

# The Impact of Colonialism on Nigerian Education and the Need for E-Learning Technique for Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

Education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of lives of its members and the maintenance of the social structure. It grows out of the environment and the method of teaching being directly related to the pattern of work in the society. The greater portion of Nigerian education before the colonial era was informal, and functional, but with the colonization of Nigeria by Britain, the system of education was changed from progressive education to essentialist education to enable the colonialists achieve their aim of colonization. The purpose of this write up is not only to reveal the pros and coin of colonial education, but to explore the impact of colonialism in Nigerian educational system and to proffer solutions that will lead to better education that will be progressive in nature for sustainable development. This paper highlighted on the pre-colonial education in Nigeria, the impact of colonization in Nigeria educational system, problems such as the failure of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria, emphasis on examination results and paper qualification as inherited from the colonial masters among others were identified. Recommendations such as, the need for the re-implementation of the 6-3-3-4 System of education, and the use of E-learning among others to enhance functional education in Nigeria were given.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Nigerian education, E-Learning

## Introduction

Education is an indispensable factor in the all round development of any nation. The genesis of Nigerian education labeled traditional education was progressive in nature, because of its emphasis on functionalism. Enoch (1996) stated that "traditional African education is not --- admired for the mere fact of its being indigenous to Africa, rather a mere permanent, justification thought". With the advent of Christian missionaries and subsequent colonization of Nigeria by the British colonial masters, essentialism was imposed on Nigerian educational system. The colonial brand of education viewed education as a "central body of essential knowledge that must be transmitted to all who came to school" (Wango 1978). With this type of education, Nigerian teacher was expected to be strict and well behaved to the extent that he was a model of emulation. In imparting, knowledge to the learner, he could use lecture, play way or Socratic teaching strategy, while the learner was expected to learn what the teacher taught him by memorization and reproduction of the same on the examination day.

The colonization of Nigeria by Britain which lasted about a century has come and gone, but its impacts on Nigeria linger up to date. While some of these impacts are good and desirable some are in conflict with some African culture. To the Europeans the aim of introducing western education in Nigeria was to fit the ordinary individual to fill a useful part in his environment and to ensure that the exceptional individual shall use his abilities for advancement of the community and not to its detriment, or to the subversion of constituted authority. To this effect the colonial education in Nigeria was in principle a policy for separate development of the Muslim areas and the non-Muslim

areas as noted by (Turaki 1993). Colonial education aimed at spiritual purification of the learner only and that was irrelevant to the needs & interests of Nigerian learner and the society. This called for reform in Nigeria educational system with the launching of the national policy on education in 1977 to enable the nation to return to its progressive system of education and this then calls for the need of the use of E-learning method of teaching to facilitate learning for the total development of the learner for sustainable national development.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### **Colonialism**

Colonialism means when a powerful country takes over the political, economic, social and cultural control of a less powerful country and rules that nation as a subordinate nation. Daniel (1980) stated that the phenomena associated with colonialism include monopolistic, seizure of territory, enslavement of the indigenous population, racism and militarism. Advocates of colonialism were of the opinion that it was meant to promote the welfare of the colonized nations for example (Ronald 1971) stated that

*In many of the new states we performed the tasks of an imperialist power without enjoying the economic or territorial advantages of empire we--- instructed the new nations in the proper principles of foreign policy. We did things with good intentions because we really did believe in self determination for everybody as a guiding moral principle, and because we thought it was our obligation to help the less fortunate "modernize" their societies by making them more like ours.*

In spite the claim of the colonialists it was observed that the colonizing nations generally dominated the resources, labour & market, of the colonies and may imposed socio - cultural, religious and linguistic structure on the indigenous population, common example in Africa was the period of the scramble for and partition of Africa by the super powers who divided Africa into regions that they could colonize. That is why (Lenin 1971) opined that it was the highest stage of capitalism.

Colonialism in Nigeria is considered to begin in 1807, when Great Britain abolished the slave trade. Generally, historians trace Britain's increasing involvement through later signing of treaties and arrangement with Nigerian rulers. In 1865 Britain took a more active role in Nigeria and eventually occupied the Niger area. In 1885 Britain administered Nigeria in separated British protectorates until 1914 when she unified the country, while maintaining considerable regional autonomy among the three major regions. British colonialism created Nigeria. Joining diverse people, and regions in an artificial entity along the Niger River

### **Education**

The term education is quite elusive and very difficult to pin down to a single definition. This is so because numerous authorities in different fields have described education as its appeals to them. Education has to do with systematic development and the cultivation of the mind and other natural powers (Chukwusa 2011) while Oji (1982) sees education as a process by which we acquire knowledge, skills, habit, values or attitude to be able to become useful and justify related member of the society to acquire as well as the results of the process that involves teaching and learning. Okere (1990) defines education as "a process of developing the individual morally, socially, emotionally, physically, aesthetically and for his welfare as well as the welfare of the society"

Education helps members of the society to acquire suitable appreciation of their cultural heritage and to live a fully more satisfying life. This includes the acquisition of desirable skills, knowledge habits and value for people living in the society. It equips the members of the society with the capabilities of personal survival in and contributing to other group's survival in the wider world (Akule 2006). It is a treasure in which every human kind should heavily invest in earthly pursue to its indefinite end. It is central to development; because it is an instrument for acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competence both mental and physical as equipment for individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society. Education should seek to fit the ordinary individual to fill a useful part in his environment and to ensure that exceptional individual shall use their capabilities for the development of the community.

### **Pre-Colonial Nigerian Education**

Pre – colonial education represents the type of education offered in the preliterate era, within the community by community members who possessed specialized skills or abilities in various fields of human endeavor. In most communities in Nigeria, prior to the introduction of formal education boys were brought up to take to whatever occupation their fathers engaged in, in some cases, they were sent to other masters as apprentices to learn various vocations. Mkpa, (2012) noted that the traditional education offered by the community was comprehensive such that it provided training in physical, character intellectual, social and vocational development. Joseph (2007) observed that Nigerian pre-colonial education was progressive because of its emphasis on functionalism, and its relevance to Nigerians.

Although occupations varied according to the geographical areas, the major ones were farming, trading, craft, fishing, cattle rearing, traditional medicine and blacksmithing. The boys also engaged in other training activities such as archery, tree climbing and wrestling. Intellectual training consisted of them sitting quietly beside their fathers at meetings and listening attentively to learn the process of such tasks and skills such as proverbs and the use of wise sayings, oratory among others. All these stimulated their sense of rationality. The girls were expected to stay back at home to learn domestic and other chores such as cooking, sweeping, hair weaving, decorations of the body, dye production, weeding of farmland among other things from their mothers. Therefore the pre-colonial education in most parts of Nigeria trained individuals to fit usefully into their society by learning and producing economic skills for self sustenance, adapting to the role expectations and contribution to the development of the society. The problem of unemployment was minimal. The limitation of this type of education was the absence of writing and learners depended on their memories to facilitate retention and the transmission of all learned ideas to the next generation

Islamic education started in Nigeria before the introduction of western education. Fafunwa (1974) noted that Islam was first accepted by a kanem ruler named umme Jilmi (1085 – 1097) and later Dunama I and Dunama II in the 13<sup>th</sup> c. in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Islam came to Hausa land by the traders and scholars from Wangarawa. Islam brought with it Arabic education and was therefore perceived as having great spiritual value. Mkpa (2012) observed that as a result of the political and social influence which islam and Quaranic learning conferred on those who possess it, many rulers employed Islamic scholars as administrators”.

The jihad of Usman Danfodio in 1804 helped to revive, spread and consolidate Islamic studies and extended access to education also to women. Support for Islamic education came from some leaders for example Abdullahi Bayero (emir of kano) who built an Islamic school which continued to grow and expanded in scope and eventually became Bayero college kano and later the present day Bayero university kano. Many institutions have sprung up over the years in many parts of the

country for the purpose of Islamic education and practices. However the limitation of this education is the focus on Arabic which in many part of Nigeria is not the language of literature and communication.

### **The Nature of Colonial Education in Nigeria**

The first form of western education came to Nigeria with the Christian missionaries in the mid nineteenth century. The church missionary society (CMS) and the Methodist missionary society were the first British Christian organizations to set up schools in Nigeria (Nnamdi 2002) Most of their works were conducted in the southern part of Nigeria, where it was deemed safer. The colonial education aimed at creating a small class of skilled technical and administration functional and agricultural raw materials plantation farmers, possibly perpetuating the continued domination of the society by the offspring of members of the overthrown ruling autocracy. The emphasis of the western education was on the 4rs (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion) this new education prepared the recipient for the job opportunities as teacher church evangelists, clerks and interpreters.

The colonial brand of education was essentialist by orientation (Joseph 2007) they viewed education as a central body of essential knowledge that must be transmitted to all who came to school for this reason they established a proper code of conduct for the localities. Most of the schools set up by these missions were boarding schools because they believed that if children were to be developed along civilized lines their daily life must be supervised controlled and directed along proper lines. Education was meant to purify the mind of the learner. This is because of their belief that man was born evil in an unsuitable and sinful world.

The colonialists expected Nigerian teacher to be a strict disciplinarian and well behaved to the extent that he was to be a model worthy of emulation. In imparting knowledge to the learners, the teacher was expected to use lecture method, play way and Socratic teaching strategy. The Nigerian learner was expected to keep mute by sitting and looking up. He memorized all that emanate from the teacher's mouth with the hope of reproducing same on examination day.

Turaki (1993) observed that the colonial educational policy in Nigeria was a policy of separate development of the Muslim areas and the non-Muslim areas. The fundamental basis of this administrative policy was religious and political. Lord Lugard promised the northern rulers of religious non interference and the policy of the exclusion of Christian missions from the Muslim areas. The Muslim areas were to be protected and preserved, while the non Muslim areas were to be opened to western education. Colonial administration in Nigeria therefore, developed two types of educational programs, thus; one for the Muslim areas and another for the non Muslim areas.

In the 1950s, because of the spread of mission schools, the southern parties were committed to policies that would benefit the south, while in the north, the emirs intended to maintain firm control to policies on economic and political change. Any activity in the north that might include participation by the Federal government or southern civil servants was regarded as a challenge to the privacy of the emirates (Wikipedia 2012). Broaden, educational opportunities and other social services were seen as threats to the status quo. Lugard's goal was secular education free from any religious propaganda, but due to lack of manpower he was forced to rely upon Christian missionaries for the development of educational programs.

Lord Lugard established a government schools for the sons of chiefs and mallams in 1904. He wanted these mallams to be taught English, reading and writing of Hausa in Roman characters, without prejudice to their religion. Turaki (1993) noted that the colonial policy permitted a joint educational program between the government and the native administration, but did not destroy

the Quranic schools, but allowed them to exist side by side with the new schools. This scheme was not well received by the Muslim teachers, religious prejudices came up to the present, prevented considerable expansion of their scheme. The policy of 'protective or conservative' of the northern Nigeria helps to explain the educational backwardness of the north in general and account for the gap in the level of educational development between the north and the south (Martins 2005).

In the non Muslim areas the first government school was established in 1929 and the second was established in 1932. These schools were established for the purpose of producing elementary school teachers who after the training would establish elementary schools in their areas. Thus (Turaki 1993) observed that by the early 1930s, there were no elementary schools comparable to those in the Muslim areas. The colonial administration by policy abandoned the non-Muslim areas to Christian mission who were concerned with the training of pastors, evangelists, teachers and communicants. The focus of education was thus theological and not secular. The aim was not for any advance education but just enough to enable converts to read and write so that they could effectively use the scriptures for evangelistic purpose and not for any social change. Mkp (2012), observed that from 1882, the government began to make bold intervention by promulgating codes and regulations, guidelines and policies on organization of schools. Government also began to appoint inspectors and to give grants to schools to ensure quality in various parts of the nation. These served as the basis for the modern day educational policies in Nigeria (Martins 2005). But after the attainment of independence, it was discovered that colonial system of education could not meet the needs and aspirations of the nation, this calls for the need to return to the progressive educational system to enable the sustainable national development.

### **The Effects of Colonialism on Nigerian Education**

The colonial brand of education was essentialist by orientation which viewed with reference, an aim of education that sought the spiritual purification of the learner. This essentialist aim of education is upheld in Nigerian education, thus it is clearly stated in the national policy on education (2004) that Nigerian education is meant to develop the child spiritually.

The colonial education system focused strongly on examinations. Most points given to a school's performance went to the numbers and rankings of its examination results. This emphasis on examination is still in use today to judge educational results, performance and to obtain qualification for jobs in government and private sectors perhaps this might explain why many of Nigerian students are involved in examination malpractices which make it possible for undeserving candidates to obtain high grades and certificates that they cannot defend.

Colonial education also affected Nigerian indigenous system of education. This was because the missionaries were after formal training of the mind, for this reason they encouraged boarding accommodation so as to supervise, control and direct the learner along proper lines (Nnamdi 2002). This deprived the Nigerian child from learning moral and other forms of education he was used to. Fajana (1978) in (Nnamdi 2002) observed the difference between colonialist and traditional education and stated that while the traditional system of education made it possible for children to learn both moral and other forms of education at the same time, the colonialist system which involved boarding accommodation deprived them of such opportunities because the colonial education was material oriented, the children missed other forms of training available outside the school. These Nigerian children could not offer their parents services which were often needed and accepted as a necessary part of their preparation for future life. This particular weakness together with other considerations such as; political, ideological and economic interests inculcated into educational program are the genesis of the legacy inherited from the colonial education.

Again in its efforts to lay basic foundation, for hard work and material gain the colonial authorities introduced various means which in their view were the only way to survival. Omotosho (1998) observed that among the vestiges of the colonial education are materialism and individualism. Both constitute the main roots from which many ideas were originated. While Nduka (1975), observed that the greatest legacy from the colonial past is western materialism. According to him, the most striking difference, as it appeared to the indigenous Nigeria, between the indigenous culture and dominant western culture was the wealth and power associated with the latter as compared with the material poverty and weakness of the former.

On the contrary, western education created a dichotomy in the status of the people. The difference between the rich and the poor became clear. The colonial system as observed by Omotosho (1998) was designed in such a way that the educated person will not have any priorities but to work hard and acquire all these because much importance has been attached to their acquisition as they are recognized as a status, symbol and the only means of enjoying life.

Rodney (1972) stated that 'the colonizers introduced a new set of formal education institution which partly supplemented and partly replaced those which were there before'. The colonial system also stimulated values and practices which amounted to new informal education. According to Rodney, it was not an educational system that grew out of the African environment or the one that was designed to promote the most rational use of material and social resources for development, nor an educational system designed to give young people confidence and pride as members of the society, but the one that sought to instill the sense of difference in the society.

Furthermore, the British used education as a tool to cultivate religion and cultural hegemony in Nigeria. Nnamdi (2002) observed that "the colonialists oppressed the inhabitants by subjecting them to ... foreign values." Such subjugation led to the domination of people.

Further still, the aim of colonial education made the colonialists to use various means to control and retard the educational aspirations and development of the colonies. This affected the quality of education provided, the number of the recipients and the social class and family background of these recipients, this resulted in the poor educational attainment of the people.

On the other hand, colonialists left behind desirable impact on Nigeria. For example, the colonialists enacted educational ordinances in 1882, 1887, 1916, 1926, and 1946 which were used as guidelines to administer education. These served as the basis for the modern day educational policies, education laws and techniques of educational administration in Nigeria today (Martins 2005). However, most of the policies had the short comings of not taken into consideration or account local peculiarities.

Even though progress in education was slow, but it was steady throughout the colonial era, and on the eve of independence, Nigeria had gone through a decade of exceptional educational growth leading to a movement for universal primary education in the Western Region and in the north, primary school enrolments went from 66,000 in 1947 to 206,000 in the West from 240,000 to 983,000 in the same period. Secondary level enrolment also went up.

## **E-Learning Components**

Above was the educational situation of Nigeria at independence up to 1977, and with the birth of the National Policy on Education in 1977, Nigerian education returned to its previous progressive position to enhance functionalism. This then calls for the need of the use of e-learning technique to facilitate learning and to move away from the colonial method of memorization of facts.

Jessica (2006) pointed out that E-Learning provides a way to bridge the gap between the changing generations and the increased need for higher education. The use of E-learning is

necessary today because learners are weary of the traditional method of teaching. Many instructors have found that slowly integrating technology in teaching all subjects works best for them. She identified three main categories for teaching using Web-based tools which include;

- Traditional lecturer with a web site containing additional materials, which could include, examination reviews, syllabi copies, lecturer outlines, primary source links, copies of articles, use of textbooks, web-sites, ... online submission of research papers for checking, links to helpful on – campus resources, and professional organizations,
- Blended instruction which is appropriately half lecturer and half online interaction. This could include: the ones listed above and required discussion forums, online reading response posts and research directives.
- Total online interaction. This includes printed lectures instead of verbal class, digitally taped and broadcasted lectures- either audio or video, and the one listed above.

The advantages of using this E-learning components in the classroom are numerous because instructors are only to limited their imagination and access to technical support and ability. The advantages include the increased interaction by the students with the material outside the class, increased access to materials provided to the students which are of primary sources, increased discussion among students and between students and instructor, increased efficiency for the instructor in time management, increased creative outlet for the instructor and increased freedom for him/her if allowed to travel around and above all it makes learning interesting and easy for the learners.

E-learning places the learner at the centre of all learning activities. This implies that the learners' education is to be based on their needs and interests. The role of the teacher is reduced to that of a guide or stage –setter, thus the work becomes easier but the end result would be progressive education. It also enables the teacher to use constructivist model of learning that creates roles for other mentors and experts. Teachers and students become producers and not just users of information, thus becoming functional. Students take more responsibility for their own learning, work at their own pace and correct many of their own errors.

## **Problems**

The point of emphasis in Nigeria education today is progressive education, which implies that the learners' education is to be based on their needs and interest to be able to fit in well in the society. The policy that would have helped in the achievement of this lofty idea is the 6-3-3-4 system of education, but the policy has accommodated massive failure.

- In spite of the lofty objectives of education in the National Policy of Education, Nigeria's education has failed to produce appropriate and commensurate values and development. It has also failed to produce learners a combination of skills and value system that could make him self reliant and fit him into the society.
- Due to emphasis on examination results and paper qualification as inherited from the colonial masters, the problem of examination malpractice is on the increase every year.
- The Policy on Education (2004) stipulates that teaching shall be practical, exploratory and experimental. The use of E-learning will help to achieve that, but the equipment and trained personnel are limited in Nigerian schools. Much of the methods obtainable today is lecture method.

## Conclusion

This paper discussed the impact of colonialism on Nigerian educational system. The research work shows that the colonial education in Nigeria was essentialist in nature and they succeeded in changing the progressive education they found in Nigeria. This colonial education was grossly irrelevant to the needs of Nigerian learners and the society at large. Resulting from the irrelevance of colonial education, its products could not fit correctly into the Nigerian society. However, it laid the basic foundation of Nigeria's formal education. The nation returned to her progressive education in 1977, with the birth of the national policy on education in order to make education functional to meet the needs of the learner and enable him fit well in the society. This then calls for the need of E-learning in teaching and learning in the educational system to facilitate learning for functional education.

## Recommendations

Based on the problems identified in this paper, the following recommendations were proposed;

- Government should ensure the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This will be possible if the government increases her commitment to education.
- To make the work of the teacher easier in inculcating values and skills, and to facilitate learning, effective software and on-line learning resources should be an integral part of every school curriculum in Nigeria.
- Teachers and students should be equipped with modern multi-media computers in the classrooms when proper learning takes place the issue of examination malpractice will significantly reduced.
- Emphasis should not just be on paper qualification but also be based on experience and ability to exhibit the acquired skills.
- Nigerian government should solely aim at functionalism and expunge essentialist metaphysical positions the educational system.
- The National Policy on Education should be reviewed to rid the educational system of colonial influences.

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