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INCULTURATION PROCESS IN THE EMERGING AFRICAN CHURCH

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Abstract

This paper examines the state of the Church, the theology with which it was established and the attitude of the missionaries towards Africans. It goes on to establish that the Christians who have arisen from this encounter have hardly been influential in affecting positively the societies they live in; when faced with existential difficulties they revert to African religion for solutions. The African worldview which was not properly studied before the good news was presented is highlighted, such as music, art and architecture, diviner's role, familial solidarity, hospitality among others; the combined role of slave-trade, religious imperialism of Christianity and Islam and Colonialism. This paper asserts that (though these influences abound the theology of inculturation must be built on the African Tradition which have persisted inspite of all attempts to strangle it.

Introduction

Inculturation process recognizes a people's culture and seeks how the Christian faith can be practiced in that cultural setting. The process of inculturation seeks to work out a synthesis in which as Pope John Paul II has written "faith becomes culture". Shorter (2006) asserts that "the goal of inculturation, therefore, is a single cultural entity that is at once a culture transformed by faith that is culturally re-expressed". In Africa because of the dearth of inculturation, the church as established by the activities of western missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa is neither African nor universal. The premise for this assertion, is based on the fact that the 'planters' of the church in Africa

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN CURRICULUM INNOVATIONS IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

when innovations are to be made in the curriculum (Curriculum Innovations can be said to be any change), many factors are to be considered. These include the psychological impact of what is to be in the curriculum on the recipients. The Nigerian policy makers tend to make innovations that tend to impair rather than enhance academic studies for students. This paper delves into this and how different innovations in the curriculum in Nigeria have been more of impediments rather than enhancers to the recipients.

Introduction

Curriculum innovations worldwide relate(s) to that which is a deviation in the curriculum. Curriculum innovation(s) pertains to new idea(s), method(s) and device(s) in the curriculum. It could be an improvement on ideas, methods and programmes. Many factors determine curriculum innovation(s). These include the purpose(s) of education in any given society. What the content of the curriculum should be, the natives of the society and the culture of the people.

The curriculum should reflect a society's goal(s), aspirations and ideals. It should be made to work towards the goals and ideals. This being so, every effort should be made to see that any innovation to be made must be properly planned and executed to bring about positive results.

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The Need for a Curriculum Innovation In the Nigerian Educational System:

The Nigerian educational system was patterned after the colonial master's educational system during the colonial period. The curriculum content of most subjects were therefore patterned after what obtained in Britain, without cognisance of differences in environmental learning situations, history of the nation or antecedents of students in the country. Thus for example, while many Nigerian students could recite poems that originated from the colonial masters own environment, indigenous poems were not taught.

In other subjects like geography, students were taught about the geography of Britain, they were virtually not taught that of Nigeria. In Biology, students were taught features of trees in summer and winters which had no relevance to the experience(s) of the students. In history, students were more conversant with British history than Nigerian history, literature books were foreign. After independence, changes were made on some aspects of the various subjects after the clamour for this. From thence, innovations and changes has continued to be made. However, in many respects, what obtained at colonial time still obtains now. For example, in most of the science subjects, the curriculum content was predominantly knowledge for knowledge's sake, rather than knowledge to solve practical problems. Experimental experience was not stressed while little emphasis was placed on acquisition of scientific skills. Till date, not much has taken place, to change this trend, for while some schools do have laboratories, where experimental experiences are expected to take place, limited experience or no experience at all may be what the students may face because of lack of necessary equipments and tools. Not only this, many students still tend to view the science subjects as end in themselves rather than means to an

Secondary schools. In the 1950s, biology, chemistry and physics were introduced for the last three years of the secondary level. It is noteworthy that in this respect, not much change has occurred till date. These three subjects are still available for students to learn only at the last three years of secondary school. This may partly explain why science is yet to be part of the average Nigerian life.

As at Independence in 1960, Nigeria was operating the legacy left behind by the colonial masters in form of the 8-6-2-3 System (Adeyinka, 1991). Criticisms against the system prompted the government to put in the machinery for change and this change came with a policy paper on the 6-3-3-4 system of Education in 1981.

The 6-3-3-4 system of education could be said to be the major education policy innovation in Nigeria after independence. The mind of those who "birth" the system at the 1969 conference was to model the American System of education, which they thought, would take Nigeria to the "promised land" in science and technology. Pupils were to spend six years at the primary school system, three years each at the Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School respectively, before students proceed to the University for a four year programme minimum. Students were to be guided at the Junior Secondary School level (J.S.S) as to what subject choice they should make at the Senior Secondary level (S.S.S). The School Counsellors were to be majorly responsible for monitoring the students through the J.S.S. levels and guide them to their subject choice at the S.S.S. level as well as counsel them in other areas of life. Students who were not academically oriented were to be channelled to other vocations in which they are seen to be proficient, be it, vulgarising, carpentry and the like. They would then be trained in such vocations to be experts and at the same time literate.

However, the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education met with many hiccups. For starters, many students and parents/guardians were not aware of when the implementation would really start if they really knew of a change in the first instance. Many were therefore caught unawares when they learnt of the new policy implementation. Not only this, the implementation did not begin at the same time among the Nigerian states. While some had started few years after the policy was out in 1981, some did not start for many years after. While some even started, it was just a policy on paper, and announced by the State(s) to have started, there was nothing concrete on ground to show that the States were prepared. Further, many of the equipments and materials for the implementation, especially at the secondary school level were expensive and many States could not afford to import them, for example the introductory technology machines and the woodwork machines. Therefore, the Federal Government had to come to the aid of the States by buying and distributing these machines. However, not all States could get the machines and the number given to each States varied while some could not get of all (Mowiaye, 1994). It followed that not all schools could get the machines and materials, not only this, after the distribution, there were virtually no personnel to operate these machines, not to talk of knowing how to use it to teach the students. What happened thereafter was that many of the machines and materials were left at the ministries or schools to rust, while many were stolen and vandalised. It was even reported that at the ports, many had been stolen. Therefore, millions of naira invested for the machines went down the drain.

Furthermore, by the nature of the policy, there was no way school Counsellors would not be involved very much in the programme, but as at the time the programme took off, there were very few Counsellors for the schools. In

fact, many Universities did not have guidance and counselling in their given curriculum, so there were very few institutions to train Counsellors for the schools. Even now, many schools do not have a single Counsellor, while many Counsellors in schools cannot operate effectively because of shortage of counselling personnel vis-à-vis the students population. Coupled with the paucity of counselling personnel, was the jealousy exhibited by other school teachers and the administrators towards the Counsellors because of the belief that they were just "loafers" by the nature of their work and so refused to co-operate with the Counsellors in their work. Many Counsellors were equally made to teach subjects in schools along with their counselling duties because of paucity of teachers in some areas, or out of jealousy. Some of the school Counsellors themselves were not really conversant with what their duties were nor how to go about it. Coupled with all these problems, was the general low morale of the teachers and school administrators generally because of poor remuneration and overload of work. Many were therefore not motivated to find innovative solutions to the problems at hand.

For many subjects, especially newly introduced subjects both at the Junior and Senior levels of the secondary school, there were no adequate number of teachers and this meant that many schools did not have teachers for these subjects, especially for subjects like metal work, wood work, introductory technology, e.t.c. In fact, many schools could not introduce some of the new subjects to their students because of this. At a time, some school administrators in some states toyed with the idea of getting personnel from the cream of professionals who had a thing or two to do with some of the subjects. For example, getting carpenters to teach woodwork-but the idea had to be jettisoned when it was realised that such

moves would compound the problems at hand rather than solve it.

At the early stage of the implementation in many states, the Government did not know what to do with those who failed the J.S.S. examinations, therefore, they became drop outs with no special programme in place for them. Many resorted to going in for menial jobs and the like. After the hue and cry at such surplus of students having nothing to do, many states resorted to just promoting the students to the S.S.S. levels after the examinations (either they pass or fail). Later, some modified this, and would give 'resit' examinations to the J.S.S. failures before allowing them proceed to the S.S.S., and usually, all students would pass the resit.

The channeling of students towards an appropriate career is virtually non-existent, students choose subjects as they like. Therefore, the primary purpose of the new policy in many respects could not be achieved. Furthermore, even at the primary school level, the foundational level for the 3-3 tier of the secondary school, the curriculum content(s) and method(s) did not change much from what it used to be before the new policy.

Many years after the implementation of the policy, some states did not know if they were supposed to cancel their School of Basic Studies or not. Some cancelled it, some did not. Till now, this status quo is still being maintained (Mowaiye 1994), while the programme has different names now.

Since an important aspect of the 6-3-3-4 system of education is to see to the nation's science and technological advancement, efforts ought to have been made to see that essential facilities for the teaching of science subjects such as laboratories and equipments were in place for students and teachers. Till now, many schools have no laboratories, and many of those who have, are poorly equipped. Whereas, science cannot be

taught theoretically. For a science oriented student, no matter how intellectually equipped he/she may be, lack of these facilities cannot be encouraging, motivating nor can it make students to excel, and only the spirit of excellency can make for scientific innovation (s) in the society. (Mowaiye, 1994).

Another policy innovation was the introduction of nomadic education for the nomads. The implementation of the national policy on nomadic education was also poorly managed. As at the time of implementation, there was no evidence that the nomads had been persuaded to accept it nor that they had been informed that such a policy was in the offspring for them. Years after it was supposed to have taken off, it is still difficult to get data as regards number of teachers available for them, students enrolment, specific centers of schooling, specific curriculum content for the students, where and how that would fit into the 6-3-3-4 system of education, nor how the nomadic teachers are trained, and the materials that are available for the nomads remain unclear. For one thing, there are more questions than answers available on the nomadic education. It seemed the policy was conceived and hastily announced. It could not but be a still birth.

Now in year 2006, the Nigeria Government says it is again out for a new educational policy. Confusion has trailed this announcement. Even Government spokespersons have been contradicting themselves. While some say the primary school lever is extended to nine years from its present six years, others say this will be operational in schools operating the Universal Basic Education (UBE) only. The contradictions are the prerequisites to failure. It must be noted that many states in Nigeria are just getting their feet so to say as far as the 6-3-3-4 system is concerned. And now, the Government has announced out of the blues, that the nation is again having a change and this time it is to be a 9-3-4 system of education and to take

by September 2006. The need for the change remains
urgent.

By the new system, pupils would spend about nine
years at the primary school before going to the secondary
school. That would then be the present senior secondary
school, so the present junior secondary school system
would be "merged" with the primary school system. The
indications for this as noted earlier is not crystal clear.
Many state leaders, especially, parents and pupils have not
been educated on this. (Sunday Tribune, 2006) Many rural
areas do not know what is in the off-spring. There is
confusion on ground. Some say the common entrance
examination to the secondary school will no longer be
necessary and that what will be in place is an examination
at the end of the 9th year for the secondary school
entrance, which will be at the present level of the senior
secondary school. Clear-cut statements on such topical
issues have not been addressed nor the implementation
modalities.

Parents who have to spend more on the primary
education of their wards, or the children who are to find
themselves spending nine years in the primary have not
been educated on this nor the necessity for change and
there is also the question of whether the curriculum content
as it is at the junior secondary school would now change
and if so what are the changes to expect? What are the
cost implications to parents and wards, school owners and
all stakeholders? Would problems arising from the change
not further lower the standard of education? Yet, the
present Government (and minister for education) would
leave in 2007, and would a change in Government not
mean a change in the system again? These are teething
problems which the nation should be over with by now. The
implications for parents/wards are too numerous and
efforts should be made to see that problems of the

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stakeholders who would be at the receiving end are not further compounded than they are.

Psychological Factors – In Curriculum Innovation

As noted, the Nigerian society is not a scientific society because of superstitious beliefs and the like. Many do not believe in scientific tenets. Furthermore, science is not a way of life, because, when it is, it has a way of permeating every life and the school system, but when it is not a way of life, it takes more than a policy statement for any innovation to be meaningful.

Furthermore, from kindergarten through the primary and secondary school levels, there is not much psychologically to make students tend towards any scientific manipulation(s), thinking, ideas or training. For example in developed nations, even at the kindergarten level, there are scientific toys and tools for children to play with. Plays and films to watch to show scientific manipulations, films to watch to encourage scientific thinking and the like, which are virtually non-existent in Nigeria. The mass media, radio, newspapers, and television which could be used innovatively towards the scientific orientation are not used. Even school books which can be used are not being used. Many pupil/students are yet to know what a computer is nor its machinations and workings. And this is more critical in rural areas. Many public schools in major cities do not get to use computers in their daily activities. The above situation is so even at the tertiary institutions.

It must be stated that the Government and policy makers do not take into cognisance the psychological orientation of the people and psychological effects of policy announcements on pupils and guardians/parents. For example, there were many parents and students who became destabilised when they suddenly found their wards/children out of school, not knowing what to do with themselves, after failing the J.S.S examination at the

inception of the 6-3-3-4 system of education and these students were forced to withdraw from their schools. Many became psychologically disoriented which led some to mental instability. Many could not find their feet since then and became societal misfits.

Many teachers suffered from low self-esteem when they found they could not teach effectively some aspects of the curriculum they were supposed to teach, because of new topics of the subject matter at the S.S.S level. For example, in subjects like geography and history, topics which hitherto were taught in tertiary institutions were now included in the S.S.S. topics to expand the curriculum and many teachers found themselves inadequate in handling the topics, since many had not gone for higher degrees or training, where such topics could have been taught. Even more critical is the fact that many became defensive and transfer their aggression to their students and the students not being taught well could and might have equally suffered from feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem, and this could have led to the fear of failure syndrome.

Most times, change of policy invariably also means change of text materials and books. Many parents/children find themselves incapable of buying such new texts. Lack of required materials can be disorienting. For some students especially the indigent students, getting text books from those who have passed through the classes they are in, is the norm and when texts are changed suddenly, it may be psychologically disorienting, because of the financial implication(s) of procuring the required texts or the inability to procure.

The confusion that new policy statements and implementations pull up can put students off academics, especially students who are not academically oriented hitherto. The fear of what will become of them after the J.S.S. if they fail, the fear that even a new policy may come up before they finish their own education considering how

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such policies are announced from the blue can be disorienting. For some parents, who may have financial plan on how their children will finish schooling through specific years, when enough time is not given before implementation of new policies, there may be an initial psychological disorientation as to how to cope financially.

Another important psychological factor to curriculum innovation that cannot be over looked is student needs. Policy implementation cannot be in isolation of the type of society any policy is for, nor can it be in isolation of students and teachers. For the Nigerian society, where many school age pupils are out of school, the policy makers must not only be concerned with making new policies but must also be concerned with the effects of such policies on the stakeholders and the society. They must see that the policies would have positive effects on the society. They must see to it that those who are supposed to be in school are there; that should be the rudiment of any policy making. Thereafter, other varied needs of the students should then be considered. In a nation regarded as one of the poorest nations of the world (Punch 2006), impression(s) must not be given that policy makers do not care about the stakeholders, so that at the end of the day, it does not result in any form of maladjustment on the part of the students, school administrators, teachers and parents/guardians, which will invariably result in school maladministration and societal maladjustments.

Conclusion

~~Education~~ Education is the bedrock of societal development. Policy makers must not toy with it nor with the lives of stakeholders. There must be long term planning of any policy and effective implementation. There must be no trial and error in policy implementation because like surgery in medicine, it is a critical operation and "errors" can be fatal. Policy change must not be left to the whims and caprice(s).



of who is the minister in charge of Government of the day. Continuity must also be maintained in the education sector. The mass media is an important tool of change and policy implementation. They should be used effectively. There must be projections in planning, of possible implementation problems and solutions. When necessary steps are taken, then Nigeria would probably be on its way to join nations taking giant strides in all sectors of the society.

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