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The Development of Western Education in Nigeria from 1900-To Date: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

The study x-rayed the development of western education in Nigeria from 1900-to date. It revealed that the imposition of western education on Nigerians and Africa at large resulted to crash of culture. Although, western education brought civilization and development, yet some moral values of Nigerian culture were lost. The study adopted a historical research method there was great reliance on primary and secondary sources of relevant data. The study reveals that western education was introduced into Nigeria with the sole aim and objectives of evangelization which the colonial masters were interested in people who can read, write, interpret and serve as clerk in their court and offices. The research concluded with the following recommendations among others as: balanced education for present day Nigeria society must merge the values of traditional education with that of western education, there should be implementation of a balanced educational curriculum that could bridge the gap between the current educational system and the socio-political contemporary society improved funding of the basic education sub- sector, education for all should be tailored towards making citizens have access and quality education, expand the provision of early childhood education to all children of the appropriate age.

Keywords: *Development, Western education, Challenges, prospects, Nigeria*

Introduction

The provision of western education in Nigeria dates back to Missionary activities and British Colonialism in West Africa European scholars erroneously held the view that education in the African continent began with the arrival of the Europeans at the shore of Africa, since education was equated to literacy. Though, the art of transmitting knowledge through writing had existed in several Africa civilizations since antiquity. In West Africa writing was not evolved, even though the people had trade contact with Europeans for

centuries. No attempt was made by Europeans to introduce literacy until the early nineteenth century (Fajana & Anjorin, 1979). Hence, the Europeans concluded that education must be formal, based on writing and that literacy are major criteria for assessing civilization.

The European interest in West Africa began as far back as the fiftieth century when Prince Henry (the navigator) of Portugal sponsored voyages of exploration to West Africa as they needed raw materials to keep their factories going. Britain and France were two Europeans powers which showed much interest in the interior of West Africa. Though, Britain showed greater

interest than France. However, the European countries were interested in acquiring colonies for exploration. France suffered defeat at the hand of Britain in 1815 and they suffered another defeat in the hand of Prussia in 1870. This made France to lose some of her industries to the victors. It was the trading tendencies and partitioning of Africa in 1884. The partition specified on the map of Africa the territories to acquire by the European countries. The participation of Africa at the end of nineteenth century was not a necessary consequence of the opening up of Africa by European, but to spy out the land for later conquest and exploration.

The European found it difficult to keep their industries working without Africa contribution. Hence they scrambled and partitioned Africa in need of raw materials in European factories, particularly palm oil, groundnuts and cotton. There was growing competition in acquiring African territories (Anjorin 1981: 13-15). The coming of the white men was dominated by the British Missionaries who claimed that the Africans indulged in evil practices such as human sacrifices and slave trade which they wanted to prevent. From all indications, the European nations were prepared to struggle to share Africa, However, they are unwilling to fight war over the sharing. Rather there were secret agreements among the various rival groups, while alliances frequently changed between the four powers Britain, Germany, France and Portugal.

The Berlin conference met in 1884 and was attended by all the European powers and the United States of

America. No African country was represented at the conference in which the fate of the continent was decided. The conference confirms or affirms the situation that certain powers had imperial ambitions in Africa. Nevertheless, West Africa conference had some achievement for Europe. It established the fact that the occupation of Africa, despite all rivalries had to be a cooperative effort of European powers. The policy provided co-operation among the European powers having rivalries not to come to an open conflict. Furthermore, the resulting partition became the basis of the present day political units which have remained practically unchanged in West Africa even after Independence. The conference did one other good thing by making sure that the conflict or rivalry was restricted to Europeans.

The colonial administration and missionaries left no plans for proper sustenance of education for Nigerian citizen rather their business of education was organized and directed by Christian missionaries with parochial aim of making citizens to learn how to read, write and understand the Bible, so as to serve as interpreters and clerks. Amaele (2005:170) confirms this by stating that the various Christian bodies used education as a means of communication and converting Nigerians into their various denominations. Boyd & King (1981:99-100) captured the aim of the missionaries thus:

It must be kept in mind that the church undertook the business of education not because it regarded education as good in itself, but because it found that it could not do its own proper work with cut giving its

adherents, and especially its clergy, as much of the formal learning as was required for the study of the sacred writings and for the performance of religious duties.

At that time the Europeans need people to work with the local farmers in cultivation and processing the needed cash crops to boost the growth of foreign factories. The curriculum during this period was made up of 4Rs (reading, writing arithmetic and religion). Within the period the curriculum was relevant to the needs of missionary's education, but never met the individual needs of the people and their lifestyle.

The colonial education was fee paying all through and so much was not achieved as only few had the opportunity of going to school, hence the Western and Eastern region met a growing demand for education and there was an expected increase in enrolment which depended on the financial buoyancy of their regional government. The European or colonial administration forced their education on the Africans and there was clash of culture. A clan which once, spoke like one and act like one. The white men came and broke the unity.

Western education whether formal or informal in Nigeria is traceable to the efforts of European missionaries around 1842. Between (1842-1857), western education was introduced into Nigeria at three independent focal points. There was Badagry in 1843, Calabar in 1846 and Onitsha in 1857. Education at this time was regarded as a fundamental importance to the spread of Christianity. The missionaries established and ran the early schools in Nigeria. They also designed

curriculum for such schools and devoted their resources to the opening of schools for Nigerians (Eso, 2014). All missionaries who came to Nigeria combined evangelical and educational work together. Consequently, early mission schools were founded by Methodist Church of Scotland mission, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Roman Catholic Mission, Qua-Iboe Mission, Southern Baptist Convention, Sudan Interior Mission, Primitive Methodist Missionary Society and a host of others. These missionaries in Nigeria wasted no time in the establishment of schools in Badagry, Lagos, Ogbomosho, Ineyin, Abeokuta, Calabar, Onitsha, Akassa, Bonny etc.

Abdulrahman (2013) noted that missionaries remained the major education and managers of education provided to Nigerians in a formal way for nothing less than forty (40 years before the colonial education voice was heard). Throughout the period of missionaries educational activities, the colonial government was silent, so the monopoly of educational activities continued with each of the missionary bodies providing education the way and manner it appealed to them or based on their denominational doctrines and principles. These gave rise to Nigerian standard of education being compromised by the development of western education in Nigeria.

Development of Western Education during the Colonial Era

The introduction and spread of western education in Nigeria between 1842 and 1899 came from the Christian missions, individuals and communities,

otherwise known as the voluntary agencies. Nevertheless, the British Colonial Administration gave nominal financial assistance to the voluntary agencies and also made an attempt to control, assist and promote education by law (Kosemani & Okorosaye-Orubite, 2002:36). Furthermore, during the colonial period with regard to the search of a relevant curriculum that would serve the society, the government decided to check the rapid growth of the missionary schools by identifying taught subject as English language, arithmetic, reading and writing and needle work for girls then geography and history were elective subjects. Although, the teaching of religion was not emphasized in government owned schools (Egbule, Tabotndip & Aboho, 2011:175).

The Phelps-stoke African Education Commission Report of 1920 and the reaction of the colonial office to the report gave way to a more purposeful deliberation and programmed of educational development in British Tropical West Africa. The report captioned education in Africa was published in 1922. The terms of reference objectives were:

- To inquire as to the education work being done at present in all the areas visited.
- To investigate the education needs of the people in the light of the people in the religion. social, hygiene and economic conditions.
- To ascertain to what extent these needs were being met. To make available the full report of the study

The commission thus, recommended in Okoli (2011:44) as follows:

- There is need for education to adopt the need of the individual Africa. The rural and urban should be considered according to their respective needs.
- The issue of health and leisure should be taken seriously and leisure in the education of individual should be given much attention.
- More attention should be paid to the use of vernacular as a language of instructions in schools.
- Character development through religion at the early stage in learning and moral teachings should be seen as an important aspect of education and girl-child education should be encouraged.

The commission's report denounced the British Colonial Administration Laissez faire attitude towards the education of the Africans. In all, the report marked a new phase in the British education enterprise in Africa; it was a report of hope and of direction for education in Africa.

Okoli (2011:56) noted that this decision was of tremendous importance because the targets set by the conference for many years became the yardstick for measuring the achievement (quantitative) in terms of educational development in African countries.

The conference addressed the problem of planning education in relation to economic and social developments.

The plans adopted were:

- a. Short term plan of five (5) years from 1960-1965 developmental planning. It

was planned to meet the need of man power in Africa and to expand and raise secondary school enrolment.

- b. Long term plan of twenty (20) years (1961-1980) enrolment, to raise the enrolment ratios of elementary schools, secondary schools and the Universities which stood at 40:30:2 in 1961 to 100:23: 2 by 1980. Thus, the conference by its long term plan had more or less projected universal primary education by 1980 across the continent. That is every child of primary school age should be in school by 1980.

At that time the Europeans need people to work with the local farmers in cultivation and processing the needed cash crops to boost the growth of foreign factories,

1. Education Memorandum of 1925

In 1925, the committee published its first report as 1925 memorandum on education policy in British Tropical West Africa. In all the commission and the committee produced far-reaching positive effects in the education of the Africans, education had positive influence as it was meant for the young and adult. The memorandum had three attributes; first, it came on board as a result of Phelps-stoke recommendations which exposed the lackadaisical posture of the colonial government and in competencies of the missionaries in providing education to citizens. The memorandum was a complete adoption of the commission's report on education in Africa' which became the basis for other educational policies and practices before the regionalized periods.

2. Education Ordinance of 1926 in Nigeria

The 1926 ordinance was a translation of the 1925 ordinance (for the whole of Africa) into reality in Nigeria In interpreting the broad principles of the 1925 memorandum, Sir Clifford formulated an education policy that would was viewed as sound. He identified two main defects of the education system in Nigeria as;

- Poor quality of education and
- Indiscriminate setting up of schools by the missions.

Clifford therefore proposed remedies as;

- Government through grants to provide more funds for education
- Government should have a firm hold on education
- Missions to take over elementary education in the southern province without government interference

This ordinance codes seek to improve quality of teachers, to establish standard schools with experienced and seasoned leadership and to provide educational needs of individuals and communities. The code however, achieved laying the foundation of Nigeria's (future) educational system.

3. Education Ordinance of 1948

The Arthur Richard's constitution of 1946 introduced the regionalization policy which was fine-tuned by the John Macpherson's constitution of 1951. The policy was anchored on Richard Davidson's plan of ten years. The code made provision for the following:

- i. The establishment of a central body of education and regional boards of

- education for the provinces, namely, western, eastern, and northern
- ii. Procedure for establishment of new schools and closure of moribund schools.
- iii. Proper inspection of schools and
- iv. Certificate cum registration of teachers (Iyaduola, 1998:50-51)

The constitutional development provided more responsibilities to the regions which had far reaching impact on educational development in southern Nigeria. The education act No. 17 of 1952 which was enacted to strengthen the new constitution in term of education divided the central education department into three parallel regional departments, each under a regional education director who was not responsible to the central director but to the regional executive council.

Also education in the constitution was placed on the residual legislative list: Thus, every region was responsible for the formulation of its own educational policies at all levels without reference to the central government. Consequently, the position of the inspector general of education became largely advisory. This led to the emergency of four different educational systems in the country, the eastern, the northern, the western and the central government's educational systems (Kosemani & Okoromaye Orubite, 1995:63)

Regionalization and Education Policies in 1950s

Regionalization policy led to Nigeria being split into three regions - Northern, Eastern and Western; each with

her own House of Assembly and general governance. This division was initiated through 1946 Richard's constitution put in place by Arthur Richards. To strengthen and further empower each region's House of Assembly to enact laws on education, health, agriculture, commerce, local governance and to raise funds for projects, another constitution tagged Macpherson's constitution initiated by Sir John Macpherson came to the fore. With the emergence of these constitutions, parties evolved and elections were done, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief S. O. Awokoyu became the premier and Minister of Education respectively in the west. Professor Eyo Ita and Mr. R. 1. Uzoma were the premier and Minister of Education in the east; however, they were later replaced by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Mr. I. U. Akpabio respectively, while Sir Ahmadu Bello headed the government of the North.

Interestingly, this separation provided a fertile ground for a healthy rivalry in governance, especially as it relates to education. The West took the lead and made it clear to the members of the house that their government would give top priority health and education as far as the budget would allow. The Minister contended that educational development was imperative und urgent, therefore must be treated as national emergency, second only to war. Soquel to the recommendation made at the Cambridge in 1952 on the need and means of improving education provisions in Africa, this led to the release of the education policy with effect from 1955.

The policy on education of the Action Group under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo presented education as priority area in his budget. The then minister for education, Chief Awokoya presented a proposal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) to the House for the introduction and implementation of the Universal (free) Primary Education (UPE) scheme in the western region by 1955, hence the policy stated that with effect from 1955 primary education would become free, universal, but not "compulsory. It included, massive teacher training scheme, expansion of teacher training facilities and introduction of secondary modern schools and technical education, to augment the existing exclusive and expensive secondary grammar schools. Much progress was recorded in terms of providing education to western region. This caused the introduction to eastern region in 1957 (with lesser success). The North did not embark on UPE because of their slow receptivity and suspicion of the western education form which they never planned for. The success of the UPE programme, notwithstanding recorded some major problems which were revealed through Banjo Commission as follows:

- Creation of high desire for white collar jobs among Nigeria youths to the neglect of vocations
- Emergence of some Nigerian literates as "white washed colonial lords. Their ideologies, values and mentality were totally strange to the reality of the country.
- Creation of class systems among literates and non-literates, Christians and Muslims, and even pagans, Civil servants and private workers, as well

as inter-ethnic and inter-regional rivalries.

- Creation and encouragement of educational imbalance between the North and South, and even within the regions.
- Infliction of terrible and seemingly irrecoverable blows to our indigenous cultures (Amaele, 2005:177),

These wounds brought great damages, the greatest of which relates to the last point-blows to our cultures. Our values and cultures were relegated. We were 'educated to believe that we had nothing worthwhile, and if not western education, we would have less hope for the future. According to Nyerene (1968:149) in Akinsanya (2012) had said in reaction that of all the crimes:

There is no more than the attempt to make us believe that we had no indigenous culture of our own or that what we have was worthless of something which we would be ashamed instead of a source of pride. Some of us, particularly those of us who acquired European education, set ourselves out to prove to our colonial masters that we had become civilized; and by that, we meant that we had abandoned everything connected with our past and learnt to initiate only European way. Our young men's ambitions were not to Black Europeans! Indeed at one time, it was a compliment rather than an insult to call a man who imitated the Europeans a 'Black Europeans.

Policies and Strategies Adopted to promote Educational Development in Nigeria Post- Colonial Era

The history of educational development in Nigeria is replete with various attempts at education innovations, reforms and policies in the colonial and post-colonial period. However, the colonial administration adopted strategies

through the introduction of Education Memorandum, Education Ordinances, and the regionalization of education policy was steps to bring education to the door post of Africans.

Postcolonial administration of 1960-1969 saw the need to recognize curriculum change or develop new curriculum. This is because the colonial curriculum of education was foreign consequently, the post-colonial era decided to design curriculum that will be in line with global educational system.

The 1969 national curriculum conference in Ibadan which led to the 1973 national conference on education was to draft the post-independence policy on education in Nigeria in order to provide a philosophy of education that will be beneficiary to every citizen of Nigeria. The national curriculum conference was the first orientation of the Nigerian educational system that promoted national consciousness and self-reliance through the educational processes (Fafunwa, 1995:241). It was the first time Nigerians deliberated by themselves on the aims and goals of education suited for their children. A good representation of the Nigerian populace was featured at the programme. The concern of the conference did not consist in developing curriculum or recommending subject contents and methodologies, instead it was a search for another reason for the national philosophy of education, goals/objectives of education and values guidelines for curriculum development.

Prospects of Development of Western Education in Nigeria

According to Omoregie, (2008), the development of Western education in Nigeria from 1900 to the present has been marked by significant progress and evolving prospects. An overview of the key prospects for the development of Western education in Nigeria:

1. **Expansion and Inclusivity - Early 20th Century to 1960s:** Initial Growth in the early 20th century saw the establishment of Western education through missionary and government schools, laying the foundation for future expansion in education system in Nigeria. Post-Independence Growth has the introduction of policies aimed at increasing access to Education for all (EFA) segments of the population led to significant improvements in enrollment rates Omoregie, (2008).
2. **Educational Reforms and Policy Development - 1970s to 1990s:** According to Adesina, (1984), Universal Primary Education (UPE) it was initiated in 1976, this policy aimed to provide free and compulsory education, increasing primary school enrollment and literacy rates. National Policy on Education (NPE) the 1977 policy outlined objectives for educational reforms, including curriculum development and vocational training.
3. **Higher Education Expansion - 1990s to Present:** According to Jega,

(2000), stated that growth of Institutions in Nigeria has risen in number of universities and higher education institutions has increased, with both public and private sectors contributing to educational expansion. Also in Nigerian universities there are increasingly focusing on research and development, enhancing their role in national and global academic communities for advancement in education systems in Nigeria to meet the global standard.

4. **Technological Integration - 2000s to present:**

According to Adeyemi, (2010) ICT in Education the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed teaching and learning, providing new opportunities for digital literacy and access to global resources. In recent time the rise of e-learning platforms and online courses has expanded educational opportunities, particularly for remote and underserved areas which in impact in the development of education in Nigeria.

5. **Government Initiatives and International Support - According to Obi, (2018) In Present Day:**

Recent policies in education aim to address challenges such as quality of education, infrastructure development, and teacher training. Also, Partnerships with international organizations and foreign governments have supported educational projects, including funding and technical assistance.

6. **Focus on Quality and Inclusivity - Recent Years:**

According to Yusuf, (2019) quality assurance is a growing emphasis on improving educational quality through accreditation and monitoring systems and inclusive Education Programs have increasing inclusivity for marginalized groups, including special needs education and gender equality initiatives, are becoming more prevalent.

7. **Private and Alternative Education Models - 2000s to Present:**

According to Ojo, (2015) stated that the growth of private education institutions has introduced alternative models and innovative curricula, often providing higher quality education compared to some public schools and Alternative Education Models has various alternative models, such as Montessori and STEM-focused schools, are emerging to cater to diverse educational needs.

8. **Future Prospects and Innovations - Current Trends:**

According to Adeyemi, (2010), stated that the continued advancements in educational technology and digital resources are expected to enhance learning experiences and accessibility and ongoing adaptation of educational policies to address contemporary challenges and leverage opportunities for growth.

Challenges of Development of Western Education in Nigeria

The development of Western education in Nigeria has been accompanied by a range of challenges from 1900 to the present. These challenges have impacted the effectiveness and reach of educational reforms and progress:

Early 20th Century:

- **Colonial Policies:** The colonial education system was designed to serve the interests of the British Empire, leading to educational disparities. Missionary schools often served only a small, elite segment of the population.
- **Curriculum and Language Issues:** The curriculum was heavily influenced by British culture and values, marginalizing indigenous languages and cultures
- **Political Instability and Governance Issues**

Post-Independence to 1990s:

- **Military Rule and Instability:** Frequent changes in government, especially during military rule, led to inconsistent educational policies and interruptions in the education system.
- **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Corruption in educational funding and mismanagement of resources undermined the development of educational infrastructure and quality.
- **Infrastructure and Resource Deficiencies**

1990s to Early 2000s:

- **Inadequate Facilities:** Many schools suffer from inadequate infrastructure, including lack of classrooms, libraries, and laboratories.
- **Teacher Shortage:** Persistent shortages of qualified teachers and poor working conditions have affected the quality of education.
- **Economic Constraints and Funding Issues**

2000s to Present:

- **Underfunding:** Insufficient government funding has led to poor educational facilities and resources.
- **Economic Disparities:** Economic inequalities between regions have resulted in uneven educational opportunities and quality.
- **Social and Cultural Barriers**

Present Day:

- **Gender Disparities:** Cultural and traditional practices in some regions continue to restrict educational opportunities for girls.
- **Religious Conflicts:** In certain regions, religious conflicts have disrupted schooling, particularly in the northern part of Nigeria.
- **Technological and Globalization Challenges**

Recent Years:

- **Digital Divide:** There is a significant gap between urban and rural areas in terms of access to technology and digital learning resources.
- **Curriculum Relevance:** Keeping the curriculum relevant in a rapidly

changing global context poses a challenge for educators and policymakers.

- Security Concerns
- **Insurgency and Conflict:** The rise of insurgent groups like Boko Haram has led to attacks on schools, abductions, and general disruptions to education in affected areas.
- **Inconsistent Policy Implementation:** While numerous educational policies have been formulated, inconsistent implementation and lack of follow-through have undermined their effectiveness.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Weak monitoring and evaluation systems have hindered the assessment of educational policies and programs.

Summary

Education was not geared towards intellectual development of Africans because it was poorly organized, ill-equipped, education was fee paying etc. Therefore, many children couldn't pay, so did not go to school. The colonialist wanted a means of communication preferable to Nigerians. Education was not intended to educate Nigerians in real sense etc. Policies and strategies to promote education were (UPE 1950s-1959, reviewed UPE 1970s, precisely 1976 and UBE of 1990. The policies came very late few years before independence, UPE in 1950s was characterized by rivalry competitions.

The western region made a good attempt in the provision of UPE, while

the eastern region made a fair attempt and the northern region no attempt at all. The development of Western education in Nigeria has shown remarkable progress, with significant improvements in access, quality, and inclusivity. Ongoing reforms, technological integration, and international support contribute to a positive outlook for the future of education in Nigeria. The development of Western education in Nigeria has faced significant challenges, including historical legacies, political instability, infrastructure deficiencies, and socio-cultural barriers. In addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms, effective policy implementation, and government support.

Recommendations

To achieve appraisable level of education, the following recommendations are necessary among others

- Balanced education for present day Nigeria society must merge the values of traditional education with that of western education
- Improved funding of the basic education sub-sector.
- Adequate provision of instructional materials to enhance teaching/learning effectiveness
- Education for all should be tailored towards making citizens have access and quality education
- Expand the provision of early childhood education to all children of the appropriate age.

- There should also be a review of the curricula and indigenous knowledge systems values and skills.
- Creating awareness and enlighten migrants, farmers, and fishermen on the need for them to acquire education (Reading, writing and calculation).
- Reduce rural/urban and socio-economic disparities in education participation
- Stakeholders should harness new information and communication technologies to help achieve education goals.

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