-work, Electronics and Auto mechanics)
2. Local crafts and Home Economics and Business Studies (Typewriting, Shorthand, Commerce, Book Keeping, etc.) Elective Arabic and French Senior

#### Secondary School

All the student are to take all the seven (7) core subjects, a minimum of one(1) and a maximum of three(r) from the list of elective subjects to give minimum of eight (8) and a maximum of ten (10) subjects respectively to be offered at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE)

##### a Core Subjects

- 1 English Language
- 2 A Nigerian Language
- 3 Mathematics
- 4 One of Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- 5 One of Literature in English, History and Geography, and
- 6 Agricultural Science or a Vocational subject,

##### b Elective Courses

Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Maths, Commerce, Economics, Bookkeeping, Typewriting, Shorthand, Literature, in English, Geography, Agricultural science, Home Economics, Arabic, Metal Work, Wood-Work, Technical Drawing, Auto-Mechanics, Music, French, Government etc.

Laudable as the school subjects are, an over-all assessment of Nigeria school curricular earlier defined as the over-all experience of a child at school will help us to answer the following pertinent question:

- 1 Is Nigerian school curricula aiding the realization of individuals and society's values
- 2 If no, what are the inadequacies inherent in the school curricular? And
- 3 What can be done to ensure that Nigerian school curricula Meets the various needs, values and aspirations of the individual and the society?

#### Assessment of Nigerian School Curricula

Although Nigerian in the given of equal educational opportunities to all and Sundry so that every individual on can develop accordingly to his ability. Up till now in Nigerian school, equal opportunity is yet to be experience. The reason is because educational facilities and the qualified personnel to man the classes and disseminate the prescribed knowledge are not equally supplied to schools. Federal Government Colleges are better off in this regard. A situation where there is a dearth of facilities in some schools, students in such schools are not expects t put up their best because of the low quality input they have received.

Though pre-vocational, vocational and Science subjects are included in the school curricula as a result of the believe of Nigerians in a functional type of education needed for individual and society's self reliance, it is the sad to say that while teachers for liberal Arts are so many in Nigerian schools, those for the Sciences and the Vocational subjects are still very few. This is because the few ones produced higher institutions preferred to work outside the school where higher wages and salaries are promptly paid and where their services are better appreciated. Up till now, many students are disinterest in anything not prestigious. How then can we promote functionally under such disgusting situation witnessed in our schools

Sometimes when the teachers are available the basic teaching materials become the major hindrance. When the practical aspects of practical oriented subjects are neglected one can say that no meaningful learning is taking place.

Undue emphasis placed on examination in Nigerian schools hinders the effective and intentional in culcation of society values. When all efforts are geared towards success in a prescribed examination, memorization of facts which are likely to be thrown overboard at the completion of the course is encouraged. This affects virtually all the school subjects including Religious studies, social studies, history etc. which serves as the citadel of Nigerian social and spiritual values.

It is important to note that, though most teachers are well equipped for their job serve some laxity in the performance of their role. Quite often, teachers pay lip-service to the necessary pre-class preparation and in some cases the same old notes are used every years. This kind of cabbage in and out carried out by the teachers affects the performance of learners. When note pragmatic in nature is taught but more stereotyped knowledge society's progress is hindered.

The emotional climate created in the classroom is also a major determinant of the attainment of Nigerian educational objectives. The interrelationship that the teachers has with the pupil and the colleagues give learners the freedom to express himself and be confident not only in himself but in the teacher. Such positive climate enhances learning. But when the teacher makes himself an island and gives no room

for positive interaction with the learners, effective learning can be seriously hindered. In such a situation, the fear of the teacher will prevent meaningful learning. The social values to be injected into learners through smooth interaction and the promotion of the psychological health of the child will also be hindered.

The issue of allowing for shared responsibility for the common good of Society will also be hindered if children are not properly guided in the choice of subject to be offered in schools. The society is waiting to accommodate individual that have what it takes to build the nation. But a situation whereby non-viable course are the order of the day, the individual will rather become liabilities instead of contributions to national development. The role of the Guidance Counselors will have to be highlighted here. The school counselors are to guide learners based on their ability and the viability of the subjects being offered in schools. Unfortunately, the teaching assignment given to many of these Counsellors affects their effectiveness as guidance officers. Added to this is the dearth of testing instruments for diagnosing student's psychological problems.

When proper guidance is not given to students regardless of the level of teaching carried out, there is the tendency for the level of teaching carried out, there is the tendency for the child to experience some psychological frustrations.

The needs of the child and the society may not be realized after all.

It should be noted that though subjects like Mathematics is recognized as a tool for technological and scientific development needed for individual and national efficiency, the content has little bearing on the mathematics needs of ordinary people in our daily situation. Hence only a few indulges in maths. Infact, many students have pre-conceived notion about mathematics as a very difficult subject and that is why mass failure is being experienced in Mathematics yearly.

For easy communication and in the interest of nation hood the teaching of English Language is very important. Nigerian as a community has several tongues there is therefore the need for a common language hence, the adoption of English Language as the Nigerian general language of communication is unfortunately many students find it difficult to master the subject probably because it is foreign or as a result of the mode of presentation adopted by most teachers. Failure to pass English almost means failure to secure a place at higher level of education because a credit pass at Secondary level is major pre-requisite for admission to higher institution. When failures are perpetually experienced frustrations and withdrawal from academic pursuits are witnessed.

Self realization/actualization will not be promoted in situation where indept learning is hindered as a result of inadequate supply of factors and teaching materials to schools.

Suggestions on ways by which Nigerian School Curricula can be made to attain Nigerian Educational Philosophy

- 1 There is the need to proved school with every teaching necessary teaching material.
- 2 Trained teachers must be supplied to all schools.
- 3 Teaching should not be solely geared towards success in examination rator, emphasis should be placed on the inculcation of social and individual values.

- 4 Teachers should be fully aware of the psychological condition that will enhance the improvement of education in schools
- 5 Promotion of worthwhile professions or vocations needed for living and for the development of the society to be ensured through adherence to comprehensive and diversified curriculum provided for in the National Policy on Education. This can be done by funding education adequately and through the production of enough teachers to man the subject.
- 6 Deliberate attempt should be made in schools to establish the concept of nation hood. Every student should receive sufficient knowledge and understating of the country and the people so as to show sympathy and understanding of local problems and to appreciate Nigerian traditions and culture.
- 7 The curricula should be enriched by the introduction of additional source like the media (video, T.V. Magazine) to the schools.
- 8 Teacher's lifestyle and the relevant body of knowledge taught in schools should help to discourage the social ills currently disrupting Nigerian progress. Such will include bribery, corruption, tribalism, nepotism etc.

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