

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA OF NIGERIA AND CANADA

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Abstract

This write up x-rays the national systems of education in Nigeria and Canada: with emphasis on the curriculum of pre-primary, primary, secondary, teacher education and tertiary education. The paper focused on the funding of education in Nigeria and Canada, as well as on educational administration in the two countries. Consequently, the researchers recommend that some aspects of educational curriculum in Canada should be incorporated in the Nigerian educational system.

Introduction

The type of education prevalent in a particular nation reflects the philosophy, ideologies and needs of the people. Any attempt therefore at studying a nation's education system is an indirect way of studying the life of the people (Nduka, 2000). According to Adejumo (1990), Education is a prolongation of history and a practical realization of the history of education, not only on the contemporary scene but as history which depends on comparative analysis for better understanding. It is also related to philosophy, for one cannot understand an educational system without knowing its immediate theoretical foundations and the philosophical matrix on which such foundations are structured.

Nduka (2000), reveals that a national system of education is simply a system of education by which a sovereign nation could be identified nationally, having regard to the needs, aspirations and circumstances of such a nation.

Brief Historical Background of Nigeria and Canada

Nigeria, a West African country, is the most populated African nation and the most populated black nation in the world, according to Nduka (2000). It is a heterogeneous society with about 250 ethnic nations and language, the three dominant geo-political zones being Hausa, in the North, Yoruba in the West and Igbo in the East. It is equally the most blessed African country in terms of vastness of resources (human, agricultural and mineral) (Nduka, 2000).

There are three systems of education: the traditional education which is indigenous to Nigeria, the Islamic education which came into Nigeria through the North-East in the 11th century and dominated the far North and the Western-type education which made entry into Nigeria through Badagry, south western Nigeria. This western-type of education which is the last to be introduced later gained more popularity, subsumed indigenous and Islamic educational systems and became the dominant, most enterprising and most progressive education system in Nigeria. It has transformed into modern education and developed into a full-fledged national system of Nigeria education (Nduka, 2000).

Canada a North American country was formerly under British imperial rule. Canada is made up of migrants from European nations, Asia and Australia. To safeguard the interest of the different states, education was excluded from the authority of the federal government by the Canadian Federal constitution.

Canadian education system explicitly reflects the religious and linguistic diversity of the population. In addition to public schools, there are privately funded schools, Catholic schools and small number of protestants, separate school(s), in Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan. (CERIS - Information - Introduction to Canadian Education, 2003).

Philosophical Aims and Objectives of Education in Nigeria and Canada

According to Nduka (2000), philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effect citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the system at all levels and aspects of the educational system at all levels and aspects of the educational system both inside and outside the formal school system. The equal opportunities must be un-

conditional, that is, irrespective of place, locality, state of birth and of residence, sex, parental background, social status, ethnic group, language, religion or political opinion. In other words, no citizen should be marginalized or discriminated against on any basis or ground in any way or form. The national educational aims and objectives as contained in the National Policy on Education (Revised, 1981), are:

- 1) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- 2) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- 3) The training of the mind appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society.

In Canadian education, the philosophy is based on liberty and permissiveness, pragmatism and liberalism. Pragmatism or experimentalism gave full expression to the enterprising spirit and profoundly influence the theory and practice of Canadian education. The pragmatism philosophy is built on the ideals of creativity, progress and the cult of individualism. It accepts the thesis that the culture of a nation grows out of its traditions in a process of adaptation to a changing civilization and so not a one shot defilation and prescription. Canadian schools therefore concentrate on sparking in their pupils an urge towards continuous creativity with sincere dedication to tasks that interest and absorb them. This permissiveness is said to have released hidden mental and manual energies in men and women who hardly suspected they had them.

Accordingly, the individual is educated to develop all his potentials which will equip him to explore and exploit the open possibilities in Canada for individual and societal benefits. The idea of liberty and equality made them to pioneer a common school at primary and compulsory attendance (Canadian Education in Global Society, 1993).

The objectives of Canadian education, according to EHRS - Information - Introduction to Canadian Education (1998), many be summarized as:

- 1) Developing all the potentials of all children including the handicapped through the broad based general education and enlightenment to enable each child benefit according to his natural ability. This would enable them to explore and exploit the vast resources of Canada for their own benefit and that of Canada.
- 2) Inculcating in all children the spirit of continuous creativity and sincere dedication to the task that interest and absorb them in order to release hidden mental and manual energies in them for individual and social benefit.
- 3) Providing all children with equal educational opportunity, through free and compulsory common schools with ample provision for individual benefit according to natural ability, aptitude and inclination.
- 4) Using the agency and instrumentality of education to:
 - (a) Solve varied types of individual and societal problems - social, economic, political, environmental and cultural problems.
 - (b) Gain access to and discover the methods of diversifying their solutions to a variety of problems and hazards.
 - (c) Enhance economy and production efficiency in order to ensure economic buoyancy, self-reliance, better health, and better living standards.

Structure of Educational Systems in Nigeria and Canada

Nigeria runs the 6-3-3-4 system of education. This formal education starts with primary of six years duration, followed by a junior secondary education of three years duration and finally a tertiary education of four years duration (Iwuoma, B. C. 1992).

Education in Canada is compulsory, normally from the ages of six or seven years of age sixteen. This begins with kindergarten for five year old. Canada runs the public educational system, which begins with the elementary school that lasts five years in most provinces (Saskatchewan), six years in eight province/territories, seven years in British Columbia, or eight years in Ontario and Manitoba.

Secondary education usually continues from the twelfth year, which include a junior high school or middle school which lasts for three years, and upper college or secondary school which also lasts three years. Tertiary education in Canada last for three to five years, first degree programme, master programme one to two years and a doctorate programme three or more years, (CERUS - Information - Introduction to Canadian Education, 1998).

Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary education is gradually becoming the starting point in the Nigerian educational system, although, it is not a pre-condition for admission into primary school; they are privately owned and are fee paying. Pre-primary education begins with kindergarten for five old and last for one year (Iwuoma B. C., 1992).

In Canada, all pre-primary school are public owned institutions. Public education begins with kindergarten for five year old and last for one year (CERIS - Information - Introduction to Canadian Education, 1998).

Primary Education

Primary education in Nigeria marks the beginning of a centrally organized school system. Admission into the primary school is at the age of six years. Primary education is of six year duration. There are private (missionary) and public primary schools in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1967). Just like in where the Roman Catholic church owned and administer primary schools, alongside with public primary schools.

The content of what they teach in public and private primary schools in Nigeria are the same. Subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, health science, drawing, arts, and craft, moral education among others are taught. The school programme also provides opportunities for physical training; hence the primary education can boast of the all round development of the child (National Policy on Education, Revised, 1981).

In Canada, elementary school lasts for five years in Saskatchewan, six years in eight provinces/territories, seven years in British Columbia and eight years in Ontario and Manitoba.

Iwuoma, B. C. (1992) stressed that class teachers are appointed to man the assigned class. This policy is also applicable in Canada. The school year in Canada and Nigeria is broken into three terms of equal duration. Terminal examinations are held to assess pupil performance and third term examination is used for promotion, in both Nigeria and Canada. Promotion examination in Nigeria and Canada are conducted internally from primary one to five; while the final primary school leaving certificate is conducted by state examination board in Nigeria and by provincial examination board in Canada. Successful candidates in the Common Entrance Examination are placed in the secondary school (Iwuoma, B. C. 1992).

Secondary Education in Nigeria and Canada

In Nigeria, primary education is followed by secondary school education. It is those who successfully completed their primary education and are successful in the Entrance Examination that get placement in the secondary schools, (Iwuoma, B. C., 1992). Secondary schools in Nigeria are public owned and privately owned by individuals. However, most of the secondary school are fee paying.

In Canada, secondary school education usually continues from the end of elementary education through the twelfth year, an exception is in Quebec where it ends at grade eleven, (CERIS - Information - Introduction to Canadian Education, 1998). Eight provinces or territories include a junior high school or middle school between elementary and secondary levels usually lasting for three years.

According to the National Policy on Education, in Nigeria Revised in 1981, children within the ages of thirteen and eighteen years attend secondary schools; it is however, not usual to find children between twenty to twenty -two years in secondary schools. Secondary education in Nigeria is sub-divided into two stages - junior secondary school (J. S. S.) and senior secondary school (S. S. S.). Each stage is of three years duration; it therefore takes six years to complete secondary school education.

In Ontario Canada, junior high school last for five years, while high school lasts for a duration of four years; it therefore takes nine years to complete secondary school education in Canada.

The junior secondary school curriculum in Nigeria is elaborate. It accommodates liberal art subjects, technical subjects and vocational subjects (Iwuoma, B. C. 1992). While in Canada beginning in September 1999, a rigorous junior high school curriculum, with strong emphasis on academic and vocational courses were introduced. Consistent standards and clear expectations about what is to be taught across the province are designed to ensure that all students receive the knowledge and skills they need (ACAATO Environmental Scan - 2001).

Junior secondary school students in Nigeria are encouraged to explore the practical aspect of life so as to gain practical experience while in the classroom. The junior secondary school subjects include the following: English language, two major Nigerian languages, and one local language (National Policy on Education Revised, 1981). History, literature in English, others are integrated science, technical drawing and introductory technology, wood work, shoe making and mending, agricultural science and business education.

Pupils in high junior school, in Canada offers the following subjects: English language, French and one minor language in the province. Mathematics, Arts and Craft, Music, Science, Geography, History, Physical Education and Swimming (Upper Canada College; Academic Programme, 2000).

The reason for this elaborate curriculum in both Nigeria and Canada is to enable pupils acquire skills which will make them capable of being self-employed if they are not able to go for further education. Terminal examination are held and the third term examinations is used for promotion exercise. The final examinations are centrally set by the various states as is the case in Nigeria and by various provinces in Canada. Successful candidates are awarded the junior school certificate in both Nigeria and Canada.

On successful completion of junior secondary school programme in Nigeria and junior high school in Canada, students are left with the alternatives to go for further education. Others go for senior secondary school programme, or technical college.

At the senior secondary level in Nigeria students study in details most of the things they were taught at the junior secondary school levels specialization is encouraged in the technical and vocational fields. The subjects taught include, English language, local language, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, religious education, history and literature in English, others include arts and crafts, vocational and technical subjects, geography, economics, business studies, etc. (National Policy on Education, 1981).

According to Upper Canada College, Academic Programme (2000), high school or upper curriculum places strong emphasis on English language, French, Spanish, or German. Other subjects offered are science, arts and crafts, music, geography, history, mathematics. All students have one period of swimming and one period of physical education in a week. Other subjects are computer science, biology, chemistry, chemical and physical systems, physics, environmental systems.

The school year in Canada starts from early September in Canada until mid-June, with breaks at Christmas and in middle of March. The school year is divided into three like in Nigeria. The terms are Autumn, winter, and spring. There is a long weekend in each of the terms.

In Canada, high school or Upper College, classes meet five days in a week starting after morning assembly at 8.30am. Class size average 18 students. Sports and club activities begin at 3.30pm and end at 5.30pm. Teachers are available to provide extra help and to supervise study halls during night studies and in the residences for boarders. So both Nigeria and Canada operate both boarding and day system of education at senior secondary school level.

Full reports of pupils' work and activities are sent to parents three times a year; marks are given for academic subjects. Test and examination are conducted in June. This policy is similar to the Nigerian education system where results of students' work is given to parents; continuous assessments are carried out and the final examination in June to July.

In Nigeria final examination is conducted by the West African Examination Council is conducted by the National Examination Council and candidates, either look for jobs or go for university education if they pass the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination. Some go to Colleges of Education or Polytechnics (Iwuoma, 1992). While in Canada, the International Baccalaureate is the principal graduating certificate awarded to a student. The college also award the

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Ontario secondary school diploma. The programme prepares students for their higher education with liberal curriculum. Its breadth responds clearly to the commitments of the college, while at the same time meeting, the requirement of the Ministry of Education and training for the common curriculum, (Upper Canada College: Academic Programme, 2000).

Academic counselling is an important component of the educational programme. Students are encouraged to draw on a variety of resources readily available to assist students in the decisionmaking for academic planning and course selection.

Instruction takes place through formal classes. Computer facilities are available for students' use in the computer centre, the library and the boarding house in Canada. The computer net work features include CD-ROM, on-line bibliographic services and Internet access.

Upper College has a long-standing emphasis on co-curricular activities and commitment to the growth of the whole person. These activities - a blend of arts, athletics and community service is broad enough to satisfy almost any interest.

Teacher Education in Nigeria and Canada

Teacher education in Nigeria has passed many stages to the present stage where the N. C. E. teachers are products of 3 - year N. C. E programme of Colleges of Education with good WASC, SSCE or G.C.E. 'O' level as entry qualification. N. C. E. programmes are based on combined two teaching subjects and one full-term teaching practice (Iwuoma, 1992).

These well qualified non-university N. C. E graduates are meant to teach in upper primary and lower secondary school according to the Ashby Commission Report. But their soundness resulted in their teaching (Nduka, 2000).

Some Colleges of Education offer four year Bachelor of Education degree for S. S. C. E. holders, 2 year and 3 year post N. C. E., Bachelor degree for good and weak N. C. E. holders respectively.

In Canada, there are two groups of teachers; teachers for primary schools and high schools. Teachers for primary have an educational background of primary and high school plus two years of training in a normal school. There are many normal schools in Canada which are recognized as efficient and their certificate of graduation are accepted throughout Canada by the Ministry of Education Ontario.

High school teachers must have a bachelor's degree in education from an education department of a college or university.

Courses offered in Colleges of Education and university for Bachelor's degree in Education in Canada are aimed at providing teachers with the opportunity to develop knowledge and competence.

Teacher education in both countries is similar, hence both spend the same years of training and acquire the same certificate before qualifying for teaching at both primary and secondary school levels.

Tertiary Education

In Canada, the field of study students choose to pursue at the post secondary school level affects both the demand for course and faculty and the supply for new graduates in different fields. Business management degree as well as degree in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences are the most popular fields of study, having constituted half or more of all degrees conferred since 1971.

Universities in Canada offer bachelor's degree programmes; one to three years, masters programme one to two years and a doctorate degree programme three years or longer. This system is similar to the Nigerian University system; where bachelors degree programmes last for between two to six years. In Nigeria and Canada degrees in Arts and Social Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, Pharmacy could take five to six years.

Admission into universities in Canada and Nigeria is either direct for those with Nigerian Certificate in Education or diploma, or by "Prelim" for the senior secondary school leavers; who must sit for and pass JAMB Examination. In Canada, the International Baccalaureate certificate qualifies one for admission in the university.

The curriculum in the university is very broad in Nigeria (Iwuoma, 1992), and Canada. It covers areas of human interests. The arts subjects include History, English language, and other

languages, Religious Education, Moral Education, Philosophy, Logic and Law, Social Sciences, Economics, Accounting, Business Education, etc. The Sciences are studied which include physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, pharmacy, engineering technology, computer science. In both countries; Nigeria and Canada research facilities are provided in the universities to encourage further studies, since the universities are expected to find solutions to problems confronting mankind on earth.

Administration of Education in Nigeria and Canada

In Nigeria responsibility for the administration and control of education is shared between the federal, state and local governments (Iwuoma, 1992). Unlike in Canada within the federal system responsibility for education rests with the ten provinces and three territories.

The federal government of Nigeria has the responsibility for general direction, policy supervision and control of the national educational development (Nduka, 2000). In Canada, each of the province and territories has developed its own educational structures and institutions. While they are similar in many ways, they reflect the circumstances of regions separated by great distance and the diversity of the country's historical and cultural heritage, (CERIS - Information - Introduction to Canada Education, 1998).

National Council on Education is the highest policy making body on education in Nigeria. It is made up of state ministers and state commissioners of education, with the former as the chairman. It co-ordinates and harmonizes policies and their execution, thereby protecting national and state interests in education (Iwuoma, 1992). In Canada, the council of ministers of education Canada (CMEC) was established in 1967 by the provincial ministers, with concurrence of their respective governments. Though C. M. E. C. affected in a broad range of activities at the elementary, secondary and post secondary levels; (CERIS - Information - Introduction to Canada Education, 2000).

In Nigeria, the Joint Consultative Committee on Education which is the highest professional advisory body on education, which comprised of chief professional officers of federal and state ministers of education and representatives of university institutes of education and professional associations, (Iwuoma, 1992). In Canada, council of ministers of education Canada, liaised with other federal departments such as statistics Canada, which provides data, analysis about all aspect of education, Human Resources, Development Canada (HRDC), conducts surveys, provides services and information and also does research in areas of literacy, lifelong learning and school-work transitions, Industry Canada (IC), offers services and links to Canadian schools and teachers through School-Net and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funds education research.

At the national level in Canada, there is no federal ministry of education but the council of ministers of education Canada, alongside with Canada Education Canada, Association of-Canadian Community Colleges and Association of universities and colleges of Canada jointly provide advisory services on educational matters.

Other levels of education co-ordinate and harmonizes policies at their levels. The National Primary Education Commission for Primary Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the federal government has responsibility for economic planning and human resources development; it is involved in such areas as learning and technologies, literacy, data collection, research and links between learning and employment. Other bodies co-ordinate and harmonize education in Canada.

The local government in Nigeria bears responsibilities for primary and adult education while the federal and states governments are in charge of secondary and tertiary education. While in Canada, province and territories delegate power to local school boards to handle education at local level or elementary level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comparative study of Nigeria and Canada's education curriculum has a lot of similarities like public and private ownership of school, in both countries, technical and vocational as well as arts subjects are emphasized. The school in these countries run a three term system and examination is conducted both internally and externally in the two countries.

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Despite the similarities, there are certain aspects of education in Canada if inco-operated into the Nigerian education, will go a long way in helping us. For instance, Nigeria should also have public owned nursery schools so that all children of five years should attend. Similarly, the number of children per teacher in Canada is 18 per teacher as against 40 students per teacher in Nigeria. Nigeria should adopt the 18 students' ratio for effective teaching and supervision.

Computer science should be introduced at the secondary school level and computer made available as it is in Canada. If this policy is inco-operated in our education system, our children will be well equipped right at the secondary school level.

Moreso, community services should be introduced at the secondary school as it is done in Canada.

On a final note, all teachers at the secondary school level should have a bachelor's degree in education as it is obtained in Canada. If all there are inco-operated, then we will gain a lot from the study, the education system of Canada.

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