

BUILDING A SKILLED AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY THROUGH THE TENETS OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

BY

¹ ORLUNGA BARTHOLOMEW GODSTIME, ² ALIKOR OROMA

¹ Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education Rivers State University. Nigeria.

² Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education Rivers State University. Nigeria

Corresponding author: ORLUNGA BARTHOLOMEW GODSTIME

DOI:

Article History

Received: 23-06-2026

Accepted: 26 -06-2026

Published: 04-07-2026

Abstract

In today's rapidly evolving world, traditional education is now seen as a pivotal tool for building a skilled and inclusive society, however this can only be made manifest if the tenets of traditional education are adequately given precedence to blend with our present curriculum. However, it is pertinent to note that education in Nigeria is structured and designed to blend with that of Anglo-American nations, of which curriculum structure and design does not support and represent adequately the African society, its culture and needs. while undermining the importance of the curriculum of developed Asian country which is practically oriented and designed to incorporate the culture of the people, science, practical innovations and support artificial intelligence, this is what the African (Nigerian) society truly need for her education. Thus, this paper explores the role of traditional education in fostering intellectual development, practical skill development, societal inclusion and economic development. through examining the importance of structured learning environments, this research investigates how traditional education can furnish individuals with essential skills, to promote social mobility and bridge cultural divides. The findings underscore the importance of injecting traditional education which is practically designed and skill oriented, as well as prioritize inclusivity, equity, and quality, ultimately contributing to a more prosperous and harmonious society for all.

Keywords: Education, Inclusive Society, Traditional Educational

Introduction

Education is the bedrock through which societal norms, values and attitudes are designed to propagate the life style of very one that it comes across. to so many, it is perceived as a social mechanism that is adjudged nationally as an acceptable process designed by any society to transmit and inculcate cherished values, skills, norms and cultures, all of which is aimed at bringing about desirable change in the behaviour of the learners. Schofield in Abdulraman (2019) stated that education an experience received overtime. In essence it represents the experience in knowledge we acquire on a continues scale, either at home, in our environment, at the farm, school, etc. even though most of the aforementioned fall under informal, non-formal and formal types of education, all are directed towards making an individual lead a fulfilled life to themselves and the society in general. However, it is paramount to note that the

process of educating the younger ones is not the exclusive right of a particular society even though it is clear that every society has its own training method that is peculiar to them. When we talk about building a skilled and inclusive society through the tenets of traditional education, we are trying to look at how employing the basic attributes of traditional education which is based on pragmatism can aid us in build an inclusive and job-oriented society were everyone will be given equal right to develop and access practical opportunities which will enable citizens to be useful to themselves and the society, with much emphasis on creating a supportive and accommodating educational environments where every student has the opportunity to succeed. Building a skilled an Inclusive society should be grounded on the principles of equity, diversity, and social justice, and is recognized as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2020).

The traditional system of education was the type of education before the coming of the Europeans to Africa and was practiced in full scale until colonial rule in Nigeria. This method of education represents practicality in its fullest and emphasis were centered on apprenticeship and mentorship. It is seen as a process in which a society transfer desirable knowledge, culture, skills and norms to learners continuously. By implication, it therefore entails that the African society had an already existing method of transmitting its norms, values, and attitudes to its younger generation before it got exposed to formal education.

The teaching and learning process in the African traditional society was designed to function as an informal education. The system does not support elaborate preparations before the actual teaching process as that of a formal school system. Therefore, it means that Africans had a way that was peculiar to her in terms of transmitting desirable knowledge to its younger generation prior to the coming and introduction of western education, corroborating from the above, it becomes imperative for one to debunk the insinuation as asserted by Carothers, that Nigeria and indeed Africa had no iota of an educational system which it uses to educate her younger generation and that the process of education was introduced to her by the white man. In response to the above Jerome (2010) stated that the aforementioned information about Africa was miss leading and fallacious because the African (Nigerian) values have survived over the ages through the instrumentality of her superb educational system that was peculiar to her, rich in beauty and content.

In the same vein, Emenyon cited in Achi (2021) asserted that teaching and learning had existed in Africa before European exploration in Africa and that this teaching and learning format was basically in an oral tradition pattern, it is seen as what the trainers in the African traditional institution used in the teaching and training of the apprentices by way for verbal instruction. The purpose of oral tradition is to instruct the trainees in the principles of doing what was right during learning periods as well as showing examples for wrong.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The current happenstance in the economic sector of Nigeria society has shown that gaining knowledge of formal education alone is not enough to cater for the need of an average citizen of Nigeria. This is because education in Nigeria has been made to flow around the backdrop of theories and paper studies rather than adapting the tenets of African traditional education which is rich in content and practically based, with lots of vibes for skill development through apprentice and training. From the above, it now implies that most of the persons who are seen as graduates today do not possess the practical know-how of the courses they studied in the university. The aforementioned can be considered a truism when we do a reflex of most graduates who studied courses like, civil engineering, electrical engineering, computer science or engineering, accounting, economics sociology etc. studies have revealed that lots of

the students who studied the above courses tend to perform very poor when asked to demonstrate professionalism as persons who have undergone studies in an institution of higher learning. It is on this backdrop that it become imperative for this study to investigate certain factors responsible for the negligence of adopting the tenets of traditional education for an inclusive and skilled oriented society.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Inclusive Society

Inclusive society is a society that aligns its norms and value to favour everyone without bias. That is, it is a society that does not support discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender, sect, creed, language, culture, region, class, economic and social status etc., this is a society in which there is no discrimination on the basis of interaction, eating and drinking, touching, marriage etc., in which there should be no sense of superiority and inferiority on the basis of educated and uneducated, rich-poor, officer-employee, laborer, farmer, sweeper etc., in which all the people of the society should be treated without any discrimination and There should be equal opportunities for interaction and development in the form of obstacles (Raheesh 2024). It is society where there is equity, equality, dedication, acceptance, fraternity and brotherhood. Every person in the society should be connected to each other and should not feel any kind of isolation. There should neither be pride in anyone nor inferiority in anyone; All people work as a unit. Thus, an egalitarian and inclusive society means an ideal society which has both equality and inclusion at its core. An inclusive society emphasizes the importance of creating supportive and accommodating educational environments where every student has the opportunity to succeed, thereby making education grounded in the principles of equity, diversity, and social justice, and is recognized as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2020).

IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION IN THE SOCIETY

- 1. Academic Growth:** overtime it has been observed that students learn better in a mixed classroom situation with other than an exclusive environment, as students with disabilities who are educated in an inclusive environment perform better academically juxtaposed to those in segregated learning environment (Raheesh 2024). also, inclusive society creates an enabling environment that encourages critical thinking for proffering solutions to problem among all learners.
- 2. Social Cohesion:** An Inclusive society promotes social cohesion and discourages segregation or stigmatization of marginalized groups in the society, especially for persons with special needs. Students learn to appreciate diversity and develop empathy, leading to more positive social interactions and relationships (Raheesh 2024)
- 3. Emotional Support:** An Inclusive society promotes emotional support and development of persons with special needs by encouraging togetherness and acceptance in the

hearts of every individual without any atom for blemish. learners in an inclusive system tend to develop positive self-esteem when exposed to adequate opportunity to coexist with people without any form of disability.

NATURE AND MEANING OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

African traditional education according to Kelechi and Okafor (2021), emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values for the recipients, therefore traditional education is a lifelong education that is based on functionalism with proponent guiding principles. Traditional education otherwise known as African indigenous education can be defined as the traditional way of transmitting societal norms, knowledge, skills, values and other competences to the African child. Every society in the world has its unique ways of transmitting cultural heritage from one generation to another (Familiusi 2020). Traditional education is an education that is referred to as being a practical oriented initiative, aimed at identifying and proffering meaningful solutions for societal needs as well as an empowerment to all who come across it. traditional education is defined as the educational system designed by the African people to transmit values, attitudes, skills norms and knowledge etc., which would help the learner to be useful to himself and the society he belongs through dedicated contributions. However, there is no way we are going to discuss about building a skilled and inclusive society without taking a critical analysis on the curriculum of our educational sector, this is because we have seen that the educational system in Nigeria is facing a serious crises majorly on insecurity, policy articulation and implementation problems, as well corruption.

Jerome cited in Orlunga and Alikor (2024) affirmed that what is worrisome now is the fact that most youth who are supposed leaders of education are beginning to loosed hope on the education system and have mostly resulted in any activity that will aid them in getting wealth during and after graduation, all of which is centered on lack of job opportunities to fit, those who are ready to join the labour force of our nation. There are lots of information about the various decline and failure of our institutions of higher learning and the surrounding factors delimitating the needed force for the enhancement of technical, social and economic transformation in Nigeria which can only be made possible through an inclusive process of traditional education which is technically inclined and practically oriented, rather than going to school to study courses that are theoretically motivated with little or nothing to contribute to the life of the certificate holder.

TENETS OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION NEEDED FOR BUILDING A SKILLED AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The African traditional education was designed for the development of the child's intellectual abilities and encourages growth in the psychomotor and affective domains, even though the ability to read and write were not

incorporated as prerequisite for African traditional education, there were different other mental capabilities expected to be possessed by the learner which are acquired through apprenticeship inform of imitation, observation and practical participation. Hence there are four major tenets of African traditional education that needs to be adopted if the Nigerian society must build an effective, skilled and inclusive society which includes the of philosophy pragmatism, communalism and perennialism.

Pragmatism. This principle entails that people should be trained with the sole aim of equipping them with a practical skill for the attainment of desirable goals that will help them lead a useful life for themselves and the society. Therefore, Knowledge conferred through this process was particularly for the purpose of practical skills for the task in the future. Pragmatism appreciates and support the search for processing things that aids man to achieve desirable goal, the theory therefore affirms that reality changes in accordance to time, place and happenstance, hence, the thory therefore emphasis that learning should be by carrying out experiments and testing. This is why Amae (2015) asserts that pragmatism is the practical and scientific way of carrying out a task, as it goes further to examine the workability of a particular problem under investigation.

The principle further entails that the traditional education is both practical oriented and participatory in its regards. Thus, recipients learn better through working with the trainer as well as observing every step taking during work. By implication, it means that young trainees learnt the art of any skill they indulge in by following detailed instructions given to them by their trainers and teachers. Corroboratively, it then implies that the African Indigenous education was functional, the knowledge, skills and values that were transmitted to learners were important for the advancement the socio-economic activities of the traditional society, this was evident in the area of agriculture, construction, arts, fishing, goldsmithing, canoe making etc. all of which, if adopted in today's curriculum would help create a skilled and inclusive society that will be devoid of youths without practical skills who would contribute meaningfully to the society and themselves, However, there is no way we are going to discuss about building a skilled and inclusive society without taking a critical analysis on the curriculum of our educational sector, this is because we have seen that the educational system in Nigeria is facing a serious crises majorly on insecurity, policy articulation and implementation problems, as well corruption. Jerome cited in Orlunga and Alikor (2024) affirmed that what is worrisome now is the fact that most youth who are supposed leaders of education are beginning to loosed hope on the education system and have mostly resulted in any activity that will aid them in getting wealth during and after graduation, all of which is centered on lack of job opportunities to fit, those who are ready to join the labour force of our nation.

Communalism. The African traditional education, emphasized that the training of the younger generation is the

responsibility of all adult members of the society who are disciplined and morally sound, hence the parents of the children are considered as guardians who are there to direct the learners while general teaching is done for by every member of the community, this is based on the fact that the child is not individually owned. Thus, when a child does something wrong in this kind of system, like refusing to join his age grade in sweeping the village square, eating in the morning without washing the face or chewing stick, refusing to surrender his or her chair when an elder enters, etc., a fellow villager can correct or scold the child (Achi 2021). This is also very important as one thing done by another could have adverse consequences on another. Thus, teaching another person or correcting the other is a good which one does to himself or herself; and to leave the person without correcting or teaching the person is do oneself harm. This makes teaching a collective responsibility.

Achi (2021) further affirmed that education was also an integral part of culture and history. Therefore, if a child acts obnoxiously in the absence of his/her parents any adult member who is present at that moment in the community has the right to correct him/her on spot. This implies that even children belong to the general community. By implication it there means education of our youths should not be left in the hands for the parents and teachers in the school alone as it is now clear to us that the moral values that a child needs to develop cannot be gotten from just the teacher and parents alone. This is because most families in Nigeria are already broken with children who are brought up in an abusive or criminal foundations, which by implication will affect the performance of the individual in future.

Multitask Learning. The African traditional educational system creates an enabling environment for learners to learn different skills at the same time. Unlike the formal education setting where learners are made to specialize in a particular profession which makes them choose certain courses to learn in academic institution, the African traditional education allows learners to learn multiple skills at the same time with the one they are already undergoing training to be specialized, by implication it means that a person whose parent are hunters will automatically learn hunting by what the African education entails, such an individual can also learn goldsmithing, rain making, carpentry, farming, etc. (Achi 2021). It is pertinent to note that girls were not exempted in this regard, even when they are thought the act of home care, in preparation of becoming a good wife and a better mother, they were also thought hair making, beading, dance and midwifery, herbalist and basket making etc. young learners in the African education system were either not allowed to specialize in a particular skill, or differ little from the skill acquired to learn another skill, all of which is aimed at making the learners become useful to themselves and the society. Hence there was no room for any formalized specialization. Multitasking is what is needed in today's society if we must achieve a skilled and inclusive society.

Reconstructionism this is school of thought believes that

man by nature is mostly unreliable, independent and trickish so much so that it needs reordering and smooth reconstruction. Hence, the nature of man and his behaviour is awful, bad, wicked and nasty as conditioned by his physical environment and is influenced by the ruling class in the society. Ameale (2015) noted that reconstructionist theory in African traditional setting tries to explain that the nature of man is naturally brutish and full of crises situations, which is a clear fact of what we are experiencing in today's Nigeria where there are reported cases of crises situations. The aforementioned situation is what the reconstructionist school of thought is trying to address through the tenets of traditional education. For the reconstructionist, education is concerned basically on the thought and actions of work based on intellectual activism. Therefore, traditional education helps man to point out the need for change as well as infuse these changes to activeness and present-day practices so that societal goals can be attained harmoniously. However, it is pertinent to note that developmental goals can only be achieved if the education is given precedence and all sectors rebranded to suit with what is really needed for the development Nigeria. The tenets of African traditional education which practical oriented and give room for acquisition of basic skills that will aid everyone who comes across it to gain proficient skill that will help achieve personal growth rather than relying on a curriculum that is skilled biased with outdated academic programmes which have little or nothing to contribute to the present needs of the society, especially on area like Social Science, Humanities, Art and Cultural studies, Engineering, Home and Hospitality management etc. most of the curriculum contents in our educational system are outdated and most of them do not support creativity in the students. Even when the education planners try to design new curriculum in the tertiary education system, they end up employing the services of individuals who are non-professionals in a particular field to design and plan the curriculum. The aforementioned is a truism when we do a cross-cultural investigation on the current Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) that was introduced in 2023 by the National University Commission (NUC) as the new curriculum for tertiary education aimed at ensuring quality and global competitiveness in university education. It would interest you to know that the new curriculum has faced lots of criticisms ranging from lack of intellectual autonomy, poorly conceived provision, stifle diversity and creativity in academic programme, use of unqualified personnel's to design the curriculum, displacement of important course etc. these and many more were some criticisms on the current tertiary institution curriculum, the implication is that there is no way we can get a positive result in any aspect of our society, this is because education (tertiary) which is considered the foundation for societal development is faulty and need serious rebranding if we must get it right. What the Nigerian youths need today is more of a creativity and practical education that will equip every individual with life-

supporting skills which is what traditional education provides or stands for. The school curriculum should focus more on the future by emphasizing knowledge diversification through unlearning what we have learnt in our educational system and through copying that of developed Asian nations like China, Finland, Singapore, etc. that have placed much emphasis on practical and scientifically driven education which stretches back to what our African traditional education stands for. Apart from the student's main area of specialization, in recent times, there are cases where students have taken interest to mount skill acquisition and entrepreneurship empowerment training programmes on the campuses of most tertiary institutions in Nigeria. They bring in resource persons to teach them. By implication, it means there is a gap in the curriculum. They know that much of what they are taught cannot sustain them upon graduation (Iyamu 2020). The question now is, will we begin to evaluate the academic programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions for the purpose of review or rebranding, to make them responsive to the demand of the time and possibly the future which are the tenets of what traditional education teach? Yet to be answered.

Theoretical Review

this study is centered on the theory of Pragmatism by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey in the 1870s. Peirce called it in his pragmatic maxim: Pragmatism believes that truth and fact of yesterday needs to be experienced truly, for the present and future, it further emphasized that there is no absolute truth and permanency as it is ever changing from point in time to another. The theory affirms that life is dynamic which is subjected to continuous innovations, hence the primordial interest of education is bound to be dynamic in nature. Pragmatist theory highlights that Education deals with human life, it also enables learners to fulfill their biological and social needs. Rai and Rupen (2020) affirmed that education must create new values which will align the task of educator to put those who have come across it into a position to develop values for themselves. therefore, the aim of education as formulated by the Pragmatists school of thought is

Conclusion

The tenets of traditional education remain a pivotal foundation for shaping societies that are both skilled and inclusive. By emphasizing discipline, structured learning, and communal values, traditional education equips individuals with utmost essential competencies while fostering respect, cooperation, and social responsibility. These qualities are indispensable for building a skilled society capable of meeting economic demands and an inclusive society that values diversity and equity. However, to fully realize this vision, traditional education must be adapted to contemporary realities through integrating modern pedagogical innovations, inclusive policies, and equitable access. When harmonized with progressive approaches, the enduring principles of traditional education

can serve as a bridge between heritage and innovation, ensuring that societies are not only productive but also just and united.

SUGGESTIONS

The Following are some recommendations for an improved inclusive and skilled society;

1. The Nigerian society must try to rebrand its curriculum to meet with the need of the African society through the process of incorporating the tenets of traditional education which is reach in content and preaches technical and industrial education.
2. There should be proper sensitization on the need to promote our indigenous system of education.

Inclusive education should be prioritized and persons with disability given opportunity to participate side by side with other learners in a practical and technical education setting.

References

- Abdulrahman, Y.M (11` 2014) *Nigerian Educational History and Policy; The Beginning of the Past, Past of the Future*. M & J Grand Orbit Communications.
- Achi A. N (2021) *African Indigenous Education*; spintex printers hub Nigeria.
- Ameale S. (2015) *Understanding the Philosophy of Education; the Western and African Perspectives*. Harey Publications coy, Port Harcourt
- Wosu.J.I (2018) *History of Education the Global Approach*. Harey Publications coy.
- Familusi O. O (2020) The Relevance of Indigenous Education to National Development in Nigeria. *Science Arena Publications Specialty Journal of Religious Studies and Theology Vol, 5 (1): 13-21*
- Ibe-Moses, k.C. & Okafor U. O (2021) Traditional Education in Nigeria and the Way Forward to Achieving the Millennium Goals. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Economics and Public Sector Management (IJASEPSM) 9 (2) 112-125*
- Ibe-Moses, K C. & Okafor U.O (2021) Traditional Education in Nigeria and the Way Forward to Achieving the Millennium Goals. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Economics and Public Sector Management 9 (2) 112-125*
- Orluniga B.G & Alikor .O (2024) Re-crafting the Nigerian Universal Basic Education Sector for a competitive Advancement in the 21st Century. *East African Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature. 7(4)173-179*
- Rai P.C & Rupen L (2020) Pragmatism and its Contributions to Education. *International Journal of Creative Research Thought (IJCRT) 8(3)1844-1847*
- RAHEESH R. (2024) Inclusive Education as Pathway to an Equitable and Inclusive Society. *Iconic Research and Engineering Journals 7(12) 505-510*
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report: Inclusion and education: All means all*. Paris: UNESCO.

