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## **CURRICULUM AS A KEY INSTRUMENT TO AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study brings out the challenges faced by countries in the African continent in making curriculum an instrument for reinforcing African renaissance and subsequent multidimensional development of the continent. Therefore, the general focus of this review is on some of these challenges faced, and possible concrete policy and practical strategies of using curriculum (curricula) to reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development.

**Methods:** The method employ to explore the objectives and questions of this paper is document analysis. . Question 1 examines the challenges faced by African countries in developing a curriculum (curricula) that will reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development; while question 2 examines the policies and practical strategies that can be put in place to make curriculum (curricula) a key reinforcement instrument to African Renaissance and subsequent development. The documents collected and analysed range within the following categories: 1. Official documents. 2. Research Studies and publications.

**Findings:** Given that curriculum (curricula) determine what knowledge, skills and competences will be develop in individuals for their integration into the society and their contribution in the development of the society, makes curriculum (curricula) a force to reckon with as far as African Renaissance and subsequent development are concerned. However the curriculum of most African countries has experience a number of setbacks such as; Influence of neo-colonialism on education, insufficient expertise, sociocultural inferiority complex, and politization of economic studies which does to give room for most African countries to experience real and solid development.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** The study recommends that to viruses there are anti-viruses and in this case are the following policies and strategies; Curriculum revolution, creation of a national and pan-African Curriculum boards, Cultural Revolution oriented in pan Africanism, Industrial and entrepreneurial oriented curriculum (economic oriented curriculum). If Africans could come together, develop and implement these policies and strategies, then African Renaissance will cease from being a popular slogan and will become a reality and African development (socio-cultural, political and economic) will be lived not head in form of promises in powerful unrealistic speeches.

**Keywords:** *Curriculum, African-Renaissance, Development, Challenges, Way-Forward*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been much talk in African circles on African renaissance and subsequent development. But a pertinent issue has been in practically making this African renaissance a reality that will lead to the development of the continent. There has been the change in the name of structures such as Organization of African Unity to African Union with a series of conferences and no significant change is experienced by the common African in the light of renaissance and development. The concept of “Renaissance” first of all in the views of Thompson (1995) refers to the period of arts, culture, style art, architecture, literature and other revival from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore it can be said that renaissance in any context just as the African context refers to revival for hope and prosperity. That is a positive vision for a peaceful, democratic, market and development oriented, attract trade and investment and eliminate capital flight. African renaissance is not a new notion but dates back to the 1940s with advocates such as Cheik Anta Diop and has become very prominent in recent times and project a new Africa in which its potentials will be harnessed by Africans to overcome the challenges and obstacles of achieving cultural, scientific and economic renewal or restoration ( Louw, 2000).

In order for Africa to experience this, there has to be at atmosphere of peace with absence of conflicts, positive self-esteem and concept for stability and economic prosperity. The key instrument to achieve this much talked peace and prosperity that has been given little attention over the years is the education through a renaissance oriented curriculum (study programs) in formal and non-formal sectors of education. That is why Stremlau (1999) calls for the African union to abandon the status of alliance of states and be transformed to a community of nations focused on advancing peace, unity and prosperity in the continent. Therefore, education through its curriculum can be said to be the only instrument that can enlighten politicians, diplomats and the common man on the street to reason in the direction of Africa and a community that needs revival for collective development.

Offorma (2014) refers to curriculum as a document which is planned or an instructional guide blue print used in the teaching and learning process to develop in a learner a desirable positive change in behaviour. From the African renaissance perspective we will state that curriculum should also involve the development of quality skills and competences to enhance physical, moral, spiritual, socio-cultural, political and economic positive change in the society. It also takes into consideration the characteristics of recipients, methods and procedures of instruction and evaluation not leaving out the goals and philosophy which in this case is African renaissance and development. Curriculum is the only roadmap to attaining whatever sociocultural, political, economic educational and developmental goals through the philosophy or concept of African renaissance. African countries individually and the continent as a whole has evolved and a number of conferences have been held but Africa is still lacking behind the other continents, that is why the call for African renaissance and development is becoming louder more than ever before. Therefore, this paper focuses on *“Curriculum as a key instrument to African renaissance and subsequent development: challenges and the way forward”*.

### 1.1. Purpose of the work

To discuss some of the Challenges faced by African countries in developing (curriculum) curricula that will reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development. And State

concrete policy and practical strategies of using curriculum (curricula) to reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development.

### **1.2. Research questions**

1. What are the challenges faced by African countries in developing a curriculum (curricula) that will reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development?
2. What policies and practical strategies can be put in place to make curriculum (curricula) a key reinforcement instrument to African renaissance and subsequent development?

## **2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Conceptual Framework**

African renaissance can be seen more enshrine in the advocacy of Steve Biko in the Apartheid era in South Africa. He funded a movement known as the Black Conscious Movement, which in his advocacy argued that colonialism emptied Blacks of their dignity. The remnants of colonialism to the black people were inferiority complex, and made the post-colonial or neo-colonial African a psychological or mental cripple (Biko, 2004). Therefore, African renaissance as an ideology is all about reawakening Africans by repairing the damage caused by the colonialists, by restoring the dignity, self-concept and esteem, and above all come out of the psychological dilemma so as to develop sociocultural, economically and politically.

According to Prince Edward Island (2003) a curriculum should be inclusive and designed to enable every learner to attain his or her full potentials by providing them with a number of constructive learning experiences, and offers equal learning opportunities to all the learners. Furthermore, Offorma (2015) holds that program cannot be separated from curriculum, she sees curriculum as a program of study, activities and guidance. This is visible as subjects, content and a knowledge guide, which include all the learning activities that characterize learning experiences. Curriculum is an instrument of human development that has the possibility of building every human to a useful being. Curriculum is so dynamic that no learner, child or citizen is left out its reach. Therefore, is a good instrument or weapon is creating awareness on African renaissance and instilling skills in Africans for subsequent development.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The Marxist theory is one of the key theories used in education to project the role of curriculum or nature of education as the engine of social formation, which has its roots in economic, political and socio-cultural determinants. This fall in line with Parsonian functionalism which holds that education through curriculum is an instrument that does not only reproduce but also maintain the existing social, economic and political order (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This shows us that if the curriculum does not give room for creativity, innovation and invention the society will experience retardation or very slow growth rate. This is where Africa is today, still at the level of reproduction. That is why Apple (1982) feels that the philosophy of reproducing a society is to maintain the socio-cultural, political and economic order of maintaining the dominant over the subordinates, which he assumes as not functional, social and antagonistic social (cultural, economic and political) order.

Therefore, one of the key instruments for African Renaissance activist, advocates, politicians and educators to use for change and development to the African continent, by curbing the western dominated system is a pan-African curriculum (curricula) that pushes for cultural enrichment, equal social and educational opportunities, political honesty and patriotism, and solid economic development.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The method employ to explore the objectives and questions of this paper is document analysis. . Question 1 examines the challenges faced by African countries in developing a curriculum (curricula) that will reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development; while question 2 examines the policies and practical strategies that can be put in place to make curriculum (curricula) a key reinforcement instrument to African Renaissance and subsequent development. The documents collected and analysed range within the following categories: 1. Official documents. 2. Research Studies and publications.

### **4.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1. Challenges faced by African countries in developing curricula that will reinforce African renaissance and subsequent development.**

##### **4.1.1. Influence of neo-colonialism on education**

Anwaruddin (2014) holds that neo-colonialism is a form of domination established with the coming of “decolonization” after the Second World War. This came from the fact that most of the colonies were not properly prepared for independence and subsequent self-governance, and the colonial powers maintained their grip on the just independent countries by offering “help” which was thought by the former colonies as a gate way towards “development. This made the newly independent countries especially on the African continent dependent not independent in almost every aspect of national life especially education which is the engine of development. The nature and quality of education is determined by the curriculum and since the curriculum of most African countries were design by their colonial powers, it was meant to maintain control rather than bring development. Therefore, the colonizers simply gave the countries new names, flags and anthem but all other aspects were under their control (Warf, 2006).

Most African countries continued the colonial system of education by using their curriculum. Diang (2013) takes the example of Cameroon which is more willing to accept the education or curriculum of the colonialist, Britain and France than creating something indigenous. Diang (2013) in Kanu (2006) makes it very clear that the curriculum of most African countries is based on the human capital theory. This theory holds that for the time spent on education, productivity and earnings of the individual increases. Therefore, the neo-colonialist have oriented most African curricula to focus on the individual and forget collective development. In this light, the focus is put on individual achievement rather than communal achievement. That explains the reasons of high levels of embezzlements and corruption in most African countries, which are factors of stagnation or under development.



#### **4.1.2. Insufficient expertise**

Stenhouse (2005) holds that a curriculum requires critical testing, that is it should come from the base rather than just being accepted by the base or the masses. Furthermore, Ahmadi (2015) see curriculum as a medium for translating educational ideas or philosophies in to a testable hypothesis. This means that there is a lot of expertise that is needed in developing, implementing and evaluating curriculum. However in most African countries most of the curriculum are designed and implemented with European experts or international organizations such as UNESCO which are still seen by most pan Africanist as neo-colonial institution (Anwaruddin, in press). And at the end of the day the curriculum does not meet up the individual and communal expectations as required, due to inadequacy of the programs to local realities. This is because most African countries have not invested in the development of curriculum specialist, and some countries have but do not use them due to the generality of public service.

In Cameroon the ministry of secondary education in 2013 introduced a new curriculum for teacher training colleges (Decision N°. 495/B/ MINESEC/ CAB /30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2013) without the curriculum being experimented and evaluated before implementation. The teachers and the student teachers were surprised because they never knew when consultations were made and the criterion used to select participants for the curriculum development process. The curriculum process did not from observation respect the norms of curriculum development, implementation and evaluation. And the absence of expertise could clearly be seen from the structure and the realities. There were no concrete consultations even with the ministry of basic education that will make use of the products in the future. This is due to insufficient experts or the neglect of experts in the curriculum process by the commission.

In Akemche (2014) we discovery that consultations by most African countries on curriculum expertise, development, implementation, and evaluation are done and influenced by organizations such as CONFEMEN (conference des ministers de l'education de Etates et Governments membre de la Francophonie), PASEC (program d'analysis de system educative de CONFEMEN), Commonwealth of Nations and many others which are considered by some Africans as neo-colonial institutions. Going by these assumptions, these institutions and the expertise ensure that the curriculum of these countries guaranty high rates of literacy but low level of skilled education. Above all, ensure that the curriculum favours neo-colonialism, which will always make African countries to run to them for expertise.

#### **4.1.3. Sociocultural inferiority complex**

Adler (1983) sees culture as a way the mind is conditioned to make differences between members of different human groups or races and how they respond to their environment. Africa is associated with the black race and if there is anything the Caucasians have succeeded in doing, is enshrining in the black man through the school curriculum or education program their superiority, thereby establishing the inferiority nature of the black man to the black man. According to Ugbam et al. (2014) culture is considered important due to the fact that it defines a peoples' identity and furthermore, Ademeji (2006) in Ugbam et al. (2014) declare that removing a person from his/her culture is denying that person an identity. That is what has become of the curriculum of most African countries. Since they are inspired, conceived, implemented and finance under the supervision of the European countries or bodies (neo-colonialists). Most Africans have been acculturated thereby denying them an

identity and making them inferior before other races. These explain why most African languages, dressing, food, music and dances are giving way to that from the west and today Asia.

Oelofen (2015) examining the works of anti-colonial writers like Fanon, Memmi, Freire and Pyke who stated that colonialism and the oppression Africans lead to a mentality known as '*colonized mentality*' which is an expression of inferiority, because it builds the desire to want to become like the colonizer. Africans see everything African as inferior to that of the former colonizers or neo-colonialist. They have succeeded in acculturating the neocolonized to internalize their culture and since it is not the culture of the neocolonized they experience loss of self-concept and esteem. The main instruments the neo-colonialists are using to maintain this statusquo which is an obstacle to African renaissance and development are school programs. Through these school programs the Africans from one generation to another are made to understand that anything African is inferior and Africa can only develop if they follow the ways of the Europeans. And this is being done forgetting that Africans are following rather than creating, that is why the Europeans are always ahead.

#### **4.1.4. Politization of economic studies**

Boräng et al. (2014) in (Stone, 2012) sees politicians as bureaucrats who are at the centre of knowledge production, by determining the policy of knowledge accuracy and coverage. However, it has been observe that most of these policies which lead to the development of economic studies curriculum or program from the primary to the university levels are not meant to provoke economic development of the community or the nation, but to serve their interest of remaining in power. This is done by making the graduates dependent on the politician or the state, so that they can remain under the grip of the political class. That is why Jerven (2013) describe governments in developing countries as still having high level of statistical literacy called infancy. Their focus is on statistics to the extent that these statistics are manipulated just to win the minds of local and international community. That is why the economic curriculum or program are not creativity, innovation or invention oriented, rather it is reproductive oriented which cannot enhance African renaissance from economic perspective nor subsequent economic development.

## **4.2. Way forward**

### **4.2.1. Curriculum revolution**

African renaissance was meant to be a revolution that will state from awareness to concrete socio-cultural, political and economic development of Africa. Curriculum revolution stands for spontaneous and efficient measures to be taken and effectively implemented to render the curriculum more effective, by reinforcing it with more active activities and functions to the individual and society by engaging children and adults so as to lead to societal sustainability and development (Smith, 1976). If African countries and the continent want a general rebirth or reawakening that will lead to a solid and rapid development of Africa, the instrument to use is education and the engine of the educational system which is the curriculum or school programs. When African countries will take into consideration the contextual realities and conceive, design, plan, implement curricula with awakening and internal development orientation, and do constant evaluation and amelioration of these curricula to ensure that it meets the needs of the time, then Africa will experience renaissance and development.

#### **4.2.2. The creation of a national and pan African Curriculum board**

A curriculum board is a structure with diverse specialists and personalities which has five main functions which are; need assessment, planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of school programs and courses (UNESCO, 2017). Since a curriculum determine the orientation of the society, if the African continent really wants to experience renaissance and concrete development by Africans themselves the African Union (AU) from its education commission create a pan African curriculum board. This board will be charge to develop a curriculum frame work after consultations and working sessions with local, national and sub-regional curriculum boards. Such a board will decolonize and eradicate the influence of neo-colonial structure of education which is seen as meant to always make Africa dependent.

Africa can only become strong through education and the curriculum board is an inevitable structure for the African continent if they really want to experience renaissance and gross roots based development. It is a forum where African countries examine and share educational experiences and pave the way forward for a new Africa. This is in conformity with Storen (1952) who states that the best way of achieving public interest and ultimate objective, is through schools. And this can only be done by continuously developing the school programs. Therefore, if Africa wants to achieve African renaissance and true development, there has to be a forum through which their school programs will be conceived, planned, implemented, monitored, evaluated and constantly revised. This forum should be the Pan-African Curriculum Board, which has to involve Africans all professional, social, cultural, economic and political classes.

#### **4.2.3. Cultural Revolution oriented in pan Africanism**

Cultural Revolution has to do with spontaneous and efficient measures to be taken and effectively implemented to render the culture more effective, by reinforcing it with more active activities and functions to the individual and society by engaging children and adults so as to lead to societal sustainability and development (Smith, 1976). Jacobs (2002) makes us to understand that knowledge is a key element in cultural development or social construction. Therefore, individuals and groups of humanity are always in continues process of constructing and reinventing their comprehension of each other and their environment. Africans need to develop knowledge of their surroundings and how to make it better through a sound curriculum which is rooted in the African culture but open to the world, and not always look up to the West who will acculturate them and make them develop inferiority complex which is an obstacle to social, cultural, economic and political development of Africa.

The philosopher of 'Africa by Africans for the world' can only be developed through curriculum or school programs. With which Africans will be doctrine and trained how to develop and export their cultures and values and not the other way round. This will bring back the self-esteems and concept of Africans. Africans will put Africa first and will work together to develop and valorise African peoples and their cultures to the world. Africa will be able to use its own languages in the study of sciences and arts, and will develop its technology through innovation, inventions and discovery. A cultural revolution will give room to all African children to develop their potentials to its fullness due to the existence of



solidarity which will bring peace and unity, and also because they will experience liberty and freedom in all its ramifications.

#### **4.2.4. Industrial and entrepreneurial oriented curriculum (economic oriented curriculum)**

Industrial oriented school programs develop competences in problem solving, communication, quality management, commitment, risk taking, innovation and inventions, and human resource management skills. This results in the production of multi-skilled engineers, architects, technologists and managers. Therefore, a curriculum should be developed in this line to give the learners all the required knowledge, skills and competences to realize the economic renaissance and development of their respective communities and countries (Prince Edward Island, 2003). Without industrialization and technology Africa cannot develop at the desired rate. Therefore, the African renaissance and development curricula has to prioritized practical and solid industrial and entrepreneurship education, in order to experience economic independence and unconditional development.

The youths of Africa a vibrant segment of the continent that if properly invested in through education, the awakening and economic development of Africa will be a reality. Africa will move from a consumer or reproductive economy to a creative and productive economy. According to Parthasarathy (2005) entrepreneurship though not often associated with education has to do with the abilities of identifying a potential opportunity either business or career and using knowledge, skills and motivation to develop and realized these opportunities. It is only through the formal and non-formal curricula or programs that a child or a citizen can be guided on the development of the knowledge, skills and given the motivation require realizing potential opportunities. Competition is one of the skills require to succeed in entrepreneurship. Therefore if African countries inculcate in their learners at all level of education concrete entrepreneurial skills then, at the end of the day African renaissance and development will become automatic.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Given that curriculum (curricula) determine what knowledge, skills and competences will be develop in individuals for their integration into the society and their contribution in the development of the society, makes curriculum (curricula) a force to reckon with as far as African Renaissance and subsequent development are concerned. However the curriculum of most African countries has experience a number of setbacks such as; Influence of neo-colonialism on education, insufficient expertise, sociocultural inferiority complex, and politization of economic studies which does to give room for most African countries to experience real and solid development.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The study recommends that to viruses there are anti-viruses and in this case are the following policies and strategies; Curriculum revolution, creation of a national and pan-African Curriculum boards, Cultural Revolution oriented in pan Africanism, Industrial and entrepreneurial oriented curriculum (economic oriented curriculum). If Africans could come together, develop and implement these policies and strategies, then African Renaissance will

cease from being a popular slogan and will become a reality and African development (socio-cultural, political and economic) will be lived not head in form of promises in powerful unrealistic speeches.

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