

Education throughout history



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Introduction

Education has been defined (Ukeje, 1966) as a process by which people are acclimatized to the culture into which they are born in order that they may advance it. It is the process through which people are prepared to live effectively in their environment. Today, the environment refers to the universe.

This definition suggests that various cultures from time immemorial patterns and systems of education (formal or informal) suitable for their needs and environment. In many cases the content of educational programme may differ in terms of method and/or approach but the import (i. e. the purpose) is usually the same – maintenance and transmission of culture (knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, skills, technology, values, etc). As the form, content, method and approach to education continue to be dynamic following the changing circumstances of the culture, it became necessary to pass on more and more knowledge and skills from one generation to the next.

Records have it that every culture started educational process through informal method. As more needs arose and life became more dynamic and complicated, it became expedient that the process of education must change to reflect the changing circumstances of the culture. Various cultures therefore evolved formal systems of education so as to be orderly in their approach to transmission of knowledge and skills.

Educational activities usually involve training in socio-economic activities of the environment in form of skill training in technological, recreational and intellectual subjects. It is pertinent at this point to have an idea of how

education was organized in nations of early civilization and note the contribution those ancient communities have made to the development of modern day education.

Educational Practice In Ancient Greece

Greece is known as the cradle of civilization. The ancient Greece covered very large expanse of territories in Europe and parts of Asia. Invention of writing by the Greeks was one of the greatest achievements in the history of Education. Greek language had a great influence on English and other modern European languages and so it was essential for Western civilization. City state is the unit of political administration in Greece. Sparta and Athens are the main city states of Greece world. So, our discussion will centre on education in Sparta and Athens.

Spartan Education:

Only Spartans who were regarded as the citizens received any education and this was mainly physical, military and moral. Spartan education was geared towards physical vigor, determination, courage, military skill, obedience to law and constituted authority.

Only healthy Spartan children were raised to become citizens, unhealthy ones were either exposed to die early or left to be adopted by the subject classes.

Education Of The Boys:

Spartan boys were exposed to military training very early as from the age of 7. They were organized in smaller groups in the barracks where they had a leader to whom they were responsible rather than their parents/families. The

physical education was to make them tough and develop the spirit of endurance. They were to put on minimum clothing, eat less food, have little rest, etc. Mental and moral training were involved in their dances and music. Their religion was largely patriotism. Reading and writing were not included in the public education. As from age 18-20, they were exposed to practice in professional battle (mock battles) and at 20 they were matured enough to seek for active service among the hostile groups. Up to age 30, they lived in the barracks as active soldiers until age 60 when they disengaged to take active part in politics.

Education Of Girls:

Greek girls received public athletic training in sports, jumping, throwing discus and javelin, but not boxing. They were organized into troops like boys by ages. They engaged in dancing, singing, marching and took part in public religious rites, but they lived at home. If a Spartan girl failed her test, she would lose her right of citizenship and became perioikos (a member of the middle class).

Objectives Of Spartan Education:

Spartan education was determined by the desire for military efficiency. It aimed at providing patriotic, obedient and military efficiency in citizens so as to defend the integrity of the state. It prepared women for womanhood.

Appraisal Of Spartan Education.

Positively, the Spartan education was efficient in its organization and relevant to the needs and aspiration of the people of the time. There was provision of equal education for men and women.

Negatively, the Spartan education was too narrow, short-sighted and inadequate. It was tied strictly to the defense of the state. Other areas of need were neglected (e. g. economic and socio cultural aspects) It failed to take care of individual differences and it had no regard for human rights and dignity.

The Athenian Education:

Athens was one of the city-states of the Ancient Greece. In ancient Athens the purpose of education was to produce citizens trained in arts, to prepare citizens for both peace and war. Athenians believed that their form of education was better than that of the Spartans and so they did not share the kind of admiration other city-states had for Spartans. Athenians felt that they were more superior to the Spartans in terms of their training and upbringing like the Spartans, the Athenians boys are taught at home by the mother or by a male slave until they attain the age of 7. As from that age, they attended elementary school until they were 13 part of their training was gymnastic. The younger boys learnt running, jumping, wrestling, discus and juvenile throwing. They also learnt to play musical instruments and sing. They learnt to count, read and write. They took a lot of lesson and practice in dictation, memorization and acting. Books were very expensive and rare, so subjects were read out loud and the boys had to memorize everything.

Pioneers Of Practical And Popular Education: The Great Teachers

(a) The Sophists and the Philosophers:

Apart from elementary school masters, instructors and the like. The first professional higher education in the world was the group of brilliant talks and keen thinkers who appeared in Greek during the 5th Century B. C. (500BC).

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They were called Sophists meaning professional wise men. Later they were known as philosophers i. e. lovers of wisdom for its own sake. They were the first to discuss whether there were any absolute standard of morality or merely artificial convention. Whether justice is consistent or simply means the way of the ruling class. They were phenomenally graceful and subtle talkers (orators) usually to fairly large audiences. They toured the large cities giving carefully prepared flowing speeches. They were highly paid and widely advertised and welcomed by a reception committee and entertained by ambitious hosts. They claimed to be authority on everything and that they could lecture on any subject under the sun. They demonstrated that almost anything could be proved by a smooth talker. Their main legacy to Greece and the modern world is that thought alone is one of the strongest forces in human life. The respect they create for the thinkers is enduring till today.

(b). Socrates: He was an Athenian and he stayed in Athens talking to his fellow citizens

instead of the whole world like the Sophist. He distrusted and opposed almost everything done by the Sophist. He refused regular payment, living and dying for. He wore worn clothes and was barefooted. He talked to people at street corners and in the gymnasium rather than specially prepared hall. He trained people to think. He said he knew nothing and try to find out.

While we can consider Sophist to be the first lecturer Socrates was the first tutor. He made the other fellow to do most of the talking, he merely ask questions. Socrates questioned all sorts and conditions. His methods were:

(A) The modest declaration of his own ignorance which imperceptibly faulted the other man and made him eager to explain to such an intelligence
burnaivel enquires.

(B) His adaptability which showed him the side on which each man could best be approached.

(C) His unfailing good humour which allowed him always to keep the conversation going and at crises when the other lost his temper, he would now dominate the discussion.

(c). Plato (428BC 347): He was the greatest of the Socrates students. He founded a college called Academy to pursue the study of the Socrates. Socrates had launched him to engage himself in teaching, studying and writing books on philosophical problems all his life. In all his books and teachings, he acknowledged his teacher (Socrates) and subordinated himself entirely to the personality and methods of Socrates. In all different situations, Plato combined the steady unflinching aid in the pursuit of truth with the most subtle adaptability of approach to different peoples. Plato talked more systematically and more exclusively than his master.

He established a college rather than going about the street. He had entrance examination and disciplinary rule. Instead on chatting on everybody he preferred specially selected pupils. He gave lectures instead of spontaneous speech. He was a noble man, rich and gifted. He limited his effort to highly trained and carefully chosen listeners. He was the founder of examination system. Through his teachings and books, he made many pupils including

Dionysius of Syracus (a tyrant) and a superlative (good one) Aristotle – probably the best and single mind the human species has ever produced.

(d). Aristotle (385 – 322 BC): He was a rich doctor's son and he always preferred the scientific habit of thought. He was admitted to Plato Academy at the age of 17 and he remained there until when he was about 40 years i. e. until Plato dies. After traveling and doing independent research for some years he founded a college of his own call ' LYCEUM'. Apparently, he thought of research and teaching as two sides of the same coin Aristotle organized his teaching very thoroughly. His Lyceum resembled a modern research institute with the vast number of specimens for his biological work which he collected from many parts of the known world, which must have been examined by squad of his research students. His mastering political to treaties was the distillation of important analysis of numerous existing constitutions made by his assistants under his supervision.

Much of Aristotle's teaching then was the type of very high level discussion which goes on in similar institutions today. Much of his teaching also was done on a slightly lower level to less advanced students who were still much more highly educated than the average citizens. Many of the works was handed down under his name were not books he personally wrote but collection of lecture notes taken down by his pupils and perhaps later corrected from his own personal note. We see from them (note) that he combined lecturing with class discussion but put the emphasis on the lecture i. e. he set out a series of topics which link together to form a complete survey of a subject. He took each topic separately, broke it down into a number of problems and then examined each of them separately. The note

showed him talking on continuously, analyzing one suggestion after the other, explaining where each falls short and why and finally working his way to the solution.

(e) Other leading philosophers and educators whose thoughts influenced the development of formal education in the world include:

(i) J. H. Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827)

(ii) Fredrick Froebel ((1782 -1852)

(iii) John Dewey (1859 -1952) and

(iv) Maria Montessori (1880 -1952)

Traditional Education In Nigeria

Islam and Christianity, which have influenced Nigerian education in no small measure, are of recent development compared with the indigenous system of education which is as old as man himself in Africa. Every society whether simple or complex has its own system of training and educating its youth. In old Africa society the purpose of education was clear, it was functionalism. African education emphasizes social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral value.

Although Nigeria consists of many ethnic groups and societies, each with their own culture and tradition, they all have common educational aims and objectives but methods differ from place to place chiefly because of social, economic and geographical imperatives. The education of the child phical imperatives. The education of the child from Nigerian society starts from

infancy. At this initial stage, the child is more intimately involved with his mother than anybody else until he is about the age of 5 or 6, this is understandable and universal. The father is out most of the day and the mother stays at home with the child. His mother is his first teacher and he watches and learns everything his mother does. At about the age of 4 and 6, other members of the family become involved in the education of the child. They send him errand, tell him story, teach him obedience and respect for elders, code of behaviour, and history of the family or ethnics group.

Traditional education is all embracing and every social institution involves an educational activity which leads the individual to acquire behaviour pattern, abilities and skills necessary for effective citizenship in the society in which he lives. The traditional African educational system finds expression in the age group. Age is an important element in the life of the African. The elder is assumed to be a custodian of wisdom and he is expected to demonstrate this in speech and action if he is to keep his position among those who look unto him for leadership.

Goals Of Traditional African Education:

The broad goal of Traditional African Education is to produce an individual who is honest, respectable, and skilled and conforms to the social order of the day. This broad goal can be split into the following objectives:

- (1) To develop the child latent physical skills
- (2) To develop character
- (3) To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authorities.

(4) To develop intellectual skills

(5) To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour

(6) To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.

(7) To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

Muslim Education In Nigeria

Islam was brought to Hausa land in the 14th Century by traders and scholars. The first set of mosques was built in Kano in 1349 – 1385. Kano then was a commercial city. The elementary Arabic schools in Nigeria were called Quranic schools and both Arabic, as a language and Islam as religion were taught simultaneously. When a pupil began to read the Arabic alphabet, he did so with an intention to read the Holy Quran. One of the Islamic Tradition says “ The best man among you is one who learnt the Quran and the care to teach it”. Therefore teaching religion to others was considered a duty for which a person should expect no earthly reward. The system of teaching and learning the Quran and Arabic language started in Northern Nigeria where the teacher in the early stage depended on living on charity.

The Islamic education was well entrenched in the North and it became highly organized that centres of advanced Islamic education started springing up.

The Jihad period of Shehu Uthman dan Fodio assisted the spread of Islam in the North and consequently the establishment of Quranic Schools in the North. Jihad spread to Southern Nigeria through Ilorin which became a centre of Islamic learning up till this time. At about 1830, Islamic along with Quranic school spread to other parts of Yoruba land and a large number and small Quranic schools and institutions of higher learning similar to those already existing in the North sprang up in many Yoruba cities including Iwo, Ofa, Oyo, Shaki, Iseyin, Ogbomoso, Osogbo, Lagos, Epe, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, etc.

A Quranic school is usually found in or outside the mosque. The Ustaz (teacher) sits under a tree or in his parlour, verandah, porch, or in the mosque surrounded by volumes of the Quran and other Islamic books. A little distance to the Ustaz but near enough to be within reach of his long whip squatting are some 10 to 40 pupils in semi-circle, folding broad wooden slates from where they chant different Arabic alphabets, words or Quranic verses. The teacher in most cases is assisted by the brightest or the oldest or both among the pupils.

Muslim children begin their Quranic education as from about the age of 3. At this stage learning was by repetition and rote (learning by heart) in a sing-song pattern. The teacher recite to his pupils the verse to be learnt and they repeat it after him, he does this repeatedly until he is satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation. The pupils, sometimes in group, are thereafter left on their own to continue repeating the verse until he has thoroughly memorized it. The verse is then linked with the previously memorized verses and in this way; the pupil gradually learns by heart the whole chapters of the Quran.

Islamic education could be divided into the following stages:

1st Stage: Learning of Arabic alphabets and words.

2nd Stage: Learning and committing the first 2 essus and memorizing it.

They also learnt basic tenets of Islam and Hadith.

3rd Stage: Had a broader and wider curriculum. The pupil begins to learn the meaning of the verses he had committed to memory. The teacher does his best to explain the Arabic text. The pupils are introduced to other writings such as hadith.

4th Stage: This may be considered the post secondary level. At this stage, the pupils begin to learn grammar and vocabulary in Arabic. The course of study also includes Logic, Mathematic, Jurisprudence, Geography, Medicines, etc.

5th Stage: It is after the 4th stage that the student decides in what area he wishes to specialize. This marked the beginning of university education. He proceeds to University at Fez, Lahore, Timbuktu, Al-Azeez. In the alternative, he continued home learning from local specialists called Sheiks. After finishing, he is free to practice as a teacher, Imam or Sheik, depending on his area of specialization.

The Early Mission Schools And Their Problems

Missionary contacts with the people of Nigeria started at the later part of 15th Century when the Portuguese set their feet on the soil of what is now called Nigeria. The Portuguese on arrival at Lagos and Benin ports in 1472

felt the need for introducing Christian religion and establishing schools for the purpose of sharing common faith and language with their customers.

By 1515, the Catholic Missionary activities had started in Benin with a school established in the palace of the Oba of Benin for the sons of both the Oba and his Chiefs who had been converted to Christianity. This initial effort of the Portuguese missionary led to the establishment of trading posts, host churches and schools in Benin, Brass, coastal towns in Delta, Bayelsa and Lagos States and a seminary on the highland of Sao Tome off the coast of Nigeria. The main objective of the seminary was to train Africans as priests and teachers to manage the churches and schools that had been established. It is on record that the 1st set of schools was wiped out by the slave trade that ravaged West Africa for nearly 300 years.

Sierra Leone became a territory acquired by the British Empire as a colony where the liberated Africa could settle when slave trade was abolished late 18th Century. Within a short time, some liberated Africans, including Ajayi Crowther had been converted and educated in the formal school system in Freetown. The second coming of the Missionary was after the abolition of a slave trade. The Wesleyan Methodist became the 1st Christian organization, to arrive Badagry in Nigeria. The contact was made by Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman and Mr. & Mrs. de Graft. With the contact schools started, other missions started sending their men to Nigeria.

The first known school was established by Mr. & Mrs. de Graft (an African born in Cape Coast) in Banditry and was named Nursery of the Infant Church. Later, many other schools were established by various other missions in

Abeokuta, Lagos, Calabar, Ogbomosho, Onitsha, Bonny and other coastal towns.

The history of secondary education started with the establishment of CMS Grammar School in Lagos in 1859 by Reverend Thomas Macaulay with 6 students.

The primary objective of the early Missionary was to convert the native to Christianity through religion. The knowledge of the bible, ability to sing hymns, to recite catechism and to communicate both orally and in writing were considered essential for good Christianity. So the primary education curriculum was geared toward the achievement of the above. The early secondary schools taught mostly Latin, Greek and the 3Rs i. e. reading, writing, and arithmetic. They taught little or no science for nearly half a century. The entire educational provision was dependent upon the effort of the Christian Missions supported by the home- churches and gifts from friends. The government, both local and imperial, did not make any provision on education until 1877.

Problems/Features of Early Mission Schools:

In the process of implementing the educational policies, the missions faced the following problems:

- (1) There were no central schools laws and as a result there were no standard for running the schools.
- (2) Varying administrative techniques were adopted for school management.
- (3) No standard qualification for teachers.

(4) No regulation to guide the school attendance and regularity of teachers and pupils.

(5) In all the schools emphasis was on conversion to Christianity and religious instruction remained the basic core of the school curriculum during the period.

(6) There was inadequate finance.

(7) There were no trained teachers and no training colleges.

(8) There was no common syllabus and no standard text books.

(9) There was inadequate supervision of schools.

(10) No central examination system.

(11) There was no uniformity in the conditions of service for teachers.

(12) There was intense missionary rivalry in the Southern part of Nigeria which led to uneven distribution of School.

Education During The Colonial Era

Educational Ordinance Of 1887:

This ordinance laid down the principles which have become the foundation of educational laws and policies in the country. The principles included:

(1) The constitution of a Board of Education made up of Governor as the Chairman.

– Members of legislative council

– Four nominees of the Governor

– Inspector of schools (which Dr. Henry Carr was the first inspector).

(2) The appointment of inspectors of schools.

(3) Extension of grants-in-aid to teacher training colleges.

(4) Power of the board to make, alter and revoke rules for regulating the procedures for grants-in-aid.

(5) Empowering the governor to open up and maintain schools.

(6) Rates and condition of grant-in-aid to schools were based partially on subject taught and partially on degree of excellence in the school.

(7) Safeguard as to religious and racial freedom.

(8) Certification of teachers.

(9) Admission of poor and alien children as may be directed by the Governor.

(10) Establishment of scholarship for secondary and technical education.

Even though, the 1887 Ordinance was meant primarily for Colony of Lagos, it influenced the gradual expansion of schools into Yoruba land and the Calabar area of the eastern part of what was to be known as Nigeria.

Dr. Henry Carr, a Nigerian in 1891, was appointed the first indigenous inspector of schools for the Colony of Lagos. He advocated for greater government involvement in schools, particularly in the area of finance and control.

Major Enactments That Shaped The Nigerian Education Since The Colonial Era

(a) The 1916 Education Ordinance was promulgated by Lord Lugard to provide for the whole country, education based on good character and the usefulness to individuals and the society at large.

(b) The Phelps-Stoke Commission on Education in Nigeria (1920). This was meant to review the existing educational practices in Africa and make recommendation to reform education in Africa. The commission visited Nigeria and other British control countries in West Africa. The commission report was published in 1922. Its recommendations were far reaching and they intimidated the British Colonial Government to issue the 1925 memorandum on education.

(c) The 1925 memorandum on Education in British Territories. The memorandum was:

(1) The first statement of the intention of the colonial government on Africa since 1842 when western education was introduced in Nigeria.

(2) The outcome of Phelps-stoke report which brought into light the apathy of colonial government to the education and the incompetence of the Christian mission in the field of education.

(3) The document that piloted Nigerian Educational policies and development from 1925-1945.

(d) The 1926 Education Code. Sir Hugh Clifford, Nigerian Governor, in 1926, enacted education (colony and Southern provinces) Ordinance No 15 of 1926

to curb the development of sub-standard schools that were mushrooming beyond the control of the missionary.

The Ordinance made provision for improvement on the qualities of teachers, providing schools with experienced leadership and guidance, creating a conducive atmosphere for realistic co-operation among the agencies/stakeholders and generally supplying the educational needs of individual and the community at large.

(e) Other policies that assisted in shaping the Nigerian Educational system included:

(i) Davidson's 10 – year Education Plan (1942-1952).

(ii) Asquith Commission, 1943.

(iii) Elliot Commission, 1943.

(iv) Self determination educational policies of the regions (1952-` 1959).

(v) The Ashby Commission, 1960.

(vi). National Policy on Education 1977, 1982, 1998, 2004.

Tutorial Questions

(1) Attempt a distinction between the Sophists and the Philosophers in the Ancient Greek education and explain how the contributions of Aristotle's, Plato and Socrates influenced the education system of various nations of the world.

(2) The early Greek education prepared citizens for rigorous life. Examine this statement by presenting the nature of the Spartan and Athenian education.

(3) Write short notes on the contributions of the following to education:

- (a) Perstalozi
- (b) Froubel
- (c) Montessori
- (d) Dewey

(4) Explain the nature of the African indigenous education and the goals the system was set to achieve.

(5) Attempt the comparison of early Christian Mission School with the Muslim Education. What are the main problems faced by this educational system?

(6) Discuss 3 of the enactments (ordinance, commission, memorandum, etc) that shaped the Nigeria Educational system during the colonial period.

(7) To what extent will you say that the National Policy on Education has brought order to the Nigerian educational system?

(8) With your knowledge of the functions of the various commissions overseeing various levels of Nigerian educational system, make a case for the establishment of National Commission for Senior Secondary Education.

(9) Justify the fact that the National Policy on Education is the major post independence achievement of government in bringing order to Nigerian educational system.

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