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Karl Marx Historical Dialectics, Cultural Education and Nigeria's Economic Goals

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Abstract

Educational policy do change as a result of changes in social, economic and political structures. The present 2013 educational policy document became necessary because the nation intends to meet the medium term economic development plans (NEEDS). This strategic plan has engendered an expanded role for education as an investment for economic development and social change. The study therefore raised a fundamental question on the relevance of the present of westernized educational system. Karl Marx's historical dialectics emphasized that the social, political, legal and educational system depend on a superstructure; the prevailing economic structure. If education is part of the superstructure, there is need to see how the nation can achieve her goal via the cultural education datum. The study employs an integrative approach which is a combination of the speculative, analytical and prescriptive mode of philosophizing. Historical dialectics provided the framework for analyzing the ability of education to meet the needs of the nation vis a vis the economic structure of the society. This study argues that, to meet the economics goal as expressed and emphasized in the 2013 National Policy on Education, the curriculum should be built to meet the economic needs of the society through its cultural dictated practices. Cultural education thus will mean having an environmental and geographical dictated curriculum. An education that de-emphasizes examination and embraces practicality and situated within her learners' culture and language.

Key words: Cultural education, Historical Dialectics, Economic structure, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

Introduction

The world is presently in a transition period; the human species is undergoing one of the most dramatic revolutions in history, revolution that is changing everything from the ways people work, to the ways they communicate with one another, and the type of knowledge schools now transmit. Radical moves are being made in different parts of the world to set an educational system that is relevant to the society. This paper is a response to the agitation to have an educational system that is relevant for the 21st century and that will meet the economic goals of 2013 national policy which hopes to achieve the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) goals.

Faborode and Edigheji (2016) noted that there has been growing concerns over the quality of graduates from Nigerian Universities in addition to questions on relevance of the institutions to national development in terms of paucity of research and development impact. According to a research published by Watkin, van Fleet and Greubel (2012) of The Brookings Institution, out of 97 million children enrolled in primary schools in Africa, 37 million will not learn basic skills and as such, they will not be much better off than those kids who never attend school. The report further revealed that in countries

such as Nigeria, over half of the enrolled pupils finish primary education without learning the purposed basic skills and this applies to other levels of education. Meanwhile, Nigeria today is ranked lowest, 138th, in the Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017 especially, in the areas of health and primary education (World economic forum, 2017). One may wonder why Nigeria has gone so bad in her education when there are different arms of education authorities providing the standard from basic to tertiary level of education. It may be easy to blame Nigeria's education failure on many valid reasons like poor education financing, colonialism, political will and corruption. However, the issue of irrelevant curriculum content is paramount among the many ills of education in the country, this factor is one of the major reasons why we have mis-fit graduates in the country. This paper, therefore, seeks to make a detailed and critical analysis of the concept of historical dialectics and how it can help in building a relevant cultural education that will empower the learners and get the nation to her desired point of full economic development. To this end, the paper examines the concept of historical dialectics, Nigeria's economic structure and the role of education in achieving her macroeconomic goals.

Historical Dialectics

Historical dialectics is carved from two words; dialectics and history. Dialectics comes from the Greek word meaning to debate. In ancient times, there were philosophers who believed that the way to arrive at the truth of a statement was by revealing the contradictions in the argument, that is, the opposing and competing ideas within the argument. The clash of opposite opinions was seen as the best way of getting to the truth and this was the ancient dialectical method (Laaman 2017). While History, according to Fafunwa as quoted by Jekayinfa and Kolawole(2008), "is to a people what memory is to an individual, a people with no knowledge of their past will therefore be a victim of collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course. Individuals, communities and societies could scarcely exist if all knowledge of the past were wiped out" The history of a people is, therefore, tied around how a society views her past in relation to the social, political, economic and educational institutions. An understanding of society therefore involves a historical perspective which examines the process whereby humanity both produces, and is produced by, social reality.

The history of mankind right from the inception of sedentary life has always been the history of struggles. Every historical change is propelled by the dynamics of conflict which is dialectical and prevalent both in nature and in the society. The theory of historical dialectics is the combination of the traditional view of Feuerbach (an idealist who believes that the universe is composed solely of matter) and G.W.F Hegel (and idealist who believes in absolute and unchanging reality of matter). Marx explained how the development of the productive forces brings into existence different production relations and different forms of class in the society as well as the different forms of society. Historical dialectics in the view of Marx, arises out of conflict and contradiction: at a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of the society come into conflict with the existing relations of production (Engels, 1890). In historical dialectics, Marx (1971) used dialectic to explain changes of the past and predict events of the future in all areas including politics, economics, legal and education; these changes are gradual and the new forms always contain some of the old. Marxists apply dialectic to social institutions in form thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The social institution in existence is called thesis, when a new institution is created and the new called antithesis; (3) the new social institution then synthesis

In the final analysis the class nature within the given society production mode, if the institutions in society according to Marx are based on a superstructure of production mode of the society, and education as one of the superstructure is to reflect the base structure and serves to reproduce it, Marx's therefore sees a connection between the economic structure of a given society and the type of education that should be offered by such society. Historical dialectics studies the origin and development of our knowledge of the outside world. It studies the transition from 'not knowing' to 'knowing', and from 'incomplete knowledge' to 'more complete knowledge'; it studies how the laws of the development of nature and society are daily reflected more profoundly and more extensively in the mind of humanity. This theory is therefore more of an epistemological principle of raising consciousness, human interaction, and material transformation of the society than metaphysical theory of being.

Marx did not write widely about education but his groundbreaking analyses on the inseparable relationship between consciousness and human activity (praxis) serves as a foundation to understanding the role of education in building learner's consciousness towards social transformation. Consciousness and reality, reflection and action (praxis) are so closely linked that it is impossible to consider such concepts in separate terms because they both mutually shape and interact with one another. Marx (1971) maintained that the greatest impact on consciousness is the experiences of people within existing social relations of production and that is why it is argued that human beings produce their life in a manner that is conditioned by their physical and social organisation. This physical and social organisation is based on a superstructure which is the economic structure of the society. It is with this understanding of historical dialectics that a culture based education can be rooted.

Nigeria's Historical Dialectics

The history of education is as old as the creation of man himself, man as a productive animal is by nature very curious, gregarious and constantly faced with needs to be met. These need which in turn inspires him to explore the environments around him. Before the introduction of western formal education by early Christian missionaries and colonial rule in Nigeria, Nigerian people had their own systems of education commonly referred to as African Indigenous Education. Though, this type of education did not offer literacy and formal

schooling, it was nonetheless founded on certain aims, a specified content and a workable pedagogy. Its basic goal included transmission of the community's cultural heritage, inculcating moral, social and religious values, and imparting the youth with desirable dispositions, skills and competencies (Babarinde; 2016). Fafunwa (1974) also listed seven cardinal goals of traditional education as; developing the child's latent physical skills, developing character, developing respect for elders and those in position of authority, developing intellectual skills, acquire specific vocational training, developing a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs and to understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

In the work of Ocitti(1971), five canons or philosophical principles that are vital to African indigenous education were enumerated. They provide a foundational structure on which African indigenous education was built. These canons include preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holism. This reveals that African traditional education was a model of education which ensured that everyone who went through it was employed; it was practical and tended towards self-reliance. It was also a system of education that preserved the socio-cultural structures of society. However, it also suffered some limitations which includes its curriculum being confined only to the categories common to a particular environment; in the bid to preserve the status quo, criticism was not entertained thus, knowledge was passed on from one generation to another without critical appraisal; it was dominated by oral tradition, making it difficult to preserve accumulated knowledge and skills. Added to these is the secrecy that surrounded the content of traditional education. In the midst of these weaknesses however, African traditional education has great relevance or implications for modern African education. Its value that needs to be imbibed is that of self-reliance; many people in the present time acquire certificates and do not know what to do with them for themselves and for the society. Another area of interest is that the modern day education needs to learn from the traditional by developing problem solving educational curriculum rather than abstract models that become irrelevant in the face of concrete challenges and these form the thesis for understanding African educational condition.

The Western Education system on the other hand started in the Western part of the country in the first

half of the sixteenth century. The aims of education as at that time was to enable Africans participate effectively in commerce. Hence, it was argued: the Portuguese were mainly interested in commerce but they nevertheless realised that if Africans were to be customers, they must have some rudiments of education and also accept Christianity (Fafunwa, 1978).

The desire of the foreign Christian Missionary was to liberate Africans from what they called the dark mind, barbarism and idolatry so as to further their trade missions. This they pursued vigorously competing with one another through the establishment of schools and colleges. The missionary's concerns for establishing these schools were to train teacher catechists and lay readers that could assist them in their evangelical mission. Since the primary concern of the group was to propagate the gospel, their curriculum covers Christian religion, and this stage, in our history forms the antithesis; opposing form of education because it viewed African type of education as informal, barbaric and superstitious. This intervention of colonial government in education after the entry of missionaries led to the establishment of elementary schools. These schools serve as centres for training of clerks, interpreters and technicians for service of the state. Their educational policies like the missionaries education, were not driven by demands of the society thus, the British government did not have a clearly defined policy on education in Nigeria. This has brought the nation to where it is today because there was no relationship between basic needs of the society and the type of education operating in the country. What were the basic needs of the Nigerian society that western educational system did not provide for in their educational policy and programme? This brings us to discuss the structure of Nigeria's economy and the role of education in achieving her economic goals.

Nigeria's Economy and the Process of Education

The kingdoms, states and empires that existed in pre-colonial Nigeria were great and prosperous not only because of their sound socio-political institutions but also as a result of the natural resources such as bountiful agriculture, trade and crafts. A close observation of the Nigerian terrain and climate reveals the diversity of its natural potentials gave rise to the economic viability and a variety of occupations. The structure of pre-colonial Nigerian economy rested basically and extensively on the nature of vegetation; the traditional mode of

production or economic structure in the indigenous society was dictated by the geographical and environmental factors such as land, river and climate which also to a large extent determined the type of education that the different societies provided her younger generation.

The dynamic nature of the indigenous economic system led to economic expansion as it invited expatriates who later colonised the country. The coming of colonial lords in particular, brought about the change in communal mode of production to the capitalist system, a system where the communities no longer own the means of production, a system where the means of production were privately owned and the basic aims were for profit maximisation. During this era, education changed from indigenous knowledge to westernised education with the thrust being the training of clerks, interpreters and secretaries. The immediate needs of the community were to be like the white men and white-collar jobs became dream of every young Nigerian. People consumed items they did not produce, lands and rivers were abandoned with the nation's once flourishing mode of production that attracted the British was left to waste. The quest for foreign goods further destroyed the economy and directly made the western education useless and mis-fit because it was not in any way based on our immediate cosmology and ontological structure.

Nigeria's education in the post-independence (which therefore form the synthesis for the present Nigerian education) era has mostly been concerned with using schools to develop manpower for economic development and Africanization of the civil service. Looking through the 1st to 5th edition of Nigeria's educational policy it can be said that Nigeria has been in search of an education that would align with her economic goals. The nation had in the past carried out four national development plans between 1962 and 1985, however these goals has not been fully accomplished (Awoseyila, 1996).

In all of this failed economy plans, the Nation recognizes criticality of education as the most important vehicle for social, economic and political transformation. Education as an investment should according to this policies yield returns in terms of skilled and needed manpower resources that will enhance the nation's economic status and standard of living. The former education minister (Nyeson Wike) while presenting the 6th edition of the Nigerian National policy on education in 2013 emphasized that the present change in policy was to meet among other reasons, the nation's National Economic

Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) goals.

The NEEDS that was launched in 2003 was a major initiative to reposition the economy to meet the multifaceted challenges confronting economy. The NEEDS is a home-grown economic programme targeted towards achieving a stable, predictable and sustainable macroeconomic environment non-inflationary, non-oil GDP growth. It is a medium term strategy which aims at poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation. However, there are no signs that the nation's educational system can achieve the task.

This poor state of education in Nigeria is aptly captured in the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) statement as follow: the delivery of education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect compounded by inadequate attention to policy frameworks within the sector. Findings from an ongoing educational sector analysis confirm the poor state of education in Nigeria. The national literacy rate is currently 57 percent. Some 49 percent of the teaching force is unqualified. There are acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities at all levels, access to basic education among other factors. (Nigeria National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2004). Wide disparities persist in educational standards and achievements. The system emphasises theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical vocational and entrepreneurial education. School curricula need urgent review to make them relevant and practice oriented. These reasons call for policy maker to look into the issues of policy implementation especially in terms of curriculum content and policy implementation.

Achieving Economic Goals via Cultural Education Datum

As stated, the need to look at the curriculum content and policy implementation becomes really essential if the nation desires to achieve her economic goals.

Curriculum content: From the analysis, the curriculum content that can be used to achieve desirable economics goals must situate its content within the learner realities, social, economic geographical and environmental realities. Curriculum planning in this direction sees school as an entity that cannot be separated from geographical and environmental dictated economy. Based on historical dialectics dictate, curriculum content, expansion and development is done with practical participation in work and economic effort simultaneously; education in this light cannot be

separated from world of work.

The curriculum designed on historical dialectics is purely a transformative curriculum in that it would promote students' acquisition of the necessary strategies and practical skills that can empower learners to become employable, independent, productive and capable of making decisions that would affect their social, political and economic realities. Base on argument on historical dialectics, learners' experiences should be constantly enriched through their exposure to authentic historical facts of economic, social, political and cultural issues. This exposure then encourages reflection during the classes, empowers the students with a voice to refuse and denounce content that will not enable them function optimally in life. It also identifies empowerment as one of its most important tenets and believes in a curriculum that is founded on students' interests, cultural needs and community empowerment.

Policy Formation

To build a cultural relevant education that can support the economic goal, there is a need to work on these basic policies: examination policy and language policy.

Examination Policy: Historical dialectics places more emphasis on the learners' competence and ability to use education to transform the society rather than examination. Much of the problems in Nigeria's educational system have been the emphasis placed on examination. According to Obanya (2017), examination has perpetuated an outdated paradigm in education which runs counter to the tenets of education for all, it inhibits innovation, twist curriculum around in a negative sense, and distort the process of teaching and learning and produces misfit graduates for the knowledge economy. Obanya believes that for education to really become relevant to the nation there must be a synergy between education and the world of work and not on examination. People who have benefited from education are now expected to have acquired a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' skills. As it is, educational policies however well-crafted cannot on their own ensure that education takes place, neither can the most scientifically constructed curriculum be an automatic guarantee that schools and classroom bring about transformational change in learners. Examination policies can affect curriculum implementation and the role of teachers in the educational operating theatre - the school, the classroom, the laboratory, the workshop, the demonstration form and the playground. In reality,

examination has become a threat to education. Obanya quoted a story told by Fafunwa on education and examination: A group of Nigeria educators was conducting a foreign visitor round schools and briefing him on the problem of the nation's education development...the school buildings were dilapidated...Classroom lacked basic furniture...4-5 children shared a text book...teacher complained of nonpayment of salary.....children and parent had lost interest in schools. While trying to digest all these problems, the visitor was shown the magnificent building of the West African Examination Councils (WAEC). The visitor responded, I think I can now see your problem. What you have is an examination system! (Obanya, 2017) This is true scenario of Nigeria's educational system. Government that did not provide the basic learning material but pays for basic final examination WAEC and NECO.

The argument being advanced here is in the area of deemphasising examination in Nigeria's educational system. Nigerian educational system is flooded with examinations which cannot produce transformative learner as most of these skills cannot be subjected to examination. Examination policy reform is thus a must and a matter of urgency if we must see education as a tool to transforming the society, focusing on culturally relevant education dwell more on practical life skill rather than paper success.

Language Policy: The issue of language is of crucial importance in building cultural relevant education. According to Macedo (1994), language should never be seen as merely a tool for communication. Too often, teachers who place great importance on learning to speak, read and write in the standard language representing the mainstream delegitimise the language experiences that students bring with them to the classroom. When the dominant language is most highly valued in the learning process, minority language speakers (including those who speak non-standard English) are automatically devalued, and their words and ideas are seen as less important if they are heard at all. These students are often forced to become passive objects of the educational process. Unless and until they are able to learn the language of the mainstream, they have no voice with which they can read and write their worlds. The trend all over the world especially amongst the developed countries of the world is that the mother tongue is equally used in the school system as the medium of instruction.

This factor has helped countries like China, Japan, India and South Africa to mention but a few in no

small way in achieving sustainable development because learners are able to transfer concepts learnt in the mother tongue easily. The 2013 National Policy on Education recommends that the Nigerian primary school child should be well grounded in his or her mother tongue apart from learning English and/or any other language. The policy places emphasis on importance of language learning on the overall development of the child in primary school and also as solutions to the Nigerian problem. For education to be meaningful, the child should be taught in his mother tongue which he can both read and write. Taiwo (1976), states that there is no favourable means of rapport between the teacher and a child on his first day at school than a common language, which is the child's mother tongue. As the child progresses in his adventure of schooling, the mother tongue is a reassuring means of acquiring concepts and building them into ideas and skills. However, despite putting up this policy, the policy has not been implemented. If Nigeria as a nation is serious in her quest to raise a generation of citizens that are productive, then the nation must revert to using the local languages as media of instruction in our schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has built a culturally relevant education based on Marxist historical dialectics. Historical dialectics emphasize the need to study the past in order to understand the present and predict the future. The analysis is anchored in dialectical pairs which seek to represent the tension between contradiction and totality, such as content and form, theory and practice, concrete and abstract, thesis and antithesis, etc.

Based on this conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. The curriculum content should be culturally relevant; situated within the context of Nigeria's environmental dictates.
2. Emphasis should also be placed on teachers' use of indigenous language by the policy makers.
3. To develop the full capacities and potentials of the learners, the policy should de-emphasize examination and certification that spur competition and rather emphasis should be placed on learners' competency and practice.
4. The practical based and activity based

methodology should inculcated into the curriculum.

5. The curriculum planner should ensure that the nations' curriculum content carries subject that develops the life coping skills and soft skills of the learners. Finally
6. There is an urgent need of proper funding of educational sector

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