

Abstract

The paper shows that the success of any education system depends not only on the nature of its aims, but also on its content. Indigenous African education grew out of the immediate environment, real or imaginary. From the physical environment, children had to learn about weather, landscape, animal and insect life. Children had to have knowledge of important aspects of the environment in order to adopt and exploit it. Most of the early Western scholars at the time of colonization, however, assumed that because Africans knew no reading and writing, they had no systems, contents and methods of education to pass on to the young. To such scholars, education in Africa meant Western civilization. The failure to integrate indigenous learning and Western education was partly a deliberate effort to eradicate African education. The introduction of Western institutions by some colonial agencies, especially the Christian missionaries was also calculated to undermine many aspects of African social structures and pave the way for their replacement. The Western assault on traditional knowledge also applied to the replacement of local languages with foreign languages. With achievement of independence for most African countries in the 1960s, little effort was devoted to considering whether the knowledge conveyed in the schools was of relevance for the young nations. The more urgent problems had to do with the expansion of education, with the building of new schools, with government take-over of private schools as well as doing away with racially-segregated schools. Consequently, curriculum reform to reflect the relevance of the African setting did not take place. Western curricula values continued to be reinforced after independence. The current forces of globalisation, which have strong elements of cultural imperialism and aim at the harmonization of attitudes, supposedly, with the emergence of a global culture and the domination in the use of foreign languages in primary schools in Africa provide little or no room for acquisition of African indigenous knowledge. To arrest the current situation, the paper proposes that it is best for Africa to look to herself for the development of her own curricula and modes of delivery through the examination of methods and techniques of indigenous African knowledge.