Prospects of Traditional Education and Cultural Identity for Sustainable Development Process in Nigeria

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Abstract

Traditional education is back-to-basics, conventional education or customary education, refers to long-established customs that society traditionally used in schools. Traditional education helps in receiving instruction on core topics such as math, science, reading and social studies; diversity in social interaction; and access to specialized instruction. It was concluded that adaptation and use of traditional education are greatly influenced by the culture, economic, social, political and geographical contexts also contribute to generate indigenous knowledge, but to a lesser extent. Therefore, traditional education systems show great diversity not only among ethnic groups but among locations also helps in reclaiming cultural identity in Nigeria. Therefore, all the academics, policy makers, planers should pay greater attention to this invaluable treasure of knowledge that is threatened by extinction. If we are to move towards interactive technology development from the conventional transfer of technology approach we all may have to learn many things from our village level experts, the gurus of indigenous knowledge.

Keywords: traditional education, reclaiming, cultural identity, prospects, invaluable

Introduction

Prior to the independence movements of the 1960s, many East Africans were socialized within indigenous contexts. At present, traditional institutions of customary law, land tenure systems, inheritance rights, and rituals are disappearing due to changes in power relations inherent in modern techno-industrial culture, resulting in the devaluing or erasure of indigenous African knowledge. Indigenous knowledge encompasses what local people know and do, and what they have known and done for generations (Eisner, 2015). These practices developed through trial and error, and proved flexible enough to cope with change. Much of this knowledge, however, has never been systematically documented and is subsequently being forgotten and replaced by "modern" education and technology. "Modern" education, the formal, Western-style educational system currently in place, is associated with Western thought and is perceived by Western-oriented educators as better than indigenous knowledge,

which is typically associated with folk knowledge and hence considered "inferior" (Eisner, 2015).

The term "indigenous" refers to the complex, culturally diverse societies of Africa which have resulted from decades of immigration and integration. Such a complex includes Islamic traditions, which vary greatly and cannot be separated from other indigenous practices (Erny, 2011). The modern1 folk dichotomy contributes to a widening gap between youth and elders in many rural African contexts and perpetuates a false perception that modernization is a unidirectional process (Erny, 2011). A curriculum which divides "indigenous" knowledge from "modern" knowledge fails to teach students about the unique cultural patterns by which people develop and advance their social worlds, and ignores the ways in which "modern" cultural beliefs and practices draw from folk and indigenous ways of life.

Traditional Education

Traditional education means education in which instruction takes place between an instructor and students where all are physically present in the same classroom. Traditional education, also known as back-to-basics, conventional education or customary education, refers to long-established customs that society traditionally used in schools. Some forms of education reform promote the adoption of progressive education practices, a more holistic approach which focuses on individual students' needs and self-control (Beck, 2006). In the eyes of reformers, traditional teacher-centered methods focused on rote learning and memorization must be abandoned in favour of student-centred and task-based approaches to learning.

Depending on the context, the opposite of traditional education may be progressive education, modern education (the education approaches based on developmental psychology), or alternative education

The primary purpose of traditional education is to transmit to a next generation those skills, facts, and standards of moral and social conduct that adults consider to be necessary for the next generation's material advancement (Beck, 2006). As beneficiaries of this plan, which educational progressivist John Dewey described as being "imposed from above and from outside," the students are expected to docilely and obediently receive and believe these fixed answers. Teachers are the instruments by which this knowledge is communicated and these standards of behaviour are enforced.

Historically, the primary educational technique of traditional education was simple oral recitation: In a typical approach, students sat quietly at their places and listened to one student after another recite his or her lesson, until each had been called upon. The teacher's primary activity was assigning

and listening to these recitations; students studied and memorized the assignments at home. A test or oral examination might be given at the end of a unit, and the process, which was called "assignment study recitation test," was repeated. In addition to its overemphasis on verbal answers, reliance on rote memorisation (memorization with no effort at understanding the meaning), and disconnected, unrelated assignments, it was also an extremely inefficient use of students' and teachers' time(Quiroz,2015). This traditional approach also insisted that all students be taught the same materials at the same point; students that did not learn quickly enough failed, rather than being allowed to succeed at their natural speeds. This approach, which had been imported from Europe, dominated American education until the end of the 19th century, when the education reform movement imported progressive education techniques from Europe (Dewey, 2008).

Traditional education is associated with much stronger elements of coercion than seems acceptable now in most cultures.It has sometimes included: the use of corporal punishment to maintain classroom discipline or punish errors; inculcating the dominant religion and language; separating students according to gender, race, and social class,as well as teaching different subjects to girls and boys. In terms of curriculum there was and still is a high level of attention paid to time-honoured academic knowledge (Dewey, 2008).

In the presentit varies enormously from culture to culture, but still tends to be characterised by a much higher level of coercion than alternative education. Traditional schooling in Britain and its possessions and former colonies tends to follow the English public school style of strictly enforced uniforms and a militaristic style of discipline. This can be contrasted with South African, US and Australian schools, which can have a much higher tolerance for spontaneous student-to-teacher communication.

What is Culture?

Agha (2014) defines culture as "totality of how people live and behave." Culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, society." Culture "as all those historically created designs for living, explicit and impact, rational, irrational, which existed anytime as potential guide for behaviours of men." According to Otite and Oginwo (2016) culture is "the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, customs and technology, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation." Culture is "The sum total of human creations, intellectual, technical, artistic, physical and moral. Culture is the complex part of living that directs human social life. The things each generation must learn and to which they eventually may add." Culture distinguishes human being from other animals, in that human are able to

construct patterns of behaviours for themselves, and are able to transmit this from person to person and through generations.

Characteristics of culture

- Culture is learned, not a biological inheritance: According to Linton (cited in Anderson, 2004) "Culture is learned by growing up with it the process of cultural transmission from one generation to the next is called enculturation." Culture according to Mishra (2004) is a social heritage because it is hereditary and transmissible from one generation to another.

- Culture is symbolic: Akama, (2012) described it as "the most symbolic elements of language functioning in this case as the substitution of words for objects; with language, humans are able to transmit culture from one generation to another.." Language is a very important index of culture. Once one speaks one's native language, it is easy to identify where he or she comes from.

- Culture is dynamic: According to Akama (2012), Culture is dynamic because all cultures change overtime, changes take place in response to such events and phenomena as environmental pollution and crisis, intrusion of migrants and cultural diffusions, or modifications in behavior and values within the social system.

- Culture is a set of shared ideals, values, and standards of behavior: It is the common factor that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to the group and its members. It can be shared and has the capacity to influence the any individual knowingly or unknowingly.

- Sense of community life: Living together and the sense of' Community of brothers and sisters' are the basis and the expression of the extended family system. Citing an example of a practical demonstration of this sense of communalism in Nigeria, it is stated that in many parts of Southern Nigeria, most of the earliest educated elites are known to have been sponsored using palm nut products simply to underscore the fact that their communities used the resources of their palm nut products to pay for their studies in the United Kingdom and other oversea scountries.

- Sense of good human relations: this indicates African people's ability to relate cordially with one another and tolerate each other, tolerate and endure successive bad governments. Africans have a sense of respect for constituted authority and elders.

- Sense of sacredness of life: African respect life and hold it as sacred. This is of course why legalization of abortion has not been passed into law in any African country.

- Sense of Hospitality: Africans are very hospitable people. Hence the existence of so many expatriates doing their business without disturbance and molestation in the continent attest to this.

- Sense of the sacred religion: Religion, faith or even creed are personal and should not be discredited, toyed with or dominated. Hence, violent clashes result in any attempt to breach any of these esteems.

- Culture is Integrated: It is structurally broken down into parts, and there is the tendency for all the parts to function as an interrelated whole. The various complements are compatible, and they operatein harmony and complement, as integrated patterns and interrelated system of institutions, mores, folkways, and usages.

- Culture is continuous and comprehensive: Members of a culture may die but the cultural patterns subsist in time from one generation to another. Also, the impact of culture on its members is comprehensive, without exception. As humans cannot escape death, so they cannot escape cultures' influence and direction of life course.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a part of a person's identity, or their self-conception and self-perception, and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture (Tan,2005).. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity or upbringing.

Cultural (and ethnic) identity is a subset of the communication theory of identity that establishes four "frames of identity" that allow us to view how we build identity. These frames include the personal frame, enactment of communication frame, relationship frame, and communal frame (Bunschoten , Binet, ., & Hoshino, 2001). The communal frame refers to the cultural constraints or the sense of "right" that people live by (which varies by cultural group). Therefore, cultural (and ethnic) identity become central to a person's identity, how they see themselves, and how they relate to the world.

Traditional Education and Cultural Diversity

A closer look at the local traditions in a country reveals the methods by which the cultural and ecological balance is maintained. Culture is defined by the ecological conditions and the traditional institutions that help to sustain the community (Mishra, 2004). This promotes a situation of "constructive

dependence" instead of "destructive dependence" of so called modern development. Evidence of this is found in various myths, taboos, rules and regulations that form part of the local culture and ethos.

The generation, adaptation and use of traditional education are greatly influenced by the culture, economic, social, political and geographical contexts also contribute to generate indigenous knowledge, but to a lesser extent. Therefore, traditional education systems show great diversity not only among ethnic groups but among locations also. There are at least according to Otite and Ogionwo (2016) four ways to understand and compare the traditional educational different cultures.

- A different knowledge of similar things;
- A different knowledge of different things
- Different ways of organizing knowledge and
- Different ways of preserving and transferring knowledge.

Traditional Education and Biological Diversity

Biological diversity is now threatened by extinction. According to Quiroz (2016), biological diversity and cultural diversity are two sides of the same coin. Living diversity in nature corresponds to a living diversity of cultures. With cultural and environmental changes, both biodiversity and the indigenous knowledge systems vital to sustainability are being lost at an incredible rate (Haverkort & Millar, 2014). Poverty is one of the main reasons for this rapid loss of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems. Poverty increases the pressure on natural resources and diverts people from complex indigenous knowledge systems to simple and easy techniques such as chemical agriculture. In addition, introduction of "modern" commercial agricultural technology from West displaces or even eliminates the local practices (indigenous knowledge) in favour of modern practices such as mono-cropping (simplification of ecosystems for so called easy and "efficient" practices). This has led to the degradation of natural resources, poorer nutrition and loss of informal channels of communication.   Appleton (2013) and Larson (2008) have provided examples of the loss of indigenous knowledge systems through the loss of indigenous channels of communication.

The author of this paper compared the knowledge which a 26 year old young farmer from Buttala (rural area of Sri Lanka) had of traditional practices with that of his grand farther (a farmer at age of 82 years) and found that younger farmer's knowledge was very much reduced. It is widely accepted that traditional farmers conserve the biodiversity as they are the practitioners of environmental processes designed to transform, manage and use the nature.

Therefore, the indigenous knowledge accumulated by these people constitutes a pool of techniques which are of great importance for long-term sustainability (Anderson, 2004).

Use of Traditional Education in Sustainable Development Process

All most all the development actors have now recognized the value of participatory approaches in decision-making for sustainable development. Traditional education provides the basis for grassroots decision-making. It is recently found that the indigenous knowledge of ecological zones, natural resources, agriculture, aquaculture, forest and game management is far more sophisticated than previously assumed (Posey, 2015). Furthermore, this knowledge offers new models for development that are both ecologically and socially sound. Therefore, it is a well known fact that development activities that work with and through indigenous knowledge have several important advantages over projects that operate outside them. One classic example is that reverting back to "non-scientific" polyculture (mixed cropping) from "scientific" monoculture. The characteristics of traditional polycultures that make them desirable were ignored by agricultural researchers in developing countries with the introduction of concept of green revolution into those countries (Agba, 2014). But recently, research concerning polyculture has blossomed and some of their benefits are becoming clear. Polyculture is the sustainable farming system prevailed in Sri Lanka for more than 2500 years. It has many sustainable characteristics such as diet diversity, diversified income generation, production stability, minimization of risk, low pest and diseases incidences, efficient use of labour, intensification of production with limited natural resources and maximization of returns under low levels of technology. These lessons the local people have learned through millennia of accumulated experience and survival are invaluable in designing modern development plans (Akama, 2012). Therefore, the policy makers should pay greater attention to indigenous knowledge in the development process at policy level. This is very important in preparing national agricultural policy for a country like Sri Lanka. The vast majority of the population in Srilanka is small scale farmers, each working less than two hectares of land. These farmers represent different ethnic groups. While remain invisible to policy makers these small farmers' groups work in a rather unorganized manner and search solutions for their "localized" farming problems through indigenous knowledge. Such technology is user-derived and tested through time. On the other hand, the critical strength of the indigenous knowledge is its ability to see the interrelation of disciplines, and then integrate them meaningfully. This holistic perspective and the resulting synergism show higher levels of developmental impact, adaptability and sustainability than

Western modern knowledge. Therefore, it is a very good source of readily available and already tested appropriate technology for policy makers to use in their planning process.

The value of indigenous knowledge is not only limited to agriculture, environment and biodiversity. It has an immense value in education, medicine etc. Indigenous peoples' traditional model of education is a balanced and complementary model acceptable to the local community. It is an education system gradually developed from the accumulated knowledge of many generations. It leads to the development of a whole person in a dynamic family and community context. It incorporated principles of holism, integration, respect for the spiritual and natural world order, and the balance. On an individual scale, it encompassed total preparation of the total person for living a total life (Obomsawin, 2008).

Later, some education experts have realized the value of holistic nature of the indigenous education systems and introduced the same into the modern education systems with a new title called "affective learning" (Eyford, 2010). The concept of affective learning is to follow a holistic approach to develop character, conscience, attitudes and moral values. According to Eyford (2010) the affective learning contains the forces that determine the nature of an individual's life and ultimately the life of an entire people. Neglect of affective learning has contributed to escalating crime, drug dependency, pornography, and family/social breakdown in the West (Eyford, 2010).

While Western medical system mainly concentrates only one issue at a time the indigenous healing system (Aurvedic medicine) follows a holistic approach. It is interdisciplinary and combines knowledge of botany, toxicology, chemical physics, biochemistry, and psychology. Indigenous medical practitioners tackle prevention as well as therapy, perceiving illness and healing holistically (2014). Therapies often enhance healing by treating the whole being, rather than targeting specific symptoms, and trace the disease to the context of the person's life, rather than a bacteria or virus. Exploration of plant medicines (ethno-pharmacology) has evolved over millennia to a current usage of some 20,000 species, which still form the major sources of medicine for the population of the majority of the world. Western science, in contrast, has fully studied only 1100 of Earth's 265,000 plants (of which some 40,000 have potential medical or nutritional value).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was revealed that traditional education helps in receiving instruction on core topics such as mathematical science, reading and Social Studies; diversity in social interaction; and access to specialized

instruction. Traditional education, also known as back-to-basics, conventional education or customary education, refers to long-established customs that society traditionally used in schools. It was concluded that adaptation and use of traditional education are greatly influenced by the culture, economic, social, political and geographical contexts also contribute to generate indigenous knowledge, but to a lesser extent. Therefore, traditional education systems show great diversity not only among ethnic groups but among locations also helps in reclaiming Africa names for cultural identity in Ogun State.

Recommendations

·   All the academics, policy makers, planers should pay greater attention to this invaluable treasure of knowledge that is threatened by extinction. If we are to move towards interactive technology development from the conventional transfer of technology approach we all may have to learn many things from our village level experts, the gurus of indigenous knowledge.

·   The outcome must be a reconceptualized curriculum practice that is inclusive, democratic, and acknowledges individuals' African heritages, experiences, and identities. These changes must be cultivated and grounded in local ways of being, knowing, and thinking.

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