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**EDUCATION MONOGRAPH NO. 8**

**TRENDS AND ISSUES IN AFRICAN EDUCATION**

**Focus on:**

- **Culture and Environment in the  
School Curriculum**
- **The Demand of the Curriculum  
and What the Schools Practise**

## FOREWORD

This is the eighth volume of the **Education Monograph: Trends and Issues in African Education series**. The contribution in this volume are a collection of selected papers by Directors of curriculum centres/institutions and curriculum developers and specialists from the countries reported upon. All the contributors (acknowledged in Annex I of this Monograph) participated in the seminar/workshop held in Nazareth, Ethiopia in November 1989, organized by the African Curriculum Organization and the Ministry of Education, Ethiopia in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and under the sponsorships of the German Foundation for International Development. The theme of the seminar/workshop was "Culture and Environment in Primary Education: The Demands of the Curriculum and What the Schools Practise".

In general, the papers attempt to explain the meaning of culture and environment as applied to curriculum development in the schools, and how the objectives of culture and environment are translated into school activities. They also give an account of how the content of culture and environment are determined and given due focus and emphasis in the school curriculum; and how such content is translated into school activities using appropriate teaching methods.

In particular, Chapter I of the Monograph gives an overview of the culture content in curriculum and the role played by culture and environment in general education in many countries in Africa through the teaching of language, mathematics, art, craft, music, dance and drama; and how the use of environment in teaching enriches learning by pupils/students. Chapter 2 takes the issue of education for cultural and ecological survival from an African perspective, more so in view of what has been happening to the environment presently and the many debates and conferences which have recently taken place worldwide regarding the destruction to the environment.

The remaining chapters examine, in varying degrees and details, the concepts of culture and environment in the school curriculum; the rationale for their inclusion in the curriculum; the objectives pursued by various countries and how culture and environment influence the school curriculum; the sources of implementing cultural and environmental curricula; and failures associated with effective implementation of environmental and cultural activities; and have attempt to identify passages or chapters in the pupils textbooks which stress, incorporate or treat cultural and environmental aspects in an exemplary manner. In particular, the papers, more so Chapter 6, have shown how the mother tongue as well as the official languages of English or French, art and crafts, home science, music and drama have been used to inculcate the values of culture in the young.

These papers have been carefully prepared by experts who know and understand the African education systems, work in the system, and are by and large products of the systems. At a time when so much is being talked about the destruction to the environment, and the need to preserve African cultures and traditions, the collection of these papers in this volume is a welcome contribution to knowledge in the fields of culture and environment. It is hoped that this collection of papers by African scholars will prove useful to all those with an interest in curriculum development, culture and environmental education, and for readers who seek an insight into what is taught in African schools about culture and environment.

Copies of this Monograph can be obtained free from:

The Chief  
Public Administration, Human Resources  
and Social Development Division  
Economic Commission for Africa  
P.O. Box 3001  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b>	(i)
<b>CHAPTER 1: Culture and Environment in the School Curriculum: An Overview</b>	
I. Introduction	1
II. Culture Content in Curriculum	2
III. Trends in Practice	5
(a) Language	6
(b) Mathematics	9
(c) Arts, Crafts, Music and Drama	9
(d) Environmental and Agricultural Science	10
(e) Environmental Education	10
IV. Conclusion: Balance in Curriculum	13
<b>CHAPTER 2: Education for Cultural and Ecological Survival: African Perspectives in Primary Education</b>	15
I. Introduction - Slogans all the Way	17
II. African Perspectives in Primary Education	18
III. Africa and Cultural Survival	21
IV. Africa and Ecological Survival	23
V. Establishing a Confident Identity	26
VI. The Dynamic Nature of the Curriculum	28
VII. Conclusion	29

	<u>Page</u>
<b>CHAPTER 3: Culture and Environment in Primary Schools in Tanzania: The Demands of the Curriculum and What Schools Practise</b>	<b>31</b>
I. Introduction	33
II. Culture and Environment Defined	33
III. Curriculum Implications	35
IV. The Curriculum	36
V. Culture and Environment in Practice	37
VI. Deliberate Attempts	38
VII. The Community School Curriculum	39
VIII. Curriculum Implementation	41
IX. Success and Failures	42
(a) Success of Implementating Cultural and Environmental Curricula	43
(b) Failure to Implement Cultural and and Environmental Curricula	44
X. Culture and Environment, Curriculum and School Practice: Proper Approach	46
XI. The Environmental Approach	47
XII. The Future of Culture and Environment in School Curricula	48

	<u>Page</u>
<b>CHAPTER 4: The Role of Culture and Environment in Curriculum Development</b>	<b>51</b>
I. Introduction	53
II. Rationale	53
III. Specific Objectives	55
IV. How Culture and Environment Influence the School Curriculum	56
V. Culture and Environment Related Content in the School Curriculum: The Case of Malawi	57
(a) Art and Craft	57
(b) Chichewa	57
(c) English	58
(d) Music	59
(e) Home Economics	59
(f) Physical Education	59
(g) Social Studies	59
VI. Current Teaching and Learning Activities	60
VII. Critique of Current Practice in Schools	61
VIII. Suggested Programme of Cultural and Environmental Activities	62
IX. Organization	64
X. How the Programme can help the Teaching of Culture and Environment Related Content	65
XI. Conclusion	66

	<u>Page</u>
<b>CHAPTER 5: The Role of Culture and Environment in the Primary Curriculum in Sierra Leone</b>	<b>69</b>
I. Introduction	71
II. Rationale	71
III. Specific Objectives	72
(a) Environmental Studies	73
(b) Social Studies	73
(c) Science	74
(d) Creative Practical Arts	74
(e) Prevocational Studies	75
(f) Physical/Health Education	75
(g) Language	75
IV. Culture and Environment Content	76
(a) Environmental Studies	76
(b) Social Studies	76
(c) Science	76
(d) Creative Practical Arts	76
(e) Prevocational Studies	77
(f) Physical/Health Education	77
(g) Language	77
V. Content Teaching - Learning Strategies	77
VI. Critique of Current Practice	83
VII. Suggested Programme of Cultural and Environmental Activities	86
VIII. Conclusion	86

	<u>Page</u>
<b>CHAPTER 6: Culture and Environment for Primary Education in Kenya</b>	<b>89</b>
I. Introduction	91
II. The State of Culture and Environmental Education in Primary Schools	92 92
III. Content	95
IV. Teaching and Learning Strategies	98
V. School Activities in Conformity with Curriculum Demands	99
VI. Critique of Current Practice	100
VII. Suggested Programme of Cultural and Environmental Activities	100
VIII. Conclusion	100
<b>CHAPTER 7: Culture and Environment in Curriculum Development: The Case of Ethiopia</b>	<b>101</b>
I. Rationale	103
II. Specific Objectives	104
III. Culture and Environment Content	109
IV. Teaching Learning Strategies	110
V. Critique of Current Practice	111
VI. Suggested Programme of Cultural and Environmental Activities	113

	<u>Page</u>
<b>CHAPTER 8: Culture and Environment in Curriculum</b>	
<b>Development: What the Schools Practise in The Gambia</b>	115
I. Introduction	117
II. Critical Areas of the Natural Environment	118
III. Primary School Curriculum	120
IV. The Education Policy of 1988-2003	122
V. Summaries and Recommendations	124
<b>ANNEX I</b>	
<b>ANNEX II</b>	

**CHAPTER ONE**

**CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW**

## CHAPTER ONE

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### CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

That magic word "**curriculum**" has often been accused for many of the ills one comes across in society. When pupils and students have little respect for elders, it is because the schools did not give them proper grounding in the culture of their society. Drug abuse is sometimes attributed to lack of proper/good education; and then lack of required skills for national development is due to schools pursuing irrelevant curriculum.

With these charges, it becomes necessary to define curriculum and why culture and environment are so important to be included in this magic creature. Indeed, there have been so many definitions advanced in respect of curriculum, and one can only cite but a few. Curriculum may be defined as:

- "That body of value-goal-oriented learning content, existing as a written document or in the minds of teachers, that when energized by instruction results in change in pupil behaviour"
- "planned set of human encounters thought to maximize learning" or as
- "all of the experiences that learners have under the auspices or direction of the school"<sup>1/</sup>

From these definitions, curriculum may be discerned as consisting primarily of two elements viz:

- (i) content which is characterized by facts, descriptive and evaluative concepts, principles, norms and rules; and

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<sup>1/</sup> George A. Beauchamp - Curriculum Theory The Kagg Press, Wilmette, Illinois 1975 p. 105

- (ii) categories of instruction organized under symbolic studies, basic sciences, development and aesthetic studies, and molar problems.<sup>1/</sup>

These two categories or elements of the curriculum tend to highlight the crucial role played by culture and environment in schools curricular and their relationship is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1. Since two words have been introduced in this discussion, culture and environment, it is important to have their meanings made clear to avoid any confusion.

Culture may be defined as a complex whole, a way of life of a people, which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs etc. It consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, works of art, techniques, rituals, habits culture and environment to help mould the character, traits, personality, national outlook, ethical values, attitudes and the overall socio-cultural and socio-economic development of an individual. It is no wonder therefore, that culture and environment are consciously and effectively included in the schools curricula of countries around the world.

Man cannot live outside the context of his environment nor even of his culture. The environment influences and affects his activities; culture helps to mould him into a complete person, and the two have their demands on his way of life. In fact, socialization in culture and environment starts from very tender ages of children. It is therefore necessary to examine the two elements (culture and environment) and the role they play in general education.

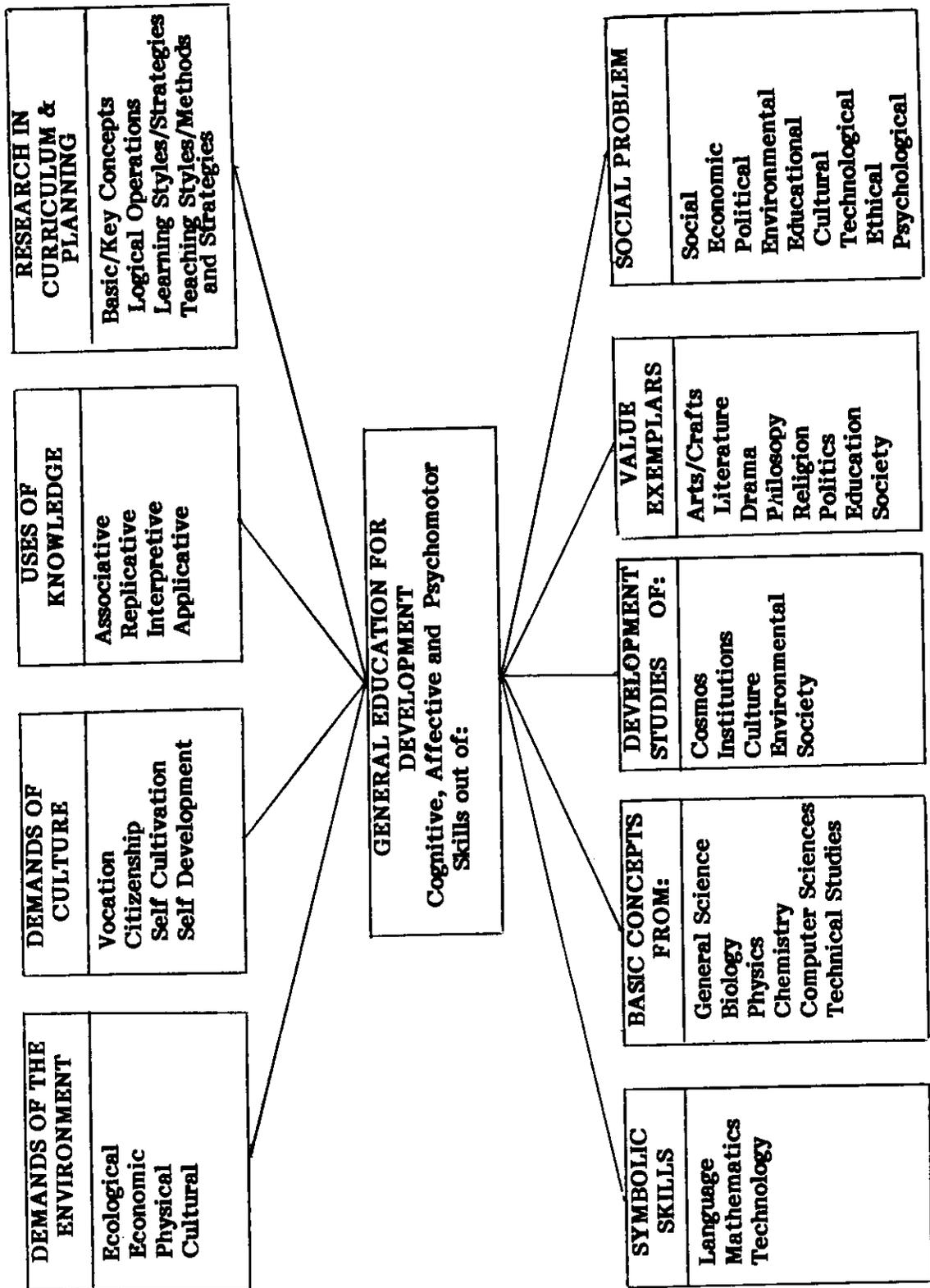
## II. CULTURE CONTENT IN A CURRICULUM

There have been arguments that curriculum should consist of statement of school objectives or intended learning outcomes of learners. Others have argued that curriculum should be a selection of cultural content which would assist learners in the attainment of learning objectives. Whatever the arguments, culture content may be thought of as the systematic organization of what we have come to know as the disciplines particularly those disciplines wherein certain knowledge is prerequisite to the attainment of other knowledge. Indeed in many systems of education, certain disciplines or subjects lend themselves heavily to the inclusion of various aspects of culture and environment in the curriculum. These subjects include, among others, social studies, civics, general science, creative arts, crafts, pre-vocational studies, languages, drama, environmental studies, literature etc. For most parts these subjects draw their content and materials from the immediate environment.

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<sup>1/</sup> Harry S. Brocody, Othanel Smith & Joe R. Burnett - Democracy and Excellence in American Secondary Education, Raw McNally & Company, Chicago 1964, p. 83

FIGURE 1: THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION



One comes across the types of curriculum which have often acquired their names from their design characteristics i.e. such names as separate subject curriculum; the correlated curriculum; the broad fields curriculum; the activity curriculum; the problems of living curriculum; the persistent life situations curriculum; the core; the experience; and the emergent curricula. From all these curriculum designs, one can see the need for integration of culture and environment providing a more meaningful learning experience in the various school subjects.

In short, it should be pointed out that culture and environment play a major role in education at all levels of the system, more so at the primary level of the system. This role is demonstrated in Figure 1 which shows that both culture and environment impose certain demands on an educational system in respect of content, instructional materials and learning experiences.

Culture imposes certain demands on education e.g. the need for vocationalization of education so that the outputs of the educational system are equipped with some basic knowledge and skills for a productive and meaningful life; the need to acquire citizenship skills and knowledge; and the need and requirement for self-cultivation and self-development and socialization. Education is incomplete if the demands of culture are not effectively satisfied; nor can one be considered properly educated if the education received alienates one from one's culture and society. In this regard, therefore, general education for developing cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills draws heavily from learners' participation in development studies of the cosmos, culture and cultural institutions, environment and society; from the study of symbolic skills of language, mathematics and technology; and from value exemplars in the study of arts and crafts, literature (written and oral traditions) drama, philosophy, religion, politics, education and society itself.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that cultures of different societies form part of the common heritage of mankind so that when reference is made of the African culture it is an acknowledgement of the contribution made by culture to the common heritage of mankind. In practical terms, the culture of a people, be it in Africa or elsewhere is often expressed through a number of activities such as songs, dance, dress, eating habits, sculptural works, arts, crafts, mannerisms, marriage ceremonies, rituals, customs etc. All these have formed an essential part of traditional, informal and formal education.

On the other hand, there are the demands of the environment, and no education is complete without taking these into account, particularly in providing a meaningful learning experience. In primary schools, for instance, environmental topics should be introduced in a context of general education, as part of the general cultural activities to complement basic activities relating to the study of language particularly the mother tongue, mathematics, and physical and creative expression. It has to be emphasized here that the provision of such education

is inseparable from certain methods and skills which may be developed by the pupils in exploring their living environment. In fact basic environmental concepts can be acquired at the same time as the rudiments of physics, biology and human sciences on which they are based. In addition, a study of the environment should appeal to the pupils sensory faculties (e.g. perception of space, shapes, distance and colours), and should involve visits in the neighbourhood and of playing the local games. More important is the study of the child's immediate environment, i.e. the home, the school, area or district, all of which provide a rich learning experience.

At the secondary school level, a number of environmental and ecological topics are often included in the curriculum in the teaching of such subjects as social studies, general science, biology, physics, geography, covering such topics as weather, climate plants, soils, transport, population, safety, food and hygiene, pollution, natural resources, lakes and rivers etc.

Because of the importance of culture and environment in man's life, many of the subjects in which the elements of culture and environment play a vital role, students are given a thorough knowledge of the functioning of ecosystems and the socio-economic factors governing the relations between man and the environment in the context of national development. In this context, environmental education issues are treated more seriously at third level education; where studies include various measures which can be taken to avoid damage to the environment; better management of renewable resources, recycling, long-term planning, choice of attractive techniques, supervision of the environment, and preventive measures to the environment's destruction.

### **III. TRENDS IN PRACTICE**

Almost invariably, all curricula in Africa embrace culture and environment in practice. The two are vividly present in the syllabi, pupils textbooks and teacher's guides at the various levels of the educational system. The rationale for doing so is that primary schools in Africa are very much part of informal sector in which the pupils form part of the community which in turn established the school as its social institution. As such, the school is both part and an instrument of the primary socialization which takes place within a given environment; and pupils are greatly influenced by the values, norms and knowledge often pertaining outside the school. At the same time, primary schools constitute part of the larger super-system (society) propagating the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge needed for national development, especially in the fields of science and technology. Schools at both primary and secondary levels as social institutions are assigned the dual task of preserving the cultural traditions of society while also preparing the young for a changing role in society by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes without giving up their identity or destroying the environment. How this is done, constitutes the analysis of this section.

(a) Language

Whether it is through oral traditions, written language or literature, language is the medium of communication in the home or at school. Man has always expressed his thoughts, ideas, feelings etc. through language.

In schools, the question has often been raised about the language of instruction. There have been arguments about the use of mother tongue or imported official languages particularly English, French and Portuguese. These arguments stem from the fact that the language of instruction cannot be separated from the problem of culture and environment in the teaching of various subjects in primary schools. In blending a triple heritage (African traditions; Western traditions values and technology; and Religion; i.e. Christianity, Islam and African Religions), language has been a major force in this blend.

The mother tongue has been highly recommended for use at the lower end of primary education for instilling cultural values in the young; for propagating those aspects of culture which must be passed on from one generation to another. Yet the mother tongue has shown to have serious limitations on education in many African countries - e.g. lack of textbooks, written materials and instructional materials and media in the mother tongue have constituted a serious handicap in using it as a medium of instruction. Indeed there is very little empirical evidence to demonstrate the impact of the mother tongue and the consequences that emanate from its teaching because it tends to become less useful at national level.

The usefulness of the mother tongue at the national level has been overtaken by the adoption in some African countries of a national language which has in practical terms reduced the other languages to the level of dialects. Take the case of Tanzania, which adopted Swahili as a national language for use in schools as a medium of instruction and in government and in business, the other languages and dialects (over one hundred and twenty in number) were relegated to home and village use only; and hardly any written literature (perhaps a part from the Testament and other religious books) exists in languages such as Kichagga, Kinyamwezi, Kihaya, Kinyakyusa, Kisukuma and Kizaramo. The same could be said of Ethiopia with Amharic as the national language taught in schools and used as medium of instruction and for communication in government and business. In these two countries, the national language is both an examination subject taught in schools and a medium of instruction.

In Malawi, whereas Chichewa is a national language, English is the official language used as a medium of instruction at all levels of the educational system and in government and business. All other languages such as Yao, Tumbuka, Konde, Chimang'anja, Sukwa, Tonga etc. are used in the home, local business and for religious services.

Cameroon on the other hand has a number of languages such as Douala, Fulbe, Hausa, Ewonds, Bali, Nso etc. none of which has been elevated to the status of a national language; nor any of them being taught in schools. Instead, the country has two official languages, French and English, none of which is indigenous to Cameroon. The two foreign languages are used for the propagation of Cameroonian culture and for educational activities.

Nigeria, with languages totalling a few hundreds, uses English as the official language of communication, while a number of indigenous languages are taught in schools such as Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Fulani etc. Zambia also with a number of languages, has no less than five of them (Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lodzi, Lunda, Lubale and Kabonde) taught in school, although English is the official language of communication and the medium of instruction.

Yet in all these countries and many more, language is used as the yeast in the loaf of political unity, the preservative in the perpetuation of several cultures within one nation; and the binding force in unifying the various African cultures of a nation in the curriculum. It is through language that primary school pupils share experiences through folk tales, riddles and stories; that pupils express themselves through music, dance and drama; and through language, oral traditions, arts and crafts etc the environment are preserved.

It is no wonder, therefore, that almost all primary school textbooks in Africa draw heavily on culture and environment by way of content of what is taught in the schools. Textbooks cover what is done in the home, at the farm, school, market, village or within a given community.

In Kenya, for instance, the primary school textbooks entitled "Practical Primary English" cover such topics as:

- At home; Friends.
- To-day and Yesterday
- Good News from the Village
- Age-Sets and
- A Cure for A Killer"<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Kenya: Practical Primary English, Pupils Book 2 & 7 Longman

In Cameroon, the pupils primary textbooks cover such topics as:

- An Evening at the Fireside
- The Drums of Africa
- The Ramadam Festival
- The Craftsmen of My Village
- The Fight<sup>1/</sup>

All these are examples of culture and environment playing their part in the primary school curriculum through language. Other subjects have aspects of culture and environment. After all, what would education be without producing a complete man? As was aptly put by a Nigerian:

"Education aims at producing a person who has been able to develop all his talents and who is therefore able to live in society i.e. a person who has been exposed to a good blend of all the literacies (literacy, cultural, humanistic, scientific, mathematical, technical etc.) so that he can grow up knowing i.e. attaining a sufficient and an appropriate level of knowledge of the disciplines; doing i.e. applying his knowledge to solving personal and societal problems; and behaving i.e. acquiring that type of attitude which enables him to interact meaningfully and purposefully with the fellow men for the overall benefit and improvement of society.<sup>2/</sup>

This is the philosophy within which African education systems have had culture and environment included in the curriculum. Only when education makes you grow knowing, doing and behaving will it have succeeded as an instrument of national development.

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<sup>1/</sup> Cameroon - Pupil's Book for Grade 2 and Final Year - Ha:ier

<sup>2/</sup> P.A.I. Obanya (ed.) Education and the Nigerian Society, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan 1981 p.1.

**(b) Mathematics**

Mathematics extends from kindergarten through secondary schools to the university. It permeates through a person's life from infancy to old age and for this reason it should be accorded the most detailed treatment in the curriculum. Whether from the point of view of traditional, modern, adult or continuing education, mathematics is one field which is always present. In the home, the sharing of food among children is a mathematical exercise albeit in crude form; the purchase of things at the local market involves mathematics; and hardly anything is done in the village without getting involved in some aspects of mathematics. Yet mathematics is included in African curricula as if it were something new and alien. This may help to explain a recurring problem of whether we should encourage the verbalization of mathematical concepts when the students first understand their relevance.

For instance, pupils will have been buying fruits and vegetables from local markets according to the sizes or heap of the fruit or vegetables. And yet when children are introduced to the concept of weights and measures in pounds or kilograms there is little reference made to the mathematical concepts already known by the children i.e. of heaps and sizes. A bigger orange, mango, banana or water melon, costs more because, in terms of weights and measures, it is heavier than the small one. But the concepts are taught as if they were completely new and hence the reason for verbalization.

In mathematics, pupils are taught a number of things often of direct relevance and applicability to daily life. Topics on additions, subtractions, multiplication and division, fractions, length and distance, to name a few, are typical examples of mathematical issues often encountered in the home, village or school. Indeed the learning of mathematics can be made more interesting if it draws heavily on the pupils' environment. Yet experience has shown that if there is a subject in African schools which is badly taught, it is mathematics. Pupils detest it because it is too hard to comprehend. Teachers deplore it because pupils are no good in mathematics. The fault may be due to the choice of topics which may be unrelated to our culture and environment. There is need to realign the teaching of mathematics with what pertains in our culture and environment. The mere inclusion of many topics to be taught is no solution to the problem.

**(c) Arts, Crafts, Music and Drama**

In the definition of culture at the beginning of this paper, it was pointed out that culture consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, tools, institutions, works of arts, music, rituals, habits etc. Therefore arising from this definition, it should be emphasized that works of art, crafts, music and drama are very much part of the African culture. As such, their inclusion in the school's curriculum should be mandatory as long as education remains a necessary instrument for the perpetuation of society.

Although this is so, art, crafts music and drama are often marginalized in the school curriculum. In many African schools, these are treated as minor subjects not at par with subjects such as English, mathematics, science or social studies. In a continent where the education system is predominantly examination-oriented, art, music and drama are of less significance. Certainly music and drama are taken as a form of relaxation from the drudgery of hard thinking and work in English, Mathematics, French, Science, Social Studies etc.

One reason for this is that Africa is at the cultural cross-roads of life because on the one hand, art, crafts, music and drama no longer serve as a reflection of African life or the embodiment of life itself; and on the other, there is emergence of new stereotype Africans in the towns and cities who have commercialized art, music and drama and thereby making them of little relevance as fields of study in our schools. In marginalizing, art, crafts, music and drama, Africans have lost faith in themselves, pay lip services to the appreciation and preservation of African cultures. In fact, the Africans are more at peace buying the whiteman's music, works of art and crafts than those done by Africans themselves.

As a result, policy makers, administrators and curriculum planners and developers, have no cause to give arts, crafts music and drama a prominent role in the school curriculum. After all, pupils tend to appreciate more of Western popular music than their own music. In a way therefore education in Africa has tended to be a derailment of our life in favour of Western life styles and traditions. Those who can afford prefer to have their children educated in Europe or America rather than in African schools or colleges.

In spite of this preference, many African countries have included in their curricula, art, crafts, music and drama even if these fields do not command the same status as the arts, humanities and sciences. Pupils learn how to carve wood into various works of art; weave, paint, tie and dye; make baskets and mats; participate in traditional dance, music and drama; and are encouraged to make all sorts of things with their hands using materials drawn from the environment. One needs only pick or look at a primary school syllabus from Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Liberia or Kenya to see for oneself details of art, crafts, music etc. topics for study by the pupils. While there may be fewer art galleries, museums and archeological treasures (other than those of Egypt), the African may appear materially poor, but he is spiritually rich in culture, and hence the greater the reason to include culture in the curriculum. But culture draws its enrichment from the enlightenment of the environment and hence their umbilical chord relationship bestowed upon man by nature.

**(d) Environmental and Agricultural Science**

Environmental and agricultural sciences are treated very seriously in a number of school curricula. In Zimbabwe for instance environmental and agricultural science starts from Grade 1 and runs through the primary course. During the early stages of primary education course, emphasis is focused on group activity for the pupils particularly on the soil, trees and the spread of germs. In the upper primary, emphasis is on agriculture focusing on tree, planting, soil and soil fertility and how to deal with insects which destroy crops.

In other countries, agriculture is a major field of study in the senior grades of primary education in such countries as Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Ghana and Nigeria; whereas in Ethiopia and Somalia, environmental science plays an important role in shaping the minds of the young in the first three grades of primary education.

**(e) Environmental Education**

In its crucial role of contributing to the vital task of improving the management of our common heritage, the earth, education assists in imparting the knowledge the know-how and determination necessary to resolve a given set of environmental problems. It is therefore very important that learners are not just given information about the environment, but receive proper environmental education.

In the light of the Tbilisi Conference, one of the "primary aims of environment education, is to enable human beings to understand the complex nature of the environment as this results from the interaction of its biological physical, social and economic and cultural aspects. It must accordingly provide the individual and the community with the means of interpreting the inter-dependence of these various elements in space and time so as to promote a more considered and cautious use of the resources of the universe to satisfy the needs of mankind"<sup>1/</sup>.

In this regard, many African countries have made environmental education an essential component of education aimed at giving greater effectiveness to the role of education as an instrument of and a factor in national development. This can be achieved through well defined policies and ensuring that it is included

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<sup>1/</sup> UNESCO: Environmental Education in the light of the Tbilisi Conference, UNESCO, Paris, 1980 p. 33.

in general planning and adequate means made available for the implementation of environmental education. More important is the fact that most African countries treat environmental education more than just one subject of study by primary and secondary schools learners. In this regard, some countries, have had to introduce new concepts in environmental education, new methods and techniques of teaching environmental science as a subject at both the first and second levels.

An interdisciplinary approach has been used to integrate environmental education into formal education taking due cognizance of the objectives of education, the content, methods, teaching materials and evaluation of educational outcomes. In doing this, traditional compartmentalization of subjects has been reduced to ensure that various curricula subjects are treated within a given culture and environment. In practical terms, the more learning is attuned to the environment and the culture of the people the more effective it is in preparing the young for a productive life in society.

The introduction of environmental education, and more specifically environmental science, into the primary and secondary schools has given rise to specific problems with regard to teaching methods. This is so because of lack of proper training by teachers, the narrow specialization of teachers and the increasing use of unqualified teachers. Yet it is expected that with the importance attached to environmental education, teaching strategies should adopt a holistic approach to education process and should encompass various ecological, social, cultural and economic aspects of the environment i.e. that teaching methods and strategies should be inter-disciplinary.

This may call for the adoption of a broad-fields curriculum which takes into account all aspects of study involving cultural, social economic, environmental, political etc. and a reforming of teaching methods. In other cases, it may call for the adoption of a correlated curriculum in which subjects are organized according to relationship e.g. social studies, general science, environmental and agricultural science. Even where a country adopts a core curriculum, there is need to organize other subjects around the core subjects i.e. that whatever is to be taught must be related to the core subjects, and that teachers are trained properly to bring into focus this relationship.

Yet as is known in many African countries, the problem of maintaining, let alone producing a balance in the curriculum is a constant challenge to African educators. The factors which produce this imbalance and the reasons why culture and environment may not command a dominant position in the education system constitute the conclusion of this paper. It is important that they should be highlighted in the concluding remarks to attest their significance in curriculum development.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION: BALANCE IN CURRICULUM**

As has been stated in the previous section, to maintain balance in the curriculum has always posed a serious challenge to African educators. There are a number of factors which often militate against such a balance.

The first aspect of imbalance lies in the fact that many subjects associated with culture and environment (such as art, crafts, music, drama, environmental science and agriculture) have not been treated as major or core subjects in the curriculum. Indeed, music, drama, art or crafts have often been treated peripherally, sometimes as optional subjects or non-examination subjects in an examination oriented system.

At the third level of the educational system, there are fewer schools or faculties of agriculture or environmental education than there are of humanities, arts, social sciences or applied science. Yet Africa is a continent in dire need of food; suffering from drought and desertification and makes little use of its environment. While it is accepted that not every subject can be included in the curriculum, and that schools cannot teach everything, every effort should be made to combine the concepts of cultural and environmental subjects with those of other subjects already included in the schools curriculum. There is no reason why the teaching of graphic and plastic arts, music, dance and drama should not be included in the practical subjects taught in schools and should become an integral part of examinations taken by learners.

A second aspect of imbalance arises from the piecemeal nature of developing school curriculum. In many African countries, the tendency is to adopt several programmes or subjects which have been prepared independently by experts or educators and put them together as a curriculum. Subject specialists, panels or committees prepare their own set of programme say in social sciences, with little consultation with other panels or committees. Without co-ordination, it would be impossible to strike a balance in the curriculum and to assume that cultural and environmental subjects are included. The piecemeal nature of preparing a curriculum for a country should be discouraged.

A third element of imbalance stems from the importance attached to examinations and the attendant paper qualifications associated with success and school performance. As most cultural and environmental subjects are not taken as examination subjects, teaching of such subjects is not as serious as those other examination subjects. In addition, time allocation is significantly less than those other subjects for which students sit for examinations. To strike a balance, it is absolutely necessary that cultural and environmental subjects should be accorded examination status so as to compete effectively with the humanities, arts and sciences, or else imbalance will continue.

Thus the preservation and nurturing of culture and environment are crucial for Africa's survival

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL SURVIVAL: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION <sup>1/</sup>**

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<sup>1/</sup> See Annex I Note 1

## CHAPTER TWO

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### EDUCATION FOR CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL SURVIVAL AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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#### I. INTRODUCTION - SLOGANS ALL THE WAY

A paper with a provocative title such as the above reminds one of the many slogans that have been passed around in many countries around the world including Africa. The early years after political independence in many African countries welcomed the slogan "Education for Self Reliance". The now famous Arusha Declaration has been quoted by both educational engineers and politicians alike. That was in the early sixties. Then followed for the rest of Africa the slogan "Education for Political Emancipation". Today almost all states in Africa have attained political emancipation. Then with the push towards the well-publicised "Health for All by 2000" came the slogan "Education for Health Living". Africans indeed need to stay healthy not just when the year 2000 is attained but even now and beyond.

The world was awoken to the need to exploit the environment but with that came the need to conserve and protect our physical environment. With that notion arose the slogan "Education for a Healthy Environment". Protection of the environment takes into consideration the many legislations against pollution of the environment.

While the economic depressions of the 30's had gone down in history as lean years, the recent economic recession worldwide and particularly in developing countries including Africa during the seventies now extending into the eighties evoked the slogan "Education for Economic Survival" and many countries evolved Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) to combat the economic problems. Now in this commissioned paper, we are beginning to hear about "Education for Cultural Survival" and "Education for Ecological Survival". These two new slogans will be discussed at length in this paper. But those do not seem to be the end of educational slogans. As the educated world prepares for the year 2000, the proposed 1990 world conference which will be the forum for a myriad of long-term planning activities came up with the slogan "Education for All". - EFA. Here EFA, a cliché which among other things attempts to involve the erstwhile marginalized in society and proposes to evolve programmes that will enable the

participating countries 'meet basic learning needs'. So one sees in many countries slogans all the way. With slogans hopefully comes action and hence meaningful development. In all of these slogans, education is believed to have the capacity to contribute to the betterment of society. In its well-researched paper, the World Bank has clearly stated that without education, development will not occur. For only an educated people can command the skills necessary for sustainable economic growth and for a better quality of life. (World Bank, 1988).

## II. AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

In many of the known enlightened societies educational programmes have been structured into cycles. In Nigeria for instance, the following structures exist:

**TABLE 1: Educational Cycles in Nigeria**

<b>Cycle</b>	<b>Educational Focus</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Years of Schooling</b>
First	Pre-Primary of Nursery/ Kindergarten	3- 5	3
Second	Primary/Elementary	6-11	6
Third	Junior Secondary	12-14	3
Fourth	Senior Secondary	15-17	3
Fifth	Tertiary - University	18-21	4

For many children in urban towns, schooling takes them through the five cycles. However for many of the children in the rural areas of many countries, schooling begins from the second cycle although in actual fact, education could begin before that cycle. Here a conscious distinction is made between schooling and education. The difference between the first cycle urban education and the first cycle rural education is that in the former, education which involves formal schooling for three years is undertaken outside the home while in the latter, the education offered is mostly informal with deep roots in the culture of the

society. Thus one sees here that whereas schooling in the first cycle for urban children is patterned along the lines of culture "foreign" to the child, education in the rural areas at that cycle sows the first seeds of cultural awareness of the society in which the child lives. Cultural aspects of simple salutations and greetings with strict emphasis on 'respect for elders' for instance is taught and imbibed easily by rural children, an aspect which is glaringly missing in the urban Nursery and Kindergarten schools. Furthermore, the dichotomy of urban/rural with respect to formal/non-formal education at the first cycle is based on the additional fact that formal schooling at the cycle is expensive. The result is that by and large, it is the urban rich parents who are able to afford the rather high cost. And there is also a third dimension to schooling at that cycle. While in the urban areas, both parents belong to the working class and so have to leave home for a better part of the day, the rural parents invariably are self-employed peasant workers who stay within reach of their children for most part of the day. But as the margin between the urban and rural is getting diffused in many developing countries, the need to study and restructure this privileged first cycle has become urgent in a bid to remove the class connotation which now exists. How far-reaching these new developmental approaches are and to what extent the cultural aspects of the society can be propagated through these renewal programmes of governments should constitute the subject of an exciting research study for the 1990s. There is need to warn here that the introduction of a large number of rural children to the first cycle schooling should in no way denigrate the rich culture which exists and cry for preservation.

The above discussion notwithstanding, many African countries have made and continue to make huge investments in education at the primary level. As has been argued, many children in Africa now have their first taste of formal schooling at the primary/elementary cycle. The population of children between the primary school age of 6-11 is staggering. (Table 2).

This huge number of primary school children call for government determined effort in any attempt to fund education. The primary education sector has attracted such prominence that funding agencies have begun to join hands with state governments to provide not only quantitative but also qualitative education. Apart from the known fact that primary education constitutes the broad based of the educational pyramid in many African countries, it has been conjectured that for sizeable proportion of the children, primary education may be the only formal education that they are opportuned to have. Many of the children may drop out of school back into the large society. That perspective which may now come to be called 'an African Perspective' it is taken very seriously in many African countries. If education by and large is to prepare people for purposeful living, there is therefore need to invest a good deal of the nations' resources in that cycle which takes care of the largest would-be members of the community.

Table 2

Primary Enrollment and Average Annual Growth Rate (%) (1960-1963)  
in Some English Speaking African Countries\*

Country	Total (thousands)			Average Annual Growth Rate (percent)		
	1960	1970	1980	1983**	1960-80	1980-83
1. Botswana	36	83	172	198	8.1	4.9
2. Ethiopia	224	655	2131	2497	11.9	5.4
3. Gambia	7	17	43	61	9.6	11.8
4. Ghana	503	967	1417	1453	5.3	0.8
5. Kenya	781	1428	3927	4324	8.4	3.3
6. Lesotho	136	183	245	278**	3.0	6.5
7. Liberia	59	120	227	230	7.0	0.4
8. Malawi	285	363	810	847	5.4	1.5
9. Nigeria	2913	3516	13788	14384	8.1	1.1
10. Sierra Leone	86	166	112	130	6.1	5.0
12. Tanzania	455	856	3368	3553	10.5	1.8
13. Uganda	593	1110	1521	1617**	4.8	3.1
14. Zambia	288	695	1042	1194	6.6	4.6
15. Zimbabwe	484	736	1235	2131	4.8	14.6

\* Source: A World Bank Policy Study (1988)

\*\* Figures are for 1982.

Also Note figures for Nigeria and Zimbabwe are for 1984.

Quite apart therefore of the formal educational offerings, an attempt has been made by many African countries to introduce and re-establish the cultural heritage of the society in the primary education cycle. There is no doubting the fact that the culture of a society can be introduced into the formal system of education. That conscious attempt therefore of bringing alive those 'good' aspects of the African cultural heritage through designed core curriculum has involved curriculum developers and Curriculum Development Centres in massive curriculum renewal. Aspects of the curriculum which deal with culture and now ecology can be found in those portion of the core curriculum titled 'Social Studies' and 'Primary Science'. A critical analysis of some aspects of culture in the primary curriculum in Nigeria has been discussed by this author in a paper titled 'Education and Culture in Primary Schools in Nigeria. A number of observations and recommendations were made in the paper. It is pertinent at this point to draw attention to the fact that it is one thing for curriculum developers at the primary education cycle to demand the inclusion of cultural aspects but it is another thing to establish very clearly what indeed the schools are practising thereafter. As with many educational policies, that nice fit between 'theory' and 'practice' does not usually exist in societies where social change is rapid. The educational literature in curriculum theory has therefore established the clear distinction between 'Intended Curriculum' 'Implemented Curriculum' and 'Achieved Curriculum' (Bajah, 1987).

### III. AFRICA AND CULTURAL SURVIVAL

It is recently published journal, EDUCAFRICA, a Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa, (No. 13, June 1987), Professor Ayandele, contributed an article titled 'UNESCO and International Understanding: The Cultural Umbilicus'. In that well-researched article, attention was drawn to the UNESCO General Conference in 1966 which adopted the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Collaboration which states:

Each culture has a dignity and value. Every people has the right and the duty to develop its culture ... In their rich variety and diversity, and in the reciprocal influences cultures form part of the common heritage of mankind".

It is clear from the above that cultures form part of the common heritage of mankind so that even when we refer to 'African culture', it should be remembered that it contributes to the common heritage of mankind. The culture of a people can usually be expressed through a number of activities - songs, dance dress eating habits, sculptural works, mannerisms, etc. Societies have thus been identified through their cultural expressions. Thus every society has made efforts to preserve its cultural heritage by not only keeping it alive but by transmitting it from one generation to another. Cultures, it has been claimed are handed down from the elders to the young ones.

However, societies have claimed that over the years aspects of their culture have been lost or mutilated and distorted and their survival in that respect is in jeopardy. And the question which arises is whether a society's survival is dependent on its culture, or indeed whether a society should strive to maintain its cultural survival. Anthropologists as well as curriculum developers are not in doubt that the school is a proper vehicle for maintaining cultural survival. That is why the school curriculum in many African countries emphasizes cultural heritage through what is practised in the schools. But it seems that the evidence which keeps coming before us is that cultural survival appears to be deep rooted outside the formal school system. Just like sports and games which for a long time in Nigeria were regarded as activities to be undertaken outside school hours (i.e. after school), culture now seems to suffer that same fate. In Nigeria today, sports and games have been refined and included in the normal school curriculum of many institutions under the umbrella of 'Physical and Health Education - PHE'. From the look of things, we can foresee the years ahead when culture will be developed to a stage when it will be given its place in the formal school curriculum. It is here that curriculum developers need to do more work. To gain acceptance and respectability as a school discipline, culture must be reviewed and structured with very clear and acceptable objectives. With the wave of curriculum renewal now taking place in Nigeria and in many African countries, the day will not be far when culture will be an acceptable subject not only in primary schools but in other cycles of the educational system.

But there remains a thorny problem - culture cannot be transmitted wholesale. Some aspects of our cultural heritage must be reviewed and if it cannot survive the acide test of modernity, it should be shelved - no sentiments. For instance in some parts of Nigeria, female circumcision is practised because it has been handed down as part of our cultural heritage. However, there has been mounting pressure from various interest groups to shelve that aspect of the culture as they claim that the reasons for such a practice are no longer tenable. And in some parts of Nigeria also, 'tribal marks' have been handed down as part of our cultural heritage. Today, the reasons for tribal identification with facial marks are no longer tenable especially in this day and age when there is the move to 'de-tribalise' people and strive for national unity.

The above examples notwithstanding, aspects of our culture which involve modes of dressing, traditional methods of preparing local dishes from local ingredients and our kingship system are still worthy of note for inclusion in the primary school curriculum. An attempt should be made while transmitting aspects of the culture to provide sufficient reasons why it will be advantageous to retain that aspect of our culture. Furthermore, there is need for curriculum developers to identify pragmatic modalities for transmitting culture. Dependence on the modern trained primary school teacher does not seem to be a practical solution. The need to arrange for knowledgeable people in society to come to the school to teach some aspects of our culture like special songs, modes of dressing etc. has become necessary as a strategy to be recommended by curriculum developers.

The survival of our culture must be argued from a strong educational utility and not just because certain things were done by our forefathers therefore they must be done now. Curriculum developers should always remember that urbanization is a strong challenge to some aspects of our cultural heritage, so that a uniform national curriculum in culture may not be feasible. The impact of foreign cultures on any particular African culture must be given very serious consideration in any curriculum renewal process, even at the primary school level.

#### IV. AFRICA AND ECOLOGICAL SURVIVAL

The study of ecology has featured prominently in the school curriculum not only in Africa but throughout the world. Kelly (1988) maintains that ecology usually features as part of a biology course although it is also to be found in integrated science, geography and social studies courses and in broader programmes of environmental education. In a simplified form, ecology has been defined as 'the relationship between the living world, including man and the environment'. As argued by Kelly, (op cit), the study of ecology can be considered to have two major perspectives - scientific and utilitarian. In making this distinction, Kelly also claimed, the role of science is conceived as the pursuit of knowledge 'for its own sake' whilst the term utilitarian refers to the application of that knowledge for human welfare, and particularly in relation to ecology, the way we exploit and manage our environment. There is no doubt that a sound understanding of ecology is essential to the success of a range of major human endeavours such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, conservation and pollution control.

Within the last two decades, many parts of Africa have witnessed what was described as 'dramatic examples' of the perils faced when our understanding of ecology is inadequate or ignored. Some specific examples will suffice to buttress the above claim:

- (i) The thousands of square kilometers of once productive savannah turned into desert through over-grazing;
- (ii) The destruction of forests by the excessive use of slash and burn methods of shifting agriculture;
- (iii) Over-fishing in rivers and the sea; and
- (iv) The haphazard use of insecticides to the point when plant production becomes uneconomically dependent on them.

It was therefore concluded that such catastrophes can be avoided if we have sufficient knowledge of ecology and apply it wisely.

The issue now before us is to identify the role education can play, especially primary education, to guarantee the ecological survival in Africa. It has been argued and advanced by many scholars that education has a major responsibility in this respect. It is through education that we produce the scientists who increase our knowledge of ecology and educate those who put it to practical use. At the same time through education we can enable citizens, and particularly our leaders who make the decisions in public life, appreciate the importance of ecology to human welfare (Kelly et al, 1988).

But the issue on ecological survival becomes more difficult to address when it is focussed on primary education. What aspects of ecology can meaningfully be taught in primary schools to enhance our ecological survival? Can primary school children handle the issues and principles involved in ecology? In trying to find answers to these and many other related questions, One is guided by the assertion of Jerome Bruner who opined that any subject can be taught in an intellectually honest manner if it can be addressed at the level of the learners, be they children or adults. Curriculum developers cannot therefore dismiss the idea of teaching ecology at the primary school level simply because some people perceive the concepts involved too difficult for children. Based on that notion, suggestions are made in this paper on how ecology can be tackled as a primary school concept.

At the primary schools in many African countries, science has been introduced with strong support from the relevant government agencies. In the study of ecology, there are principles which are scientific in nature to grapple with, such as:

- (a) Diversity and distribution (animals and plants)
- (b) Relationships
- (c) Change and equilibrium
- (d) Movement and behaviour
- (e) Exploitation of natural habitats
- (f) Production
- (g) Pollution
- (h) Conservation

And in addition to the scientific principles, the study of ecology involves the mastering of a number of techniques which include:

- (a) Collecting technique
- (b) Sampling technique
- (c) Measurement technique, and
- (d) Analysis technique

All of the above are necessary for the proper learning of ecology.

In this portion of the paper, an attempt is made to critically examine what is at present actually present in the primary science curriculum in Nigeria. A critical examination of the approved science syllabus for Nigerian primary schools indicates that the following topics listed could lead to the study of rudiments of ecology. (Table 3).

Table 3: Rudiments of Ecology in Primary Science Curriculum in Nigeria\*

	Topic	Level
1	OUR ENVIRONMENT (plants and animals)	Years I, II, III
2.	AIR AND WATER	Years I, II, III, IV, V
3.	SOIL AND GARDENING	Years IV, VI
4.	ROCKS	Years V
5.	GROWING BETTER CROPS	Years VI
6.	IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT	Years VII

\*Details of content could be found in the approved Primary Science CORE CURRICULUM, (1980 developed under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos.

If as we have observed that a number of the primary schools in Nigeria are not teaching the above listed topics in a way to bring out the focus on ecology, it is probably due to the following identified problems:

1. Adequately trained primary school teachers with relevant knowledge of ecology.
2. Equipment for studying ecology using a field trip approach.
3. Primary science books which focus on ecology.
4. Adequate amount of time allocated to science and hence to field work in ecology.
5. Readiness of the pupils - cognitive and affective.

In support of some of the problems identified above, Kelly (1988) had observed that even at the secondary school level, the impact of ecology as a science concept had been diminished.

"because the teaching of ecology lacks reality. Too often this consists of mere descriptions of organisms in their environment without providing students with direct experience of studying ecology in action"

Teaching ecology at the primary schools can only have the desired effects if there is a determined effort to overcome most of the identified problems. The teacher factor is most significant because the primary school teacher plays a major role in the learning process at the level. Curriculum development at the primary school level must devise materials for the teachers to enable them re-educate themselves. Special workshops (not Talkshops) must be organized for primary school teachers charged with the responsibility of not only teaching science but teaching ecology that will have an impact on the children and on their environment. If properly done, then ecological survival will be a reality.

## **V. ESTABLISHING A CONFIDENT IDENTITY**

Since the political independence of many African countries, there has been a determined move to evolve things really African not only in political structures but in education. The inclusion of African traditional practices in aspects of the school curriculum has led to the move towards cultural revival and hence survival. Even with the efforts and progress that have been achieved, many African nationalists do lament the present state of affairs similar to what was observed when a country like Australia tried to set up what was described as "Australian Studies":

"We must be one of the few countries that does not know its own cultural heritage and yet studies everyone else's in great detail".

The present attempt therefore of re-vamping the curriculum in many African countries with emphasis on cultural survival can be seen as a step in the right direction. To prevent many African children from having an education marked to a great extent by second-hand cultural experience, an attempt must be made early enough to present the desired posture; hence the focus on primary education.

It has been argued in this paper that these need to shed sentiments and include for practise, those aspects of the African culture that communicate useful ideals. The purpose of transmitting any culture should be to stir people to positive action. With that notion in mind, curriculum developers have transmitted culture through some of the books adopted for use in the schools. For instance, the pictorial representation in many of the primary books used in Nigeria establish our rich cultural heritage in modes of dressing. The Nigerian traditional dress, traditional musical instruments, traditional games and traditional stories and folk-tales have found their presence in the primary school books. Nigerian children who now use the books come in contact with such aspects of our cultural heritage that can lead to its survival. There is no question about our cultural heritage forming a part of the formal school curriculum. What curriculum developers should do is to guide teachers and pupils who use the books on how best to emphasize and keep alive our cultural heritage. We must establish a confident identity with the pupils and teachers. And since the examination system is well established in our educational system, aspects of our cultural heritage should gradually find their way into the examination papers especially at the primary school leaving examination. There are a few questions now included in this examination in the various states of the federation - but they are not enough.

With respect to our ecological survival, the primary schools should constitute a focal point for awareness about our environment. Especially at the upper primary school classes, a determined attempt must be made to draw attention to what can happen to us as human beings if we continue to destroy our environment. Teachers at the primary school level should encourage their pupils to take home the message of preservation of our environment. As the Ugandan programme - The Namutamba Experimental Pilot Project advocated, pupils at the primary school level should be made to:

- (i) Study Science from the environment; and
- (ii) Study Science for the environment.

Curriculum developers should find a way of propagating these laudable concepts, for our ecological survival.

Studying science from the environment guarantees that the primary school curriculum developer draws materials and examples from the pupil's immediate environment. And more importantly, studying science from the environment also brings the child in direct contact with the ecology of his dwelling place and any attempt to preserve the environment will have immediate meaning.

On the other hand, studying science for the environment helps to drive home the points in the lessons on ecology dealing with conservation. Curriculum developers must produce materials that will enable the children see their immediate environment as a huge laboratory and any attempt to destroy that environment is tantamount to damaging the very foundation of their science learning. With that type of argument, education for ecological survival will be a reality. Many of the problems which we face today and may continue to face tomorrow are basically of an ecological nature:

Over-population  
Food production  
Deterioration of habitats and pollution of air  
Water and soil.

Thus to make appropriate decisions related to aspects of human needs such as housing, agriculture, deforestation, industry etc, an understanding of the scientific process of ecology is essential (Kelly, 1988)

## VI. THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF THE CURRICULUM

When the top echelons from Curriculum Development Centres in Africa meet to brainstorm on aspects of the curriculum, one hopes that the outcome will be both pragmatic and modern, underscoring the dynamic nature of the curriculum. Curriculum process in Africa has received a boost from the activities of the African Curriculum Organization (ACO) which itself derives strong support from the German Foundation for International Development. Now, a provocative, topic which attempts to shed some light on the role of education for Cultural and Ecological survival for the whole of Africa definitely will stir up some ideas. No matter what posture one comes out with, there are a number of salient points that must not be glossed over:

- (i) Culture and Ecology are two important topics that must not be limited to the primary cycle alone. These topics do provide basis for extensive sophisticated research that involve scholars from tertiary institutions. In other words, in terms of curriculum development, an attempt should be made to develop a spiral curriculum on the two topics. The topics should then be treated in increasing complexity as one goes from one cycle to the other.

- (ii) The teaching of culture and ecology to children will evoke many questions based on curiosity. Children normally ask inquisitive questions beginning with 'why'. In the teaching learning process, these questions will require 'honest' answers.
- (iii) And as has been well established, no curriculum succeeds if the classroom teachers do not approach it from the standpoint of knowledge and enthusiasm. Because as has been argued, many teachers, especially at the primary level will lack adequate knowledge of these two topics. Every attempt should therefore be made to give them inservice training that will emphasize competency in handling the two topics.
- (iv) One problem in Africa is in the area of textbooks adequacy, both in quantity and quality. Special effort in curriculum development should be made to provide instructional materials that will adequately cover the two topics.
- (v) Finally, when these two topics have been well-established in the various Curriculum Development Centres, there will be need to evolve a strategy of exchanging ideas and sharing of experiences.

## **XVI. CONCLUSIONS**

Culture and environment have been discussed in this paper. A number of issues have been raised based on the experiences in Nigeria. Curriculum Development Centres as well as the curriculum developers themselves have major roles to play. The success of a virile curriculum content which emphasizes culture and environment will depend not on slogans but on decisive action.

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**CHAPTER THREE**

**CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN TANZANIA  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS: DEMANDS OF THE  
CURRICULUM AND WHAT SCHOOLS PRACTICE <sup>2/</sup>**

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<sup>2/</sup> See Note 2 of Annex I

## CHAPTER THREE

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### CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN TANZANIA PRIMARY SCHOOLS: DEMANDS OF THE CURRICULUM AND WHAT SCHOOLS PRACTICE

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

In order to be able to understand the place of culture and environment in Tanzanian primary education, it is necessary to examine and analyse what the terms mean in Tanzania's context. It is equally important to understand the development of Tanzania's educational philosophy and the influence it has made on the existing primary school practices.

#### II. 'CULTURE' AND 'ENVIRONMENT' DEFINED

The terms 'culture' and 'environment' are inseparable; in that 'culture' is usually part of 'environment' whereas 'environment' may also evolve out of a culture of a given society. However, the term 'culture' has been used in a restrictive sense to refer to 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, moral, law custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It consists of all the learned patterns of acting, feeling and thinking shared by members of a particular society; i.e. the non-material characteristics of a group of people or society. In this paper, 'culture' will be used to refer to the social and psychological characteristics, i.e., the membership criteria, role assignment, norms and regulations as well as interaction among groups. It will involve the sharing of beliefs, habits, traditions and goals which arise specifically from the historical milieu out of which Tanzanians grew.

In Tanzania, the common bonds or values that used to bind the tribal communities are gradually giving way to nationalism. That is, people tend to refer to themselves as 'Tanzanians' rather than 'Chagga' or 'Sukuma' which are some of the well-known tribes in the country. The decline of tribal bases and culture can partly be attributed to intermarriages as well as the Western education that tended to inculcate in the learners foreign norms and traditions. However, the move to nationalism is largely the result of the firm stand that was declared in 1967. This is the Arusha Declaration, which is a political statement which commits the ruling party and the government to the building of a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live at peace with neighbours without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited or exploiting; and in which all have gradually increasing basic level of material wealth before any one can live in luxury.

Unlike the colonial society which was based on tribal divisions and social statutes, Tanzania's present society is supposed to be based on a classless national community in which Tanzania is to be a nation of peasants and workers, and where every worker obtains a just return for the labour he or she performs. To this end, Tanzania aspires for a socialist society which is based on three principles:

- (i) Equality and respect for human dignity
- (ii) Sharing of resources which are produced by peoples' own efforts
- (iii) Work by everybody and exploitation by none.

The aim is to increase nationalism and unity between and among Tanzanians which defending absolute integrity individual freedom, sovereignty of the national and the equality of all citizens. Thus education is required to strive to meet the goal of making a socialist Tanzanian by encouraging and fostering the attitudes of living and working together for the common good. It has to prepare the young to play a dynamic and constructive part in the development of society in which progress is measured in terms of human well-being; inculcate a sense of commitment to the total community and help pupils accept the values of Tanzania's future and not the colonial past. The educational system has to encourage cooperative endeavour rather than individual advancement; the concepts of responsibility and equality to give service which goes with special ability and counteracts the temptation to intellectual arrogance of the educated. Viewed this way, Tanzania's culture cannot be separated from the country's political and ideological stances. As we shall see later, these stances have, to a large extent, influenced school curricular and practices.

Separated from the term 'culture', 'environment' consists of the other elements that characterise or distinguish a given society from another. Such elements could be physical, economic and the people themselves or population. In this paper the term environment will be used to refer to the geographical elements, that is, topographic, climatic, population and economic conditions of Tanzania. These also have played a significant role in determining the curriculum, especially that of primary schools.

Tanzania like many developing countries, is predominantly rural and depends on the efforts of its people to increase production in both focal and cash crops to make money for the development of the country. It is on the same basis that schools have been called upon to prepare the young for work they would be called upon to do in the Tanzanian rural society. Further and foremost, education is expected to produce good farmers, develop in children critical thinking and enquiring minds, the ability to make judgements on all issues affecting them, the ability to interpret party and government policies and adopt the acquired knowledge and skills to their local environment.

### III. CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

The Arusha Declaration was translated through Education for self-reliance which was also declared in 1967. The later is a statement which explains in educational terms the political intentions of the Arusha Declaration. In short, the educational statement aims at three demands:

- (i) The demand that Tanzania's educational policy be directed to the needs of the nation and the majority of Tanzanian students
- (ii) The demand that schools identify themselves with the community and Tanzania's current struggle
- (iii) The demand that correct attitudes of socialism and self-reliance be inculcated in pupils.

In other words, school pupils are required to recognize and identify themselves with all the 'worthwhile' aspects of culture. They are supposed to be helped to learn and practice attitudes and skills which would be of use to them and the society in the future. Schools are required to prepare children for leadership in their communities so that they acquire the ability to explain and demonstrate, not simply to repeat by rote. All these and other demands call upon schools, particularly primary schools, to base their teaching and learning on Tanzania's culture and environment.

Such demands have implications for curriculum. Among these are:

- (i) To ensure that complete education is offered to the child so that he or she graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills for self-sufficiency
- (ii) To incorporate work in the central aspects of the curriculum so that pupils are not only learning but also working; theory has to go in hand with practice
- (ii) To require schools to become productive units and to carry out economic projects in order to help the school in its upkeep as well as boost the national economy
- (iv) To integrate school into the community so that the school and the community could work together as partners rather than an extra activity.

With these aims in mind, the Ministry of Education has been involved in a number of educational projects including reviewing the primary school curriculum, rewriting it with a socialist outlook and reorienting primary school teachers through in-service courses on how to implement the reformed curriculum. Tanzanian

content and terminologies have found their way into the curriculum. The National language, Kiswahili, has become the medium of instruction in all but a dozen of primary schools with the purpose of influencing the degree to which permanent literacy could be achieved by the large number of primary school leavers. "No longer would the child be barred from a comprehension of agricultural science, mathematics of civics on account of poor grounding in English Language". (Mwingira, 1969). The shift from English to Kiswahili medium has caused all the teaching-learning materials to be replaced by texts written in Kiswahili and which reflect socialist values, train an enquiring mind and present knowledge of relevance to the future of the rural citizen.

#### IV. THE CURRICULUM

As mentioned earlier, the demands made on education have effected changes in the primary school curriculum so that what is offered in schools is consonant with the social, political and economic situation of the country and this is addition to disciplinary subjects like Mathematics, Science, Georgraphy, History, etc. Agriculture has been made part of the school curricula, particularly in rural schools. This is the re-introduction of a feature of colonial education which the government and party leaders has opposed mainly because agriculture, which was taught in African schools only, was viewed as a lowly activity by the dominant colonial culture. As such, the teaching of agriculture in the African schools at that time appeared to be discriminating against Africans. This time, agriculture has been introduced with a different purpose: to make sure that it is accorded the highest dignity and receives the highest social recognition and rewards. The majority of students who are not selected for secondary schools are required to return to work on the land in villages in rural Tanzania. The few who go through the entire education system and enter same professions and leadership have the task of supporting the efforts of the farmers by rendering to them the needed services, thus ensuring that agriculture is highly comprehended by peasants. In this way, Tanzania would be transformed from a society which was prejudiced against agriculture and manual labour to one which dignifies these activities and their importance in the country's development. Such transformation would be effected in all social groups, including youth and adult, the educated and illiterate, the intellectual and manual worker, conceivably eliminating class formation and distinctions.

The curriculum content in the disciplinary subjects have also been given a Tanzanian outlook. For example, science is graded so that pupils are initially introduced to those things in their immediate environment such as animal and plant life, rocks and minerals and moves on to the more complicated topics such as machines, electricity and plants. Political education aims at developing political consciousness among the pupils to enable them to understand and facilitate the implementation of the country's policy of socialism and self-reliance. The content for Political Education syllabus centres around the political party, the government of the country, the economy, the national culture, defence and security and foreign

policy. Home Economics is taught to both boys and girls with the aim of preparing the pupils for life by imparting to them knowledge and skills on all domestic activities of an ordinary Tanzania. (Ministry of Education 1984). Among other things, topics in the Home Economics syllabus include body and environmental cleanliness, types of food and its preparation, securing and housekeeping. The aim of imparting such knowledge and skills is to prepare pupils for life in the community they live in.

Various steps have also been taken for the promotion of national unity. These steps include the promotion of Kiswahili as a national language by making it a medium of instruction in primary schools. A touch of 'African Culture', i.e. African cum Tanzanian songs, dances, art and crafts, has been effected in the primary school curriculum. Primary school pupils are given music lessons to help them use local instruments and learn music notes. They learn songs aimed at enhancing national unity and development. In art and crafts, pupils are encouraged to draw, paint and make things within their own environment such as wooden spoons, chairs, clay pots, and ruffia utensils such as coconut liquid sieves, food covers, baskets and mats.

While these are only examples, they show the efforts that have been made to make primary school curricula emphasize Tanzania's cultural and environmental ideals. In addition to classroom activities, primary schools are required to be responsible to the costs of their maintenance and upkeep and this responsibility is to be accepted as a deliberate, conscious and proud contribution to national development and national self-reliance. When practicing self-reliance, children are expected to learn new skills which are relevant to their future and adopt a realistic attitude to getting their hands dirty by physical labour. Schools are required to maintain the same relations as those which exist between parents and children. That is, teachers, workers and pupils are supposed to be members of the social unit (the school) in the same way that parents, relatives and children form the family social unit. Schools are required to realize that their life and well-being depends upon the production of wealth by farming and other activities. This means that all primary schools are to ensure that some of the pupils activities should aim at producing goods, including food, thus boosting the country's economy. To realize this goal, schools have established economic productive activities including farming, cooperative shops and other related activities.

#### **V. 'CULTURE' AND 'ENVIRONMENT' IN PRACTICE**

One of the measures taken to effect the above-mentioned curriculum has been to localize the teaching force as much as possible. Almost all the teachers who teach in primary schools (85,308 in 1983) are Tanzanians. In addition, they have received training from the local Teacher Training Colleges. As mentioned earlier, practicing teachers have/are undergoing in-service training with the purpose of improving their quality as well as initiating them in the curriculum changes and how to implement them. The allocation of periods have been made in such a way that priority has been given to Kiswahili (6 periods). Mathematics (6 periods),

Agricultural science (4 periods) and Home Economics (3 periods). Self-reliance, which includes economic productive activities have been allotted eight (8) periods per week. New approaches to teaching which are of problem-solving type have been tried in schools. The concept of 'study and work' has been put forward requiring each school to have a farm, a workshop or a cooperative shop etc. In most schools, especially those in rural areas, the visible symbol for self-reliance has been the school farm. Much concentration has been put on the production of wealth, mainly through farming and craft activities. Primary school pupils, with the assistance of their teachers, conduct adult education literacy classes at school to help eradicate illiteracy, thus providing universal education.

Another measure which has been taken has been the partial decentralization of primary schools to the regions. That is, primary schools have been placed under the control of the regions, districts, and consequently villages. This aspect was redefined in the second Five Year Plan (1969-1974) thus giving the primary school a new role:

"The school must be a preparation for life and work in the community, a place at which skills and attitudes are developed and knowledge gained, which are needed by the community and will contribute to its development. The primary school will become people's schools, not merely by preparation for further education for a few (Ministry of Education, 1969:17).

By placing the school under the control of the regions and districts, it is hoped that an effective realization of the educational goals contained in the policy directives will be facilitated.

'Collective leadership' in which teachers, parents and district educational personnel work as a team is solving administrative problems of primary schools, has been introduced in schools through the formation of school committees by the district development councils and other local authorities. This is a response to the idea of integrating schools and community. The school committees are supposed to ensure, among other things, that schools become centres for the provision of education to the community which they serve. To do this, they need to be conversant with the needs, problems and interests of their immediate community, i.e. the cultural and environmental conditions of surrounding communities.

## **VI. DELIBERATE ATTEMPTS**

One of the deliberate attempts to incorporate culture and environment in Tanzania's primary education has been the establishment of community schools. The schools, which were developed between 1971 and 1982 are defined as "those schools in which the form and pattern of life in the community, the main features

of the environment, the social practice of work and politics figure prominently in the curriculum" (MTUU, 1978). This however does not mean that the teaching of basic skills like literacy and numeracy are neglected. Neither does it mean that the curriculum fails to excite in children curiosity about ideas. Rather, it requires that the community's needs and problems form the core of the curriculum. In other words, primary schools are to be the motive force in the grassroots community and not a foreign body but a source of community development.

The establishment of community schools in Tanzania is not only seen as a means to orient school curricula to culture and environment. Rather, it is also based on the assumption that it could become instrumental in transforming a society from whose members lack a sense of social consciousness to a society whose members are cognizant of their societal responsibilities. By shifting emphasis from ordinary schools, it would in the first place help to overcome certain attitudinal and functional problems associated with manual labour as part of learning in schools. Secondly, it will ease the problem of transfer of school-acquired knowledge and skills to community members. This will be enhanced by involving good local farmers in school activities as supervisors and teachers of particular aspects of work. Employment of agricultural officers and their assistants in schools' activities would be encouraged. In essence, community schools in Tanzania attempted to approximate a democratic and socialist community by relating the thoughts and activities of the students to a socialist environment to which Tanzania aspires. It is assumed that through community schools, children will learn from the beginning that both the home and the school played on activite role; what is learned in school is a continuation of what they learn in their homes. The community should be a crucial educational institution aimed at realizing the demands set up by the education system, foremost of which is to relate school activities to Tanzanias culture and environment.

## **VII. THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

What is unique to the community school curriculum is the process by which it was formulated and the methods used to teaching it in the respective schools. Unlike the traditional curriculum which is centrally designed and developed, i.e. by the National Institute of Curriculum Development, the community school curriculum was more or less formulated at school and village levels respectively. Several categories of people including teachers, villagers, itinerant teacher educators from coordinating Teacher Training Colleges, and the Ministry officials were involved. The itinerant teacher educators advised and collaborated with the schools and villagers in identifying problems and need which would then determine the curriculum for the school.

The curriculum process started with meetings between itinerant teacher educators and the villagers. The purpose was to identify community needs and problems and to think of ways and means of resolving them. The identified needs

and problems formed the core of the curriculum. That is, the content and methods of teaching would be organized around the identified needs and problems, thus making discussions as a means to arrive at curricular deliberations.

In one instance (Kwamsisi) the curriculum team decided to have joint school-village economic projects like a farm, a poultry unit, a carpentry shop, a workshop, and brickmaking plant. Villagers would be involved in the work of the school through committees, for example, Economic Planning Committee, Education and Culture Committees, Social Welfare Committee etc. Parents and community members would participate in the classroom activities by teaching local history, crafts and political education. In turn, pupils would participate in village activities, e.g. farming, village celebrations, festivals, villages and national campaigns on health, food agriculture and exhibitions. Parents also decided to expand and diversify their agricultural activities, increase their acreage and introduce cash crops such as cotton. The money obtained from the sale of cotton and other cash crops would be spent on common areas such as buying children school uniforms and investing in communal endeavours such as expanding a cooperative shop. Similar discussions would be held at the other levels, i.e. district and regional levels with the aim of informing the concerned parties of what had been decided by the curriculum team. All these meetings would be held before any proposed changes in curriculum was implemented.

The former subjects were integrated into four main areas including literacy and numeracy, political education, community studies and cultural education. Unlike the traditional school curricula which emphasized reading, writing and speaking, the community school curriculum for literacy and numeracy put emphasis on teaching children to read and write fluently in Kiswahili (and English) while in numeracy emphasis was put on the ability to work with real numbers easily and confidently, studies would be vocational in nature involving the study of better methods of farming, craftwork, building techniques and commercial methods, general science related to pupils, local environment, health education as well as some aspects of study of physical and human environment.

Political education included the child's obligation to his/her family, village and society based on a socialist point of view. Topics in this area included the structure and functions of the ruling party, the 'Ujamaa' socialist, ideology, the working of the government and international bodies and other topics centred on Tanzania's socialism and self-reliance.

Community studies aimed at developing in the young, scientifically oriented minds in order to prepare the young to tackle various problems within their local environment; as well as developing in them skills and attitudes necessary for the maintenance of good health and life in 'Ujamaa' villages. Later called 'Environmental Studies', community studies were to be related to local needs and the environment of the village including health education, geography and history, science, vocational subjects such as better farming methods, craftsmanship and building techniques.

Culture studies included physical education, national dances, music and handicrafts.

### VIII. CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

In principle, teachers were required to deal with the theoretical component of the curriculum (except in areas of local history), and bring in parents to demonstrate to the pupils some practical activities in which they were more competent than the teachers. For example, if the lesson was on building construction, the teacher would teach the basic principles and procedures in building, and the villager would show the pupils how the actual building was done as he/she does it. Cooperative teaching was to be the normal practice in the community school. Records show that villagers took an active role in curriculum implementation by participating in the teaching of crafts, local history and political education in classes, and that they helped in collecting various teaching materials and equipment needed for crafts (MTUU, 1978, Meena, 1980, 1983).

Another approach used to implement the community school curriculum was what was known as the 'Basic Service Approach'. This involved the incorporation of all those sectors or departments which in one way or another were involved in the development of the village. Thus schools would work along with these other sectors in enhancing the villages' development. Such sectors included the Regional Development Directors (RDDs), the Regional Education Officers (REOs), Finance and Planning Officers, Health, Cooperatives, Water Energy and minerals, Teacher and Primary Education, Directors and other ministry officials. These would all meet to discuss plans and define strategies of implementing community schools. The following is an illustration of the timetable of one of the schools (See Table 1).

**TABLE 1: Shirimatunda Community School: 1980 Timetable: Grade 5**

Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mon	Kisw	Math	Eng	Enst	Enst	Cul	P.Ed	Enst	Enst	Cul
Tues.	Kisw	Math	Engl	Enst	Kisw	Math	Cul	PS	Rel	Cul
Wedn.	Kisw	Math	Eng	Kisw	Cul	Enst	Enst	AE	AE	AE
Thurs.	Kisw	Math	Eng	Cul	EA	AE	Cul	Enst	Enst	Cul
Friday	Kisw	Math	Eng	Cul	Math	P.Ed	PS	Rel	Cul	

Summary of Table 1: Total Number of Periods per Week

- (1) Kiswahili (Kisw) = 7
- (2) Mathematics (Math) = 7
- (3) English (Eng) = 5
- (4) Religion (Rel) = 2
- (5) Environmental Studies (Enst) = 10
- (6) Private Studies (PS) = 2
- (7) Cultural Studies (Cul) = 10
- (8) Productive Activities (EA) = 5
- (9) Political Education (P.Ed) = 2
- (iO) Adult Education (AE) = 2

Source: Schule za Jamil: Proceedings of the Seminar held in the United Republic of Tanzania, August 1980 Printpak/MTUU, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1984:89

Based on Table 1, the related studies, Kiswahili, cultural studies and environmental studies, have been allotted more periods than other subjects. These and other attempts show Tanzania's deliberate effort to reform primary school curricula so that it is consistent with the country's culture and environment. Even in what are known as disciplinary subjects, the content has been as much as possible evolved out of local needs and problems.

## IX. SUCCESS AND FAILURES

The success and/or failure of implementing a cultural and environmental oriented curriculum can only be understood within the context of what the purpose of developing and introducing such a curriculum were. Because it is when the aims are known that we can assess the extent to which the programme or attempts have been successful or not.

In the early sections of this paper, it was stated that the introduction of culture and environment in primary school curricula was, among other things, based on the assumption that they could be instrumental in transforming a society from whose members lack a sense of social consciousness to a society whose members are cognizant of their social responsibilities. By developing and implementing a Tanzanian cultural and environmental curriculum, attitudinal and functional problems associated with manual labour as part of learning in schools would be overcome. People were expected to see the function of primary education as that of preparing children for life and service in the villages instead of colonial mentality of viewing its function as that of preparing children for secondary education and comfortable jobs in towns.

Thus in order to make judgement as to whether the above purposes were and/or are being realized, it is necessary to look for both positive and negative results of such attempts as well as the views held by people who have experienced such attempts especially the community school.

**(a) Success of Implementing a Cultural and Environmental Curricula**

The author of this paper conducted a study on 'Community Schools' in Tanzania 1986-1987. The following are the results with regards to the successes of including 'culture' and 'environment' in primary school curricula:

- (i) These had been a great deal of awareness and acceptance of the idea of community school. Indicators of this progress increased the increased cooperation between schools and villages. The migration of people from the neighbouring villages to live in villages with community schools was interpreted as a positive gesture of positive response to the idea of living together and working together for the common good.
- (ii) Joint self-help schemes flourished (MTUU), 1978. Included were cooperative shops owned by schools and villages; it provided consumer goods to the villagers as well as a few useful items to pupils. Other successful projects included carpentry workshops, which made furniture to the schools as well as for sale, brick-making, water projects, construction of crop storage facilities, digging up of pit latrines for schools and villages and sheds for preparing midday meals.
- (iii) Qualitative developments included healthier and cleaner children, improved water conditions, expanded schools and villages, provision of midday meals.
- (iv) Village leaders and other members of community become more conversant than before with all that took place in schools while experienced villagers took part in teaching some aspects of the curriculum.
- (v) Co-operation between schools and villages increased whereas industry had overtaken apathy and confusion and pride over pessimism could be said to have been attained in some villages, e.g. Pumwani village in Kilimanjaro Region in Northern Tanzania
- (vi) Children displayed an impressive level of literacy and numeracy and showed a good nutritional status enhanced by the daily meals provided through the schools' own effort.
- (vii) Although no hard statistical data are available, it has been contended that most of the grade seven leavers were content to lead their lives in the villages. In addition, some of the villages were able to employ some of the primary school leavers in their village economic projects.

Although no hard statistical data are available, it has been contended that most of the grade seven leavers were content to lead their lives in the villages. In addition, some of the villages were able to employ some of the primary school leavers in their village economic projects. Parents noted that pupils who completed school tended to be more self-reliant by starting their own vegetable gardens.

Although the above results sound positive, they do not indicate any attitudinal change in the people. Rather they inform us about the tangible, behavioural and extrinsic outcomes that were realized through the attempts to include culture and environment in the primary school curricula, rather than the intrinsic (the lasting change of attitude and expectations) outcome of it. It is also not clear whether all these positive results were brought about by the same attempts and not by other sources like the provision of basic services and local initiatives.

**(b) Failure to Implement a Cultural and Environmental Curriculum**

Research findings from the same study revealed that no significant changes were realized from the attempts to develop and implement a cultural and environmental oriented curriculum. One of the outstanding problems pertained to the actual implementation of the curriculum in schools. In community schools for example, it was noted that there had been some difficulties in departing from the conventional subject patterns even when schools engaged themselves in community activities, became partners in the provision of basic services to the villages and was self-reliant in many aspects of their own upkeep (Machaga, 1978). That is, the curriculum was not implemented in the form of subject groupings or modules of employable skills. The disciplinary approach to teaching subjects persisted in schools. For example, Kiswahili, Political Education, English and Mathematics remained as independent subjects rather than part of literacy and numeracy mainly because they were examination subjects while the first two, Kiswahili and Political Education, carried weight in Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) as well as for selection for secondary education.

Although Community studies replaced History, Geography, Home Economics and Science and Cultural Studies replaced Physical Education, Music, Art and Dancing, they continued to be taught as separate subjects by separate teachers and even less related to children's local environment. The evaluation report, also revealed that the learning experiences which children derived from the closer relationship between the school and the village came about informally and not because of any successful or radical changes in the curriculum. Children in community schools were required to sit for the same public examinations as their counterparts in ordinary primary schools.

Although the pupils participated in communal farms and vice versa, attendance by both parents and pupils were not encouraging. Parents objected to their children taking part in communal farms and instead assigned them to work on private family

farms or to attend the cattle. Students could not be involved in decision-making, since they were not village members under the constitution. As such they felt exploited. They also felt that teachers alone benefitted from the proceeds obtained from economic, productive activities.

Teachers and pupils still regarded national examinations as very important aspects of primary education. Good performance in Primary School Leaving Examination (PLSE) is still regarded as a way to better life because secondary education led to a job in the modern sector of economy which also means an escape from the hard and rough work in rural life with minimal rewards in terms of income and status and poor social services. Primary school leavers still expected to get wage employment after completing primary education (Kilimhana, 1975:146).

In addition, school leaving examination remained academic regardless as to whether the curriculum was environmental oriented. It is in practice, a secondary school entry examination. It does not measure the realization of the goals and objectives used in Education for Self-reliance or the community school for that matter. Community oriented, like environmental and cultural studies, and other useful manual skills like farming, handicraft, cookery, needlework, etc. are not examined. Because of the continued emphasis the government places on written examinations as selection mechanism, teacher put less attention on skill training because what counted in the end was academic achievement. In turn, children were not provided with enough skills which would help them to become productive in their villages.

The objective of orienting primary school curriculum to Tanzania's culture and environment, namely, to provide practical skills to children which they would employ in their villages after they left school, has been met with limited success. Evidence of this is the pupil's particularly the parents' struggle to secure places in private schools for their children or even a place to repeat grade so that they can get place in a government secondary school (Moshia, 1976).

The orientation of the primary school curriculum to our own culture and environment, in general, and the establishment of community schools in particular has been seen as a deliberate attempt to keep children on the land in their villages. This has created suspicion among parents mainly because they appear to thwart, at an early stage, the parent's hopes and ambitious for their children and their security in their old age. Farming is still viewed as a residual occupation and as a last resort for the ambitious people. It is viewed by parents as a backward looking movement aimed at tying their children, and themselves to rural poverty.

The above negative results, to some extent, show that the parents' perception and their attitudes towards the function of primary education and the school have not changed. Changes in the curriculum have not succeeded in changing their views and bringing about the expectations about primary education. They still see the function of primary education as that of preparing their children for secondary education and wage employment. Primary education remained the source of access to good life, possibly away from rural areas.

Parental response is partly due to the perpetuation of income differences prevailing in Tanzania. That is, parents' aspirations are influenced by the structure of opportunities whereby steady income still depends on wage employment which, in turn, is based on formal schooling despite the party and government's longtime efforts to reduce income differences between peasants and workers. Also the development of socio-economic opportunities in the rural areas has dragged behind those in urban areas thus discouraging parents' hopes for their children's future in the villages.

#### **X. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT, CURRICULUM AND SCHOOL PRACTICE: PROPOSED APPROACH**

- It is agreed in principle that the objectives of a curriculum that takes into account the culture and environment of a given society are to develop in the learners work and study skills that enable them to raise significant questions from their experiences and their community, expand these questions into problems for study; use multiple resources and techniques in solving problems; work in meaningful relationships with other learners and community members in problem solving situations, participate in planning learning experiences related to community life; develop social sensitivity and increase their perceptual awareness.

The curriculum also aims at leading an individual to self-fulfilment by assuming responsibility and self direction. In addition the curriculum aims at increasing the learner's social awareness and understanding - understanding his environment and culture as related to other cultures and environments. In sum, a curriculum that is 'cultural' and 'environmental' oriented emphasizes work and study skills (vocational); self-fulfilment (personal actualization) and social understanding (responsibility to community); and one which increasingly uses the community as a place for learning.

The above objectives cannot be attained using the traditional or conventional methods of teaching, or by merely changing the content of the curriculum where by some elements of 'culture' and 'environment' are injected in the curriculum. Rather it requires appropriate organization of the curriculum, so that pupils learning as well as teaching are extended beyond the classroom and more so beyond the written syllabus documents. This then becomes a methodological problem, one of organization rather than content.

Implicit in the above contention is the notion of emphasizing teaching methodology, i.e, the 'how' of teaching, rather than the 'what' of teaching. That is, a syllabus, no matter how much good its content is, is dysfunctional if it does not offer students opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills as they are being taught. Similarly, a syllabus which incorporates culture and environment in its content but does not offer pupils opportunity to learn and practice what they learn beyond the classroom is like a dead syllabus. For this to be avoided, a different methodology - the 'Environmental Approach' is required. An analysis of this approach is in order.

## **XI. THE ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH**

The 'environmental approach' places greater emphasis on problem-solving whereby the pupil makes use of this environment, experience and interest in working towards the objectives of literacy and numeracy. This involves posing open-ended questions about problems in the local community, encouraging children to research different aspects of the problem or topic and to locate and read appropriate sections of the texts supplementary sources and carefully selected community resources including observing community's activities, questioning, discussing and sharing the findings with other members of the class. Through discussions, children become more skilled in human interactions.

The approach which is much to Piaget's view that children progress from a level of 'concrete operations' to a level of 'abstract operations' is not antagonistic to the pattern of subdivisions of subjects, so long as these are not insisted on at too early a stage in the child's development. However, the approach cannot be undertaken if the study is based on rigidly differentiated subjects. This means in practice the recognition of the need to provide direct experiences for children out of which can develop abstract concepts. The emphasis would then be placed on the child acquiring the ability to reason for himself/herself using basic data which will have been accumulated from his immediate familiar surroundings and to communicate the results of his investigation rather than on the absorption of a body of information communicated to him by the teacher under various subject headings.

The teacher's role in this approach becomes that of advisor and guide rather than that of pure instructor. In this capacity, the teacher can provide for the child's educational experiences which are more relevant to the needs of the community at large than was the case with traditional approach. What is required is a change of attitude on the part of the teacher by viewing himself/herself as an instructor and learners as recipients to that of a learner and a guide to the learners who are resourceful and self-directing.

For the above to be effective, it is necessary not only to use the environment as a source of educational experiences but also that the community members themselves, should, as far as it is practicable, participate in the educational process. To this end, many of the lessons will of necessity take place outside the walls of the classroom/school. In all this, the interest and support of parents and other community members must be gained for success to be possible. It should be understood that most parents tend to view the school as a place where serious work of book learning should take place. The idea of children being educated through matters such as their own farming, water supply, markets, traditional music and dances etc. may arouse suspicion on the part of parents, especially if this is done outside the classroom during the normal school hours. To overcome this natural suspicion, it will be necessary to gain their confidence and enlist their participation whenever possible in school activities. In addition to winning parental

confidence, a different approach to teacher training is necessary. The normal pedagogical training which focuses its attention almost entirely on the education of children within the framework of a syllabus in the classroom need to be replaced by an approach which provides the teacher with general knowledge in the various subject matter, professional and teacher training.

## **XII. THE FUTURE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOL CURRICULA**

Attempts to realize change are practical, they involve practice. That is, whatever changes or ends are made, they must be put into action in order for the changes to be effected. This requires that appropriate ways and means be employed in order to attain the selected ends. It is also necessary that the selection of ends be made on their merit and made known to the concerned groups, i.e., the clientele. For the education system to be able to achieve the aim of changing people's attitudes towards the function of primary education, by incorporating culture and environment in the school curricula, the rationale for making this choice must be clear and understood by policy makers, planners and the clientele alike. Indeed, it could be said that the decision for or against a cultural and environmental saturated curriculum is based on the people's understanding, appreciation and acceptance of different goals and purposes from those of the 'traditional' or 'conventional' curriculum. Without a clear understanding and acceptance of the proposed curricular changes by the Tanzanian publics, there will be no basis for developing and implementing such curricula; or rejecting them. The community related studies must be best justified in the same fashion as the 'subject-centred' curricula; that it has something worthwhile to contribute to the process of education which the traditional curricula has failed to contribute to children. Sinclair (1980:150) states:

"a well-conducted programme is thus assumed on an a priori-basis to benefit pupils as much or as desirable as a complement to more orthodox studies. A further justification might be a prior belief that a well-conducted relevant programme should make positive contribution to the solution of social and economic problems either immediately or over a long term, a belief again held on intuitive grounds in the knowledge that no direct measurement of contribution might ever be possible."

The above quotation means that policy-makers, educational planners and administrators as well as change agents need be able to articulate the concepts of culture and environment and their implications on the curriculum and school practices. They should be able to explain to the clients why there should be a shift from the traditional conventions curriculum to a community school curriculum. They need to be able to state clearly what results, both extrinsic and intrinsic, should be anticipated and whether this should be limited and exclusive of school-going age children - or inclusive of children and adults alike. Above all, they

need to be clear about the 'culture' and 'environment' they are referring to when they demand that the curriculum and school practices should reflect culture and environment or that schools should serve the community. For it can well be argued that schools have indeed served the communities and that they have assumed responsibility in preparing the pupils for the personal, local, national and international roles and levels of operation; using the conventional curricula. What is required is to convince the public, that the new curricula and school practices can speed up the solution of their social and economic problems and proceed to inculcate this belief in the entire social system.

However, it is admitted that the amelioration of problems such as rural poverty, unemployment, rural-urban migration of primary school leavers cannot be solved by merely effecting changes in the school curricula and school practices; or by the relevant agencies in the educational sector alone. Multi-agency programmes would be required to encourage and stimulate changes which can be attractive to both school leavers and their parents. These changes pertain to land reforms, provision of irrigation water and channels, provision of agricultural and health services, development of rural and urban cooperative societies, provision of safe drinking water and other infrastructure amenities.

Without such programmes, the school, whether it practices a 'traditional' or a 'community school' curriculum, can accomplish very little. What is required for Tanzania is to re-emphasize its efforts toward social amelioration and continue building on the already existing school-community relations. But whatever support may be provided by other agencies, a community (culture and environment) oriented curriculum if well implemented, remains in a better position to enhance social and economic transformation than a purely academic subject-centred curriculum.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT <sup>3/</sup>

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<sup>3/</sup> See Note 3 of Annex I

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper an attempt is made to discuss the role of culture and environment in curriculum development. This has been done by:-

1. Providing a rationale for including culture and environment related content in the school curriculum.
2. Describing the ways in which culture and environment may influence a school curriculum.
3. Analysing the culture and environment - related content in the current primary education syllabus.
4. Critiquing the current practice in the teaching of culture and environment related content.
5. Proposing a programme of cultural activities which can promote the teaching of culture and environment related content.

#### II. RATIONALE

For a better understanding of the issues raised in this paper, it is necessary to define culture and environment, curriculum and curriculum development.

1. (a) Encyclopaedia Britannica Volume 8 says culture consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art rituals, ceremonies, and others. (Page 1151)
- (b) Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (Page 1152)

In other words, culture is a way of life of the people.

2. According to Farrant J.S., "environment embraces the physical, economic, social and culture conditions that prevail in our World and the forces emanating from these that influence our behaviour."
3. (a) Farrant defines curriculum as that set of broad decisions about what is taught and how it is taught that determines the general framework within which lessons are planned and learning takes place".  
(b) The planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal-social competence. (Tanner and Tanner, 1975).
4. Curriculum Development is the planning and provision of learning opportunities intended to bring about certain desired changes in pupils, and assessment of the extent to which these changes have taken place.

A well known educational slogan says that education should be in tune with society. This slogan may imply that:

- (i) there exists a society;
- (ii) the society thrives on education, and
- (iii) education should respond to the needs of the society and how these relate to their culture and environment.

A society needs education for its existence. Since a society seems to invest heavily in its youth, then the main purpose of education is that the children should grow into useful citizens and become leaders of the future.

This is to enable children to become people who will maintain and improve upon what the society already has.

Therefore the type of education that is given to the nation or society should be that which the society can use. It should be the education which will foster the development of the society. A society benefits from development which is intrinsic because such type of development enables the society to see from where it is coming and where it is going.

Every society has a characteristic way of life. It has commonly approved and accepted ways of organisation, form of dress, food production, feeding habits,

family and child rearing practices. A society has a characteristic philosophy of life, it holds certain ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad. It has certain values, beliefs and superstitions and what it may consider to be effective and relevant form of education.

It is the culture of a society that makes the people. It is through culture that we are able to distinguish between peoples of different ethnic groups. Equally important is the fact that society exists in an environment. It uses and is influenced by the environment because it is an integral part of it.

If an education system is to do justice to the society it purports to serve, it must accommodate the society's culture and environment in the school curriculum.

Eventually curriculum developers should ensure that these two aspects of society are properly and adequately taken care of. No society will accept and respect an education system which ignores its culture. Similarly, no education system will be understood and survive if it ignores the environment in which it operates because such a system will be alien to its target population.

It is upon this premise that a school curriculum should be careful in considering elements of culture and the environment in which teaching and learning can take place.

### **III. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

The specific objectives for including culture and environment related content in the school curriculum may do to:

1. Ensure an education which is in tune with society, its culture and environment.
2. Develop the personality of the child in relation to his culture and environment.
3. Prepare the child for membership to and participation in the activities of his society effectively.
4. Foster the preservation, development, transformation and transmission of the culture of contemporary society.
5. Provide for the improvement and development of the society, its culture and environment.
6. Equip children with skills and abilities to enable them make economic use of available materials and the human environment.

7. Enable children to identify, analyse and interpret cultural and environmental phenomena of their society.

#### **IV. HOW CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCE THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

1. One way in which culture and environment can influence the school curriculum is through the national educational goals and aims. These goals and aims are derived from the culture and environment of the society.

An examination of the Malawi National Educational goals reveals the following ethical and socio-cultural goals:

To inculcate acceptable standards of behaviour.

To develop an appreciation for and the practice of one's culture.

To help preserve Malawi's traditions and customs.

To promote spiritual and moral development.

To help discard belief in taboos and superstitions which retard national development.

From these goals the primary education objectives with special emphasis on culture and environment related content in the school curriculum, have been formulated so that children are able to:

- Develop the spirit of unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline.
- Demonstrate the spirit of leadership.
- Know their rights and duties as citizens.
- Be tolerant and respectful of others.
- Develop acceptable standards of behaviour.
- Develop an appreciation for the practice of one's culture.
- Understand Malawi's traditions and customs.
- Develop spiritual and moral values.

Following these objectives, the curriculum developers have come up with syllabuses which have content aimed at attaining these objectives. Thus culture and environment have an influence on the school curriculum.

The school through the curriculum is one agent which fosters the development of a child's personality. And that is done in relation to the culture of the society to which the child belongs and the environment in which he lives.

Through exposure to culture and environment related content the child is expected to develop the attitudes, values, skills, customs and traditions of his society. He or she should understand his or her society to be able to work in and improve upon it.

#### **V. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT RELATED CONTENT IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: THE CASE OF MALAWI**

In line with the rationale and specific objectives stated above, the Malawi school curriculum considers culture and environment related content especially in Art and Craft, Languages (Chichewa and English), Music, Home Economics, Physical Education and Social Studies.

##### **(a) Art Craft**

The syllabus for this subject is almost wholly based on the society's culture and local environment. Children make hoe handles, baskets, mats, pots, brooms, drums, shields, spears, arrows, bows and arrows and model various domestic and wild animals, people and other objects and features found in their locality.

The reason for including this type of content in the school curriculum is to ensure that there is no gap between the home and the school. It becomes easy and more meaningful to teach using the local environment with which the children are familiar and the materials which can be found in their environment.

##### **(b) Chichewa**

The teaching of Chichewa consists of story-telling, dramatisation, role-playing, riddles and proverbs in addition to the other language teaching techniques.

In these techniques and skills a lot of culture and environment related content is used. Stories tell about the life of our ancestors, children, women and animals as contained in the local myths, legends and fables. Often moral lessons are drawn from the stories. The riddles and proverbs are all those found in the community and are used in villages and homes while seated around fireplaces and on other ceremonial occasions.

Children dramatize traditional trials of cases, wedding parties, hunting, family life and traditional healing. Besides being tools for language development, these techniques keep alive the society's culture. The children know their past. That helps them to know why their society is what it is and does what it does.

The other aspect of the culture and environment related content in Chichewa is the nature of the reading materials contained in the text books used in the school system. Basically the books are written to develop language skills in children; for instance, comprehension and letter writing. The authors of the books have used traditional and cultural themes in texts. So the children read a passage for comprehension while at the same time learning something about their own culture and environment.

**(c) English**

In the days of old, English books contained stories and material based on foreign culture. Pupils read about London, Japan or China. They read about how people in those places lived. There was nothing about themselves. All the names of people and animals were alien. It was difficult for most of them to appreciate the texts. The material was detached from their culture and environment.

Now there has been a change. The English reading books are based on the culture of the people and the environment in which they live. Needless to say, children read the books with much interest and enthusiasm. They appreciate the stories and see the relevance of the stories to their own life.

The following are some of the examples of stories in the current text-books.

The Cowboys	:	Book 5
Lende and the Lion	:	Book 6
Improve your maize	:	Book 8
Be careful	:	Book 8
Eggs	:	Book 8

The past ten years have seen the development of a significant way of teaching culture and environment related content in English. This is by way of drama festivals organized by the Association for the Teaching of English in Malawi (ATEM) for secondary schools. While some of the plays are foreign in background, the majority of them are written against the background of the culture and environment of Malawi.

Some of the culture and environment related plays which are performed by schools are:

Who will marry our daughter?

Chiwaleso  
Wizards  
The Lizard's Tail  
The Banana Tree

**(d) Music**

Much emphasis is put on developing songs with a Malawian cultural background. The syllabus contains two-part, call-complete, call-response and call-repeat songs which are typical of Malawian cultural songs. Dancing is also included in the syllabuses for primary education.

Use of improvised musical instruments is emphasized. Not only because they are cheap, but also because they can be made easily if and when required.

**(e) Home Economics**

When teaching the topic on food, emphasis is put on the study of nutrients of local foodstuffs. Both traditional and modern preparation and preservation of food are taught.

**(f) Physical Education**

All minor games which are included in the syllabus are those found in the villages. Games such as 'the chicken and the hawk', "chitedze chandiyabwa" and the 'red and white birds' to name only a few, are cultural in context.

**(g) Social Studies**

In social studies some of the topics which relate directly to culture and environment are:

- . the family
- . the school
- . the village
- . the village headman
- . the animals around the school
- . the local market
- . the shopkeeper

- . traditional leaders
- . traditional healing
- . traditional religion
- . traditional dances

The reason for including these topics in our curriculum is that they constitute the kind of daily life that people live in the society. The pupils come from the society and their lives are controlled and influenced by norms of society. It is therefore right and proper that the children should know these forms of life so that they can participate meaningfully in the activities of their society.

## **VI. CURRENT TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

In order to attain the objectives pertaining to culture and environment in the school curriculum, teachers use the following strategies:

**Lecture:** The teachers describe an aspect of life in the community while the children are listening. At the end of the lesson children are asked a few questions and the narration is summarized. Topics such as traditional healing, religion and settlement of disputes are treated in this manner.

**Discussion:** Topics on traditional dances, the family, and the village headman are generally taught through discussion. The teacher builds up the lesson with the participation and contribution of the pupils. The children sometimes discuss in groups. And the outcomes are later stream-lined and put together by the teacher.

**Dramatisation:** A story or an event is dramatized by the children. The topics which children enjoy dramatizing a traditional healing, hunting, wedding and life in the family and in the village.

**Resource Persons:** From time to time a teacher may ask one of the local people to come and talk to the children on a certain topic. It could be a talk on how to make pots, or mats or hoe-handles. It could be a talk on traditional dance - types, ceremonial occasions, organisation and functions of the dances. It could be a talk on how sacrifice was organized and administered, or how marriages were formed or how people dressed in the past.

After the talk, children ask questions and later they may illustrate some aspect of the topic covered. In case of dances and art and craft, children may learn the dance or make the items discussed.

This has proved to be a valuable way of teaching culture and environment related content because the resource persons are usually experts in this field. Some of

the teachers may not be able to do this well because either they are strangers in the area in which they are teaching or they are young and have not experienced the kind of life in the society.

**Field Trips:** Sometimes field trips are organized for the children to go and study plants and animals, habitats for various animals, soils and land use to see live situations. A visit may be made to a farm, a traditional or magistrate's court, a local market, the post office, or a church.

At times, schools organize visits to distant places to see work in factories. The Lilongwe Nature Sanctuary organizes visits to game parks and other places of interest for the public as well as pupils and students.

If properly organized, field trips can be very useful. They give children an opportunity to see things in their natural environment. They see and observe things which would not be brought to the classroom. They talk to people who are actually doing the jobs, make notes and collect samples for further examination.

## **VII CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS**

The following are some of the weaknesses in the current practice in relation to the teaching of culture and environment related content:

After being under British rule for some seventy years, most Malawians came to believe that the culture of the people of Malawi was inferior to that of Europeans. Teachers are no exception to this rule. They have tended to think that it is being primitive to teach culture-related content.

Perhaps part of the problem is that there has been no deliberate official attempt to sensitize teachers to the importance of culture and environment in the curriculum. Most of what the society has displayed is a condescending attitude towards African culture and the environment in which the African lives.

The second weakness is that teachers do not know the objectives of culture and environmental issues in the school curriculum. It is only recently when a limited number of teachers ever heard about the role of objectives in curriculum development. The majority of them do not know even the general objectives of the various subjects that they teach. The current syllabuses were not developed following a systematic approach. The subject objectives were not articulated.

From the point raised above, it is fair to say that most of the teachers are not familiar with the culture and environment related content prescribed in our syllabuses. It is possible for them to come across a topic such as pot-making in Art and Craft, or traditional dances in Music and Social studies.

But teachers may not relate them to the cultural development of the society. Most of the schools do not have copies of the syllabuses. Teachers do not know the scope of the culture and environment related content of the syllabuses.

Very little culture and environment related content seems to be taught. That which is taught does not receive enough emphasis. Most of the culture and environment related content is in the affective domain. Topics deal with feelings, attitudes and values. There is nothing more difficult than the formulation of suitable objectives in the affective domain. The problem is that it is hard to come up with objectives whose attainment can be satisfactorily assessed. Teachers find it safe to leave out such objectives and hence the topics are not taught.

In 1987 in a staff briefing of some of the teachers' colleges on how to teach topics such as cooperation, consideration for others, respect for elders, and others in society, the staff felt it was not possible to teach these topics effectively.

It is not easy to organise field trips and educational visits. For most teachers, planning is not a familiar skill. They find it difficult to organize a visit to places of interest be it someone's farm or a forest. Some of them do not even know where to find what they want, or to identify a person from the neighbourhood of the school who can talk on a certain topic.

It is difficult to move with a whole class of children to a post-office or traditional court which is several kilometers away. The other group of the culture and environment related content is in the psychomotor domain. Examples are pot making, mat making, making of hoe handles in art and crafts, and dancing in social studies. Two problems emerge. First, schools are not able to find raw materials. The schools in urban areas are worse off. Besides, there is a tendency among teachers to expect the Ministry to supply their requirements. Many teachers have not yet realised that they themselves can do a lot to utilize the environment at little or no cost. Lack of initiative to improvise constitutes a serious handicap in the teaching of culture and environment related content. It is now that the Ministry is using some of the College tutors to talk on improvisation at seminars.

## **VIII. SUGGESTED PROGRAMME OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENT ACTIVITIES**

Something that can be done to promote the effective teaching of culture and environment related content is to set up a Cultural Resource Centre. The general objective of the Centre would be to promote Malawi's Cultural heritage and values.

Specifically the Centre will:-

1. Make, collect and preserve objects and articles depicting the cultural heritage of Malawi.
2. Produce and collect oral literature e.g. culture and environment related poetry.
3. Write materials covering the history and role of the items made and collected.
4. Organize and perform traditional dances in traditional attire. The dances should be performed by the right age group if possible. For instance, "Menjedza" should be performed by elderly men and women dressed in skins and rugs as was the case originally.
5. Build up the cultural history of Malawi. Stewards could be trained to explain to visitors and students what the Centre is doing. The most popular culture related content which is taught today not as a lesson but as entertainment, is traditional dances for girls. Even here, boys do not participate fully except in the "ingoma" dance which combines boys and girls.

There is limited evidence to show that teachers use culture and environment related activities in their teaching of various school subjects. Some of the examples are the use of singing to teach vowels in Chichewa, the use of shields, spears, skins, "nyanda" and gourds in history.

In Home Economics girls are taught to use "Mafuwa" (three supporters of a cooking pot on fire) and "nsinjiro" (groundnut flour) to enrich vegetables so that a meal has the three groups of food in the absence of meat, eggs or fish.

They also use proverbs and riddles to teach moral lessons. For instance "mau wa akulu akoma atagonera", is used to teach children to heed advice from grown ups. In Home Economics Kwashiokor is used to teach protein deficiency diseases.

6. Organize food fairs showing how traditional dishes were prepared and eaten.
7. Display different methods of food preservation, healing and religion.
8. Organize competitions to encourage public participation in the development of Malawi's culture and the preservation of its cultural heritage.
9. Set up structures showing how villages and homes (families) were organized in the past. For instance, the chief's house, a family house

and its partitions where chickens and goats slept, the fire place, the children, food store and "Mphala" (the men's chatting place in the village).

10. Train young men and women in making various household items.
11. Train boys and girls in acrobatics, music and traditional dances.
12. Train teachers and students in making improvised teaching and learning aids for all subjects.

#### **IX. ORGANISATION**

1. In line with the objective, the centre will have very low-cost temporary building such as those of the historical past. For the smooth running of the Centre, one building should be permanent. This will be the administration block to handle the affairs of the Centre and deal with the public. The rest of the buildings should be made of wattle and daub.
2. The Centre should be laid out in a semi-circle with the display houses in a curve and the administration block at the head with the performing area in between. An area could also be set aside for gardens. Pole and grass sheds will do for visitors when they observe the performances. Bamboo and "Chiwale" chairs and benches could be provided. If the public will be required to pay for the performances, then an enclosed place will be needed.
3. The Centre should be administered by an officer in-charge. This could be, for a start, one of the officers in the Department of Culture in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Meanwhile this Department does not seem to have done much in this direction. He could then have two or three assistants and a few support staff such as messengers, clerks, security men and stewards.

The traditional poets, musicians dancers, craftsmen, historians, healers, religious leaders and other actors could be engaged on temporary basis as Malawi Broadcasting Corporation does with Kapalepale and other radio forums. Perhaps later it might be found necessary to identify the groups to be employed on a permanent basis, probably as Kapalepale is today with Malawi Broadcasting Corporation.

4. For a start, the Ministry of Education and Culture would make a provision for the initial establishment, salaries and materials of the Centre.
5. Each day the staff of the Centre will be making the items mentioned above, going round collecting items, inviting people to come and perform, record poems, stories, producing written material which could later be published on a quarterly or half-yearly basis as the case may be and cataloging the items.

6. Opportunities could be explored for obtaining experts within and outside the country to train our men.

#### **X. HOW THE PROGRAMME CAN HELP THE TEACHING OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT RELATED CONTENT**

If properly organized the Centre can serve as a valuable source of information and knowledge. After a few years of work the Centre should have enough historical documentation, literature, accounts, plays, and performances such as music, dances and acrobatics.

The Centre should also be a resource for improvised teaching aids such as musical instruments, globes, calendars, counters, trash and reading cards and charts, posters, volt-meters, lamps, torches, to name only a few.

Schools can benefit from visits to the Centre preferably at week-ends. Arrangements could be made for those who are far to visit the Centre during the week. The visitors will go round the place and at each stage a steward will show them and explain how the various items were made or obtained and how they were used in the olden days and how they are used today. At another stage viewers may listen to a traditional opem recited by a villager.

There should be a deliberate emphasis on the use of local materials in schools. The stewards will explain the importance of using the local environment for improvisation. The Centre can keep a plot where various crops, especially those which are difficult to find, are planted. The idea being to show schools how they can keep such crops like tea, coffee, pawpaws, oranges, rubber, cotton and others at the school for ease of reference in lessons.

At the moment teachers in Lilongwe, Mangochi, Salima, Mzimba, for example, find it difficult to teach about rubber, tea, cotton, coffee because these are not generally grown in their districts. They should be encouraged to raise their own in their schools even if it meant only two plants of each.

The other and very important contribution that the Centre will make to the teaching of various subjects is that it will serve as a Research Centre for schools.

The traditional way of counting in fives will be developed and used in Mathematics. The game of "Bawo" will be a useful starting point or reinforcement in the teaching of counting, addition, subtraction and number systems made and circulated. The round houses will be used to demonstrate that using the same materials a round structure uses the biggest space followed by a square and then a rectangle.

The principles of traditional methods of preserving food, keeping food warm and keeping water cool will be used in the teaching of science and health education. The students of law in the University may find the Centre useful too. Teachers

can use the traditional legal system to teach the developmental stages of law and justice. The students of literature, history, music, geography, religious studies and sociology should find valuable store of information at the Centre at both primary and post-primary levels.

## **XL. CONCLUSION**

Culture and environment play a very important role in curriculum development. Our current syllabuses contain a reasonable amount of culture and environment related learning activities, but not all are properly taught because:

- (a) Some of the teachers are not sensitive to the significance of the culture and environment related content,
- (b) Most teachers do not know the objectives and the significance of the culture and environment related content, and
- (c) It is difficult to formulate appropriate specific objectives in the affective domain to which some of the content belongs.

The establishment of a Cultural Resource Centre would go a long way in enhancing the teaching of culture and environment related content. To begin with, one Centre could be established and developed. Later, more Centres would be set up to be within easy reach of the schools.

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

**THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN SIERRA LEONE <sup>4/</sup>**

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<sup>4/</sup> See Note 4 of Annex I

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN SIERRA LEONE

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

Culture could be defined as a way of life of a people. People use tools and other means to meet their material, social and physical needs to develop their way of life. Culture is both cumulative and changing. As people meet with new challenges that confront them, culture responds to such challenges and changes likewise. Culture can be considered as consisting of material and non-material aspects. Material aspects relate to such objects like houses, furniture, utensils, tools, ornaments, vehicles, food and clothing. Non-material aspects relate to the people's language, music, traditions, manners etc. These two aspects shape people's ethnic and national attitudes and general outlook on life.

Environment relate to the ecosystem. The relationship between living and non-living organisms in the environment, the harmonious balance existing among the various elements, constitute the fascinating study of the ecosystem which may range in size from a small pond with its plant and animal life to a vast forest. Man's activities and natural disasters often threaten the ecosystem.

The whole Planet Earth is a vast ecosystem and the solar energy is an important external resource of an ecosystem.

#### II. RATIONALE

Culture and environment are like twins. One cannot understand culture without examining the relationship between man's way of life and his environment.

The rationale for the inclusion of culture and environment in the Primary School Curriculum in Sierra Leone could be analysed from educational, philosophical, political, religious ethical and economic considerations. The rationale could be summarized briefly as follows:-

- "Knowledge of 'Literacy Skills' in the official language English and in one or more indigenous languages". Culture and environment could be learnt through languages.

- "Rational approach to natural and social events through observing and understanding the environment in which the pupils live". Pupil's development is enhanced through a rational outlook of the environment.
- "Positive attitudes towards the pupils themselves and their cultural background towards work and the process of community and national development".

The home and immediate home environment start from pre-school years to develop in pupils, positive cultural attitudes. This should continue in Primary Schooling.

- "Positive traits of character and ethical values".

Socialization in culture and environment from tender ages, can take care of developing positive traits of character and ethical values.

The above quotations are extracted from the Sierra Leone Educational philosophy as crucial part of the aims of the educational base.

The study of major or related parts of culture and the environment, that is, about man's way of life in his immediate environment, cannot be done explicitly without drafting a suitable curriculum that reflects the child's environment. The need for the inclusion of this field directs the education planners and curriculum developers to devise objectives that are interesting, suitable and relevant to the children.

Finally, an overall rationale is that children 'live' within their culture and environment, which naturally constitute their life-style even without formal education. Primary Education taps these natural elements, culture and environment, to help mould the personality, character traits, national outlook, attitudes and values and overall socio-economic development of the children. Thus culture and environment must be included in the Primary Curriculum.

### **III. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

In the revised Sierra Leone Primary Curriculum now being piloted, certain subjects lend themselves heavily to the inclusion of various aspects of culture and environment. These subjects are Environmental Studies, Social Studies, Science, Creative Practical Arts, Prevocational Studies and Language Arts.

These subjects depend largely for their content and materials from the immediate environment and culture of the people.

The aim/goals are more composite and long-term in their accomplishment. They are here stated for the various subjects mentioned above along with objectives directly based on culture and the environment.

**(a) Environmental Studies**

The aim is to provide learning experiences for children to develop understanding about the nature of their social, biological and physical environments:

- To improve attitudes and practices concerning healthy living and to appreciate the services and interactions among people and between people and things in the environment

The objectives for including culture and environment in the curriculum are as follows:-

- To enable pupils at the end of the course to:-
  - Participate in maintaining good health of their bodies and sanitation of their homes and community
- Classify plants and animals according to their use and functions
- Describe the basic needs and the sources and processes for obtaining them
- Describe the local weather and how weather and climatic seasons affect the people, plants and animals
- Explain the sources, importance and various uses of water.
- Explain the importance of festivals and celebrations in the neighbourhood.

**(b) Social Studies**

Aim

To relate the physical features, climate, vegetation and economic activities of Sierra Leone to the history, social and cultural in activities of the people in Sierra Leone and neighbouring Guinea and Liberia.

Objectives

- Acquire basic skills in collecting and interpreting information and in constructive thinking, sound judgement and problem solving

- Develop social attitudes such as cooperation, resourcefulness, initiative, appreciation for dignity in labour and integrity and sense of responsibility
- Identify similarities and differences in the life-style and cultural background of ethnic groups in the home and neighbouring countries

**(c) Science**

**Objectives**

- Identify common plants and animals at home, school and in the community
- Make operational definitions of terms based upon what is observed and how they are measured
- Carry out simple scientific procedures of measuring and testing to find out information about the environment
- State the variations that exist among living things
- Explain the conditions necessary for things to grow
- Identify the basic parts of plants and insects

**(d) Creative Practical Arts**

**Aim**

To identify suitable materials in the environment for Creative Arts and Practical Arts.

**Objectives**

- Identify materials for carving, for weaving and for making musical instruments
- Differentiate and appreciate musical sounds produced by instruments made by different ethnic groups
- Sing and dance to music of various cultural groups
- Use different shades and blends of primary and secondary colours
- Participate in using local materials to produce colours

**(e) Prevocational Studies**

**Objectives:**

- Identify and prepare a variety of food grown and found in the environment
- Manage economically the use of available resources in the environment e.g. energy, tools, equipment and other material resources
- Participate in farming (gardening) and animal raising activities in the school and home environment

**(f) Physical/Health Education**

**Objectives**

- Identify local materials for making equipment for games and sports
- Participate actively in cleaning the home, school, and the environment
- Explain the meaning of environmental sanitation and identify the health problems associated with dirty water, refuse and poor sanitation

**(g) Language**

**Objectives**

- Explain rhythm, rhyming words and give meanings of poems about the local culture and environment.
- Write script for plays using a familiar story or aspects of the local culture
- Practise the art of listening and speaking one or more indigenous languages accurately
- Practise the art of reading and writing literature, stories and songs, customs and traditions of the local culture in indigenous languages.

The objectives on culture and environment are contained in and could be drawn from a number of subjects at the primary level. The objectives stated above are not exhaustive but constitute a core of objectives directly based on the theme.

#### IV. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT CONTENT

The current content of culture and environment for majority of schools in Sierra Leone is limited and found mainly in Social Studies, Science and Practical Arts. However, in about 90 schools, chosen from within a twenty-mile radius from Teacher Training Colleges for Primary Schools all over the country, a new curriculum is being piloted. In this new curriculum, the content of culture and environment is contained, mainly in the subjects which lend themselves to integration of concepts in the field, and whose objectives have been stated above. A list of the content for each of these subject follows:

(a) Environmental Studies

Care of our bodies, cleanliness of the home and local community; different plants and animals in the locality. How the people derive their basic needs, processing materials for basic needs, effects of weather and climate on the people, plants and animals, sources, importance and uses of water. The importance of festivals and celebrations in the locality.

(b) Social Studies

The physical features, climate and vegetation of Sierra Leone, the main occupations of the people; the stories, history, social and cultural activities of the people in Sierra Leone. The history, social and cultural activities of the immediate neighbouring countries, Republic of Guinea and Liberia; skills in data collection and interpretation. The need for cooperation, resourcefulness, initiative, appreciation and integrity, dignity in labour and sense of responsibility, cultural background and life-style of ethnic groups within home country and the neighbouring countries.

(c) Science

Common parts of plants and animals and respiratory systems, life-cycle of common plants and animals, classification of things observed such as insects, birds, flies, fishes etc. Characteristics of living things, sources of energy for everyday living. Things in the ecosystem e.g. a pond, what makes things grow, clean and proper environment; basic needs for home and family living.

(d) Creative Practical Arts

Materials in the locality for Creative and Practical Arts; materials and local musical instruments; composition of songs, sounds produced by instruments made by different ethnic groups; songs and stories of various cultural groups; primary and secondary colours. Local materials for weaving, painting, singing, dancing in the cultural groups.

(e) **Prevocational Studies**

Preservation and preparation of food grown and found in the locality, rational use of available resources i.e. energy, tools, equipment, farming/gardening in the school and at home.

Hygiene in the home, school and the environment, locally available cleaning agents, properties and characteristics of cotton and other fabrics for laundering, for sewing, raising selected animals-poultry, fish. Construction of simple structures and equipment for raising animals.

(f) **Physical/Health Education**

Local materials for making equipment for games and sports, cleaning the home, school and local environment; meaning and importance of environmental sanitation; health problems resulting from dirty water, poor refuse disposal and poor sanitation; diarrheal diseases and preparation of Oral Rehydration Salt Solution (ORSS); the importance of First Aid. Preventive measures against main children's diseases.

(g) **Language**

Rhythm, rhyming words, meanings of poems about local culture and the environment. Writing plays and stories of the local culture and the environment; listening and speaking indigenous languages. Reading and writing short poetry, stories and songs of local customs and traditions.

**V. CONTENT TEACHING - LEARNING STRATEGIES**

The choice of particular methods and techniques for teaching concepts/ideas, skills, attitudes and values in the theme, culture and environment, depends on a number of factors namely:

- The idea or value or skill itself, the psychological, philosophical, educational levels of the pupils and the resourcefulness of the teacher.
- The crucial aspects of pedagogical considerations are the output of the pupils who, over a series of lessons, go through the process of teaching/learning transaction. It is on this score that a variety of methods and techniques is advocated.
- The contents have been labelled under discrete subjects, although the nature and scope of these subjects are broad enough to allow for integration of aspects of their contents across subjects. For example, the topics: hygiene in the home, school and the environment and environmental sanitation are incorporated in both Prevocational Studies

and in Physical/Health Education. Likewise, the topics: the importance of festivals and celebrations in the locality, and songs/stories of various cultural groups are under the umbrella of three subjects: Environmental Studies, Social Studies and Creative Practical Arts. Mention is made about this integration or interdisciplinarity of concepts/ideas across subject boundaries, to ascertain the fact that treatment of concepts/ideas are not exclusive to a particular subject discipline.

The current teaching/learning strategies that are used in majority of our primary schools are:

Enquiry/discovery method, field trips/excursions, use of resource persons, role playing, assignments, audio-visual aids, lecture/teacher mode, group work, projects, quizzes and questioning.

For the new curriculum now being piloted, the above teaching/learning strategies, except for the lecture/teacher telling mode, are even more emphasised.

A brief explanation of each of these methods/techniques and samples of topics for which they are used in the teaching/learning process are as follows:-

The Enquiry Method used mainly in Science and Physical/Health Education starts with a problem. The problem may be environmental e.g., what is the main cause of dysentery among school children in our locality? It might be cultural e.g., what do these carvings symbolize?

With little guidance from the teacher, the pupils seek to discover and find answers to the recognized problems through the following steps:-

- defining a problem
- formulating hypothesis, guesses
- gathering data
- analysing data/findings
- testing the hypothesis
- arriving at a conclusion
- applying or generalizing the conclusion

Organized groups of pupils supervised by teachers go through this process at various sources to elicit plausible answers to problems which they have identified during their course work.

Field Trips/Excursion - are very useful in Social Studies. The planning stage of field trips is very important for the trip to yield fruitful results. Both teacher and pupils are involved in the planning.

The teacher is responsible for the administrative aspect. The teacher identifies the site and seeks approval of the proprietor at site, communicates with the head of school and rearranges class period so as to get a block of periods which might be necessary for the trip.

Both the teacher and pupils prepare the professional aspect of the trip. They decide on the route and the types of questions to be asked, specific assignments for sub-groups and collect materials to be used for drawing/sketching and writing answers to questions. Transportation is usually arranged when the site is far away from the school.

Pupils led by their teachers on such field trips have learnt about:-

- Different plants and insects in the locality.
- How materials are processed for basic needs e.g. soap-making, palm-oil making, gara dyeing etc. Things found in the ecosystem, main occupations of people in the locality, musical instruments used for cultural festivals and materials in the locality for Creative and Practical Arts.

Follow-up after the investigation on the field trip usually takes the form of sub-groups preparation and presentation of reports to the whole class, classifying things collected, sketching, mapping, modelling and writing of individual notes.

(a) Use of Resource Persons

A wealth of information is usually derived from resource persons in the community. The class can meet a resource person at site or he can be invited to the class. Elderly persons like Paramount Chiefs usually tell the class about stories/myths/legends and history of the chiefdom. Health Officers like Community Health Office (C.H.O.'s) Medical Officers and Senior Nurses usually talk to the classes on topics such as:-

Meaning and importance of environmental sanitation, health problems resulting from dirty water, hygiene in the home, school and environment.

(b) Role Play

It is a spontaneous dramatization which is not rehearsed and the lines are composed on the spot. This technique is used to show emotional reactions of those who are assuming the role of the designated person. Children usually role play the following topics:-

Occupation of the people e.g., shouting out wares, uprooting weeds on the farm, dress styles of various ethnic groups, singing and dancing as cultural groups in the locality do, painting pictures.

(c) Assignments

Take home assignments usually engender parent/pupil communication. Assignments should be confidential, thought/provoking for parents to participate. They should reflect what has been taught and serve as follow-up or reinforcement through more practices of what has been taught. Parents can serve as resource persons in clarifying points about any topics about the home and the community.

(d) Audio-Visual Aids

Hard and soft-ware audio visual aids are many and serve varied functions. The rationale is that copious aids appeal to more sense and yield greater and faster reception of ideas by the pupils. Aids should be chosen on various psychological, educational and pedagogical criteria that directly help to achieve the objectives. Pictures, posters, books, slides, television which appeals to the sense of sight; puppets, flannel sets, flip charts which appeal to the sense of touch; the radio, records, recorders and television appeal to the sense of hearing. However, in Sierra Leone the hardware resources are not easily available and as such not used.

Suitable aids, locally made and imported, can serve as transmitter of ideas quickly to pupils, especially slow learners in all topics in a theme.

(e) Lectures or teacher - led classes

The lecture method is widely used in schools. Teachers give information from their note books or reference texts while pupils sit quietly and listen. Some pupils, who can, write down bits and pieces of notes, as invariably pupils in primary schools cannot write fast. The whole lesson is dominated by 'teacher talk' and pupils listen. Pupils, however, remain passive receivers of information from the teacher.

(f) Group Work/Project Work

Pupils are assigned by a teacher to study a topic or problem. This allows for group effort to secure relevant answers. Weak pupils benefit from bright ones through motivation and the feeling of belonging to a small group; dull ones speak their ideas which they usually fail to do in whole class sessions. For group work a leader and a secretary usually assume roles of responsibility to maximize the effort of the entire group. Such leadership roles give pointers for future life.

Project work can be assigned to the sub-group or to individuals. Individuals still have opportunity, with the length of time for the project, to discuss with other members and benefit from various sources of information.

Examples of topics for which these techniques are appropriate are songs and stories of various cultural and ethnic groups in home country, the occupation of our people; observing and writing characteristics of living things i.e. plants, animals.

(g) Quizzes/Questioning

This techniques allows for competitions and a lot of referencing and research for the quiz. Team work is accentuated especially when the leadership directs the peer group to high aspiration in striving for victory over the competing team and individuals.

Well-constructed questions and answers can be formulated to cover various aspects of the theme, culture and environment.

In the new curriculum, however, other teaching/learning strategies have been recommended, especially, for the upper primary classes. These are games, debates, team teaching and values clarification. Team teaching is however, not entirely new in primary schools, as it is used in the upper classes for the teaching of Mathematics, Language Arts and Science which need specialist teachers, and also in Home Economic Centres. A brief description of these recommended strategies follows:-

(h) Games

This is a learning technique where pupils are put in a competitive situation with objectives (Pay Off) participants/players, and rules to help them learn the skills.

Topic for which specially prepared games can be formulated are as follows:-

Basic needs in the home - distribution of food and other items according to the size of families. Snakes and ladder games on 'health of the family'.

It could be stated here that role play, and games promote decision-making skills. They help the pupils to cope with challenges, build up mature minds to admit to change, and to practise the kinds of roles they will be faced with later on in life.

These techniques greatly increase the motivation and performance of both teacher and pupils.

(i) Debates

Preparation for debates has a great motivating force for the pros and cons groups and the rest of the class as well. Referencing in all available sources by individuals build up an armoury of points to launch out while the debate on controversial statement is going on. A topic that pupils can debate on is as follows:-

Traditional festivals and celebrations in the locality must be celebrated as they were celebrated in the days of our great grandparents.

(j) Team Teaching

This technique attempts to combine the varying talents of individual teachers into teaching teams. Some courses or main topics are so broad and integrated that two or more teachers, on account of their speciality in various aspects of the course, happen to teach the same group of pupils.

The suggested contents under Health/Physical Education would call for specialists in Health and Physical Education to handle bits of content directly related to their areas. Similarly contents under Creative and Practical Arts, skills in Music and Art work like weaving, sculpturing and painting will require specialist teachers to teach them.

The physical environment of home, country, the socio-cultural life, the health aspects and communication in indigenous languages, can be taught by specialists in Social Studies, Geography, Sociology, Health Education and Linguistics respectively.

(k) Values Clarification

This technique exposes pupils to a variety of personal, other-oriented and group values. The goal is to involve pupils in practical experiences, making them aware of their own feelings, ideas and beliefs, so that the choices and decisions they make are conscious and deliberate, based on their own value systems. The teaching/learning should aim at directing pupils to make informed decisions so that negative values are inhibited or reduced. Pupils should be guided to come up with acceptable alternatives.

Sensitive issues are likely to face resistance, but values clarification approach calls for decision-making in terms of human feelings, societal feelings, attitudes, skills and knowledge.

Examples of topics that can be taught with this techniques are as follows:-

- care of our bodies,
- cleanliness of the local community,
- cultural activities of the people in home country,
- basic needs of the family e.g., needs for different sizes of families.

## **VI. CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PRACTICE**

In this section a short critique of the current practice in the teaching of related contents of culture and environment in the school curriculum is given.

Factors of curriculum decisions lay much premium on the child's immediate experiences. The child's perceptive organs, of sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, have been found to respond more to stimuli and series of activities around him than to objects and events which are distant. Thus the Primary School Curriculum is designed to emphasize aspects that are related to the child's culture and environment.

### **(a) Lectures or teacher - led classes**

Pupils need firm bases on which to start learning any school subject or theme or sub-themes and units.

Advocates of the lecture or teacher-led method still claim to some degree, that the method allows for giving of information. The Sierra Leone experience has proved that if teacher-led method dominates the whole period, and a series of periods, majority of pupils do not gain much. These passive listeners end up with compound problems or difficulties on ideas which other participatory techniques, might have imposed little or no difficulties to grasp.

It has been proved in various instances that teaching/learning methods and techniques which allow for active pupil's participation usually yield much interest and quick and better comprehension by pupils.

### **(b) Group Work**

Group work is of immense value. Individuals participating in in groups to gather information in the enquiry method, in the process of field study, in role play, in games, in debates, in being either part of pros and cons, in project work, in quizzes, in sub-groups, have gained benefits from their experiences.

Pupils usually have a wider range of experience, the bigger the group. The imaginary continuum shows a range of achievement of the gifted through mediocre to slow or dull pupils. Thus group work activities should provide for the following facilities:-

- stretching of the gifted pupils
- providing opportunities for the weak or dull pupils to benefit from the more abled pupils in sub-groups
- sustaining the interest of average pupils in normal sub-groups

It has been found out that in individual work where pupils are not given the opportunity to consult with one another, the weak pupils perform far less than if they had had opportunity to benefit from the more abled or gifted pupils' experiences.

(c) The Enquiry Method

This is beneficial, if the teacher wants to introduce concepts or to study relationships between variables e.g., dirty water, diarrhoeal diseases. Pupils fail to go through the necessary steps if teacher does not give sufficient guidance, watch for pupils' competence, the amount of time available for teaching the subject, and support from school authorities and fellow teachers.

(d) Field Trip

Studies of the environment and cultural sites are best done by field trips. Unplanned field trips have been found to be another picnic with little or no educational returns. On the positive side, planned trips, which take care of the three main stages, what goes on for the preparation, the conduct or process of inquiry and the follow-up activities back in the classroom after the field trip, often yield very fruitful results.

(e) Use of Resource Persons

No substantial information could be elicited from someone who is not knowledgeable in a field. Thus the choice of resource person must be the right one. The consent of the resource person and clearly stated guidelines on the topic for the resource person form an important aspect of the preparation. Personal contact with resource persons allows for further questioning and broadening of knowledge and skills on the topic. Much interest is aroused when an outsider other than the teacher addresses the class.

(f) Role Play

Pupils need to be guided on the topic or main idea to role play. But undue interference during the progress can distort the spontaneous dramatization and change it to rehearsed dramatization. Naturally, pupils derive intrinsic pleasure and interest in acting out roles of other elderly persons. Such practice allow them opportunity to exhibit the roles they would like to play in later life.

(g) Games

Games derive no educational values, if the rules are not adhered to, and the motivation to win at all cost surpasses tolerance and acceptance of defeat by individuals or a sub-group.

Educational games must have clear objectives which pupils will realise, draw conclusions and make generalizations, rather than just for the sake of winning.

(h) Debates

Debates are usually planned. Debates like quizzes allow for individual and sub-group efforts to search resource materials for additional information. In debates, pupils are encouraged to bring all their knowledge and skills to bear on the problem or issue in a penetrating logical analysis. This is to encourage careful scrutiny of resource materials.

(i) Values Clarification

This technique is quite new in the steps that the authors propose. The ce on the ntral trends call for clarifying different types of personal and other group-oriented values. Pupils have to examine societal norms and values and develop the art of decision-making as regards their own choice of values now and in the future.

While the central theme of education is to develop positive attitudes and values, this technique, if carefully followed, will direct teachers and pupils as early as in the primary level to be exposed to cultural and environmental problems and issues and to make informal decisions on the values and attitudes that call for personal and national development.

(j) Audio-Visual Aids

In Sierra Leone, less use is made of hard-ware imported aids in the classroom. But soft ware aids widely used and served as very useful tools in the process.

Urban and rural sub-cultures have proved to have some effects on pupil's already existing foundations of what the environment and cultural/man-made development have to offer. There is a difference between the experience of children in urban areas and those in the rural areas.

These rural and urban differentials in pupil's performance have been marked if the following factors are less or absent:

- trained and qualified teachers
- library facilities
- armoury of teaching aids
- pupils text and exercise books
- wall charts and maps
- pupils exposure to nearby town life

## **VII. SUGGESTED PROGRAMME OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

For the effective teaching of culture and environment related content, a community integrated programme of activities is essential, pupils activities for culture and environment related content must be community based.

Thus school and the community should be equally involved in:-

- preparation for the celebration of cultural festivals e.g. the choice of site, appropriate dress styles, and specific traditional activities
  - care for the very young and the aged in the community
  - promotion of income-generating skills e.g. school/community farming projects for animal husbandry as well as crop farming
  - production of arts and crafts e.g. weaving - making of baskets, hats mats, bags and winnows from local materials
- carving - making wooden spoons and bowls, mortar and pestle, drums, masks
- painting pictures depicting cultural and environmental scences in the community

- environmental sanitation projects for the home and community e.g. refuse disposal - proper collection and disposal of household and community refuse.
- procurement of clean and safe water - regular maintenance of source of water at home and in the community.
- personal hygiene - care for different parts of the body, clothes, cooking utensils
- conservation and preservation of the environment, e.g. tree planting, use of sources of energy not entirely dependent on the cutting of wood or felling of trees, reducing activities related to the clearing of the forest.

Primary school subjects such as environmental studies, social studies, creative and practical arts, physical health education can make use of the activities mentioned above and so enrich their school programme with culture and environment related content.

**CHAPTER SIX**

**CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KENYA 5/**

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5/ See Note 5 of Annex I

## CHAPTER SIX

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### CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KENYA

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#### INTRODUCTION

Kenya lies between latitudes 4° 21' and 4° 28' and covers an area of approximately 582644 square kilometers. This great size of land is full of environmental differences. These include variations in relief and drainage, altitude, climate, soils, vegetation and animal life.

Kenya became independent in 1963 after about seventy years of British rule. The African people of Kenya can be subdivided into three major linguistic groups. These are the Bantu, the Nilotes and the Cushites. These groups share certain cultural practices arising from their interaction with one another during pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial periods. The cultural practices have been influenced by foreign cultures through missionary activities. Other peoples of Kenya are of Asian and European origin.

Education plays an important role in the transfer and transformation of cultural values and practices. During the colonial period, education was used to undermine African culture. At the same time a lot of emphasis was placed on foreign culture and environment. After attainment of independence the curriculum was revised to place emphasis on culture and the environment.

The Kenya government lays a lot of emphasis on preservation of the diverse cultural practices of her peoples. The current and recent development plans lay specific emphasis on the role of culture in National development. Culture is defined as a unique way of life peculiar to a people while environment is the total surroundings of man both physical and man made. Culture is part of the wider concept of the human environment.

Both culture and environment have received government attention as seen from National Development plans, sessional papers and presidential commissions.

The government has created a number of bodies to deal with environment. These include the National Environmental Secretariat, Resource Surveys and Remote sensing geographical information systems etc. These and others plus many non-governmental organizations in Kenya indicate her concern over environment. On the part of environment, there are several museums, archives and a Ministry of Culture and Social Services within the government.

## II. THE STATE OF CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

### (a) Objectives

In our current syllabuses, there are a good number of objectives directed towards culture and environment. Some of these are specific goals while others are general. Through the content the objectives are elaborated further. Some of the objectives are as follows: literacy

Among the National goals of education is one that states:

- (i) Education should respect, foster and develop Kenya's rich and varied cultures.

Specific objectives in our curriculum go by subject. Some of the objectives related to culture and environment are as follows:

#### 1. Mother Tongue

Mother tongue acts as a bridge between home and school and acts as a tool for teaching literacy, numeracy and manipulative skills. The culture of a child is expressed well in his mother tongue.

#### 2. Agriculture

The course intends that learners know how to use land, water resources, conserve water, animals, vegetation and control pests and diseases.

#### 3. Art and Craft

Learners will use the acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences to extend their artistic experiences to explore and improve the natural and cultural environment.

#### 4. Geography, History and Civics

The learners should be able to understand and use the environment for development.

Show appreciation of the historical past.

Identify, understand and respect the different ways of life.

5. Home Science

Learners will be able to observe, record and apply health practices in the community.

Identify eating habits among different families and the influence of these habits.

6. Kiswahili

To enable the learners: attain fluency in spoken and written Kiswahili. Respect themselves and have respect for others. Be able to recite poetry and sing local songs.

Be able to stage act, and promote unity and culture.

7. Maths

The learner should identify from the environment objects having regular and irregular shapes.

8. Music

At the end of the course the learner should:

Perform a variety of songs and dances from his own and other cultures.

Play simple indigeneous musical instruments from his locality and other localities.

Construct their different types of indigeneous instruments.

Identify and know when and how to use different types of costumes worn and during performance of cultural songs and dances.

Compose music and dance in traditional style and contemporary style.

Explore the environment for available musical resources with a view to preserve, promote and develop his musical heritage and of those he is in contact with.

9. Physical Education

The learner should:

Understand, participate and develop National and International sports and dances for preservation and promotion of his own and other cultures.

Participate in outdoor pursuits in order to explore and appreciate the environment and hence be aware of the natural resources and inspiration it offers.

10. Science

To enable learners:

To acquire and preserve certain useful attitudes about themselves and their relationship with the environment.

Develop and use appropriate skills and technologies for solving the problems relating to water, utilisation, conservation and use of energy and other resources.

Accept and participate in desirable cultural activities and practices.

Adjust to new changes in the environment.

Adopt solutions to problems of management and conservation of available resources.

Promote, preserve and evolve their National heritage for their cultural, spiritual and economic development.

11. Religious Education

In primary school, three religions are taught. These are Hindu, Islam and Christianity. Apart from the doctrines of the Faiths the curriculum places emphasis on the interaction of these religions with African traditional religions. The subject objectives are to enable the learner:

Know the fundamentals of their faith as laid down in holy scriptures and traditions of their community.

Operate within a religious framework for moral development.

Recognise and appreciate that traditional religion is an integral part of Kenya's cultural heritage.

Appreciate God's creation by contributing positively to their own self fulfilment and by proper care of the environment.

### III. CONTENT

The content for each subject is detailed in the syllabuses and in the textbooks. Some of the outline content is as follows:

#### 1. Mother Tongue

- (a) Listening to stories, riddles, proverbs and songs. Telling and retelling stories, riddles and poems.
- (b) Speaking games and role playing stating and expressing simple figures of speech. Appropriate expressions for social interaction.

#### 2. Agriculture

- (a) Land mapping including mapping of soil conservation structures.
- (b) Land use practices; land acquisition practices i.e. inheritance, land tenure systems.
- (c) Water resources, uses, and water conservation methods.
- (d) Tree planting
- (e) Soil types, uses; soil erosion and soil conservation measures.
- (f) Weather symbols and their meaning.
- (g) Cultural practices in crop production
- (h) Animal management
- (i) Farm hygiene and safety
- (j) Diseases and pests.

#### 3. Art and Craft

- (a) Study of traditional and contemporary clay containers and forms in relation to design, function, and value.

- (b) Research and documentation on traditional leather work.
  - (c) The role of trees
  - (d) Study and documentation of traditional houses in the locality; socio-cultural implications of the different structures and their functions.
  - (e) Water resources, uses and conservation measures.
4. Home Science
- (a) The family - relationships and housing
  - (b) Health education
  - (c) Food use and preparation
  - (d) Care of the home
5. Music
- (a) Folk songs
  - (b) National Anthem
  - (c) Patriotic songs
  - (d) African folk dance
  - (e) Playing traditional music instruments
  - (f) Making musical instruments
  - (g) Making costumes for dancing
  - (h) Simple research on traditional musicians
6. Home Science
- (a) Study of traditional woven and clay containers. Production of a traditional container based on the study.
  - (b) Traditional methods of fabric decoration.
  - (c) Sculpture and the environment
  - (d) Study of traditional and modern body covers and accessories.

7. Physical Education

Traditional gymnastics

8. Science

- (a) Weather and astronomy
- (b) Living things
- (c) Health education
- (d) Soil erosion and its control
- (e) Environmental pollution and conservation
- (f) Energy conservation and transformation

9. English - Kiswahili

- (a) Listening and reading stories
- (b) Oral literature
- (c) Listening and interpreting riddles, proverbs
- (d) Playing language games

10. Geography, History and Civics

- (a) The physical environment
- (b) The people of Kenya, Eastern Africa, Africa and the world
- (c) Socio cultural activities
- (d) Resources
  - (i) Extraction and use of minerals
  - (ii) Traditional industries
  - (iii) Importance of forests - uses and methods of conservation
  - (iv) Wildlife use and conservation practices
  - (v) Soil resources, uses and soil conservation
- (e) Soil erosion and its control

- (f) Environmental pollution and conservation

#### **IV. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES**

A variety of teaching and learning methods are recommended and encouraged. Emphasis is placed on facilitating the interaction of the learner with the environment. Teachers are encouraged to follow the inquiry approach.

In many communities knowledgeable people exist and are used as resource personnel by the teachers. Schools organise visits to places of special interest and in relation to curriculum materials.

Field work and field trips do enhance learning from the real world. Pupils do take part in community work especially concerning soil conservation; in cultural activities such as music and drama festivals. The chief idea is to encourage the development of interest in culture and hence facilitate understanding of the learners culture while appreciating other peoples culture.

Specific teaching methods include the following:

- Experiments
- Interview
- Production of actual items in art
- Writing compositions about items,
- Dramatisation
- Role playing
- Story telling
- Discussions
- Demonstrations
- Group projects
- Research and documentation
- Reading
- Observation of pupils working methods
- Analysing
- Modelling
- Drawing
- Construction
- Measuring
- Pattern making
- Discussing
- Written work
- Oral work
- Listening

Each of the syllabuses for Kenyan primary schools is accompanied by a pupils book, and teachers guide and is supported by radio lessons broadcast over the Voice of Kenya. Charts and other teaching aids are made available.

Some of the most common learning/teaching strategies and relevant resources are listed below:

demonstrations  
questions  
supervision  
remedial reading  
spelling  
dictation  
games  
estimating

#### Teacher/Learning Resources

- (a) Visual aids e.g. picture, charts
- (b) Audio-aids - radio, tapes
- (c) Resource persons
- (d) Real objects in the local environment
- (e) Visits
- (f) Textbooks/resource books
- (g) Research stations
- (h) Selected farms
- (i) Educational institutions
- (j) Displays
- (k) Blackboard
- (l) Sketches
- (m) Charts
- (n) Maps
- (o) Rulers, metre sticks

#### **V. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH CURRICULUM DEMANDS**

At the moment there are organised drama festivals, music and dance festivals and athletics sports and games competitions all over the country. These engage in various cultural activities and are an expression of cultural diversity and cultural acceptance. Many schools collaborate with the community in order to benefit from the experiences of knowledgeable elders.

Frequently Kenya schools engage in practical environmental activities. These include setting up tree nurseries in schools, planting trees in homes and schools and in particular the indigeneous trees. Conservation of soil and water resources are undertaken by local communities and school pupils participate in actual preparation of gabions, terraces, drains etc. Significant groups are the Young Farmers, boy scouts and girl guides.

## **VI. CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PRACTICES**

At the moment, the country has a large number of untrained teachers. They are not able to appropriately interpret the syllabus and give the right treatment to the objectives and content. Very often recommended methods are not used.

Sometimes, serious cultural conflicts arise during interaction between non Kenyan and among Kenyans of different ethnic backgrounds.

## **VII. SUGGESTED PROGRAMME OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

There is need to provide in-service courses for school teachers and teacher trainers.

Proper in-service training for teachers in primary schools should be organised and emphasis should be placed on interpreting local culture and environment. The community ought to support this by opening up to the teachers needs.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Government policy lays emphasis on the promotion of culture and on the promotion of environment at all levels of education. The school as of now seriously takes the government's view and will go a long way in reaching the general public.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM  
DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA <sup>6/</sup>**

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6/

See Note 6 of Annex I

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA

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#### I. RATIONALE

The school curriculum in any nation must be grounded in the existing culture and environment. A curriculum divorced from its culture and its environment is artificial and unlikely to survive. In a country like Ethiopia with a written history covering over 3,000 years, a long tradition of independence and its own alphabet in use for centuries there are enormous cultural riches to draw upon in constructing a curriculum.

Before the government introduction of formal education in 1908 the Orthodox Christian church schools and Muslim Koranic schools transmitted important cultural knowledge to their pupils. Even today these schools continue to offer basic literacy to young children and for those who wish to follow a religious calling training in traditional music and dancing. The distinctive style of the paintings in Ethiopian churches, some as old as five hundred years, continues to influence the artists of today. The styles of modern Ethiopian musicians and singers are shaped by a unique and ancient musical heritage. Ethiopian music is instantly identifiable almost anywhere in the world.

Cultural artifacts such as metal work, cloth weavings, wood and bone carvings, pottery and basketry reflect cultural values and beliefs persisting for centuries as well as adaptations to environmental resources and needs. The Falasha black clay figures of, for example, a lion wearing the Star of David on his head, are world-famous collectors' items of naive, traditional charm. The silver or gold Lalibela, Gondar and Axum crosses have been worn by lovely Ethiopian ladies for hundreds of years and still today may be seen worn with hand-embroidered sheer white handwoven cotton gowns in many world capitals, where they are always immediately recognised as purely Ethiopian in origin.

To fully comprehend a people's culture it is essential to understand their food. The preparation, serving and eating of Ethiopian food requires equal attention to ritual and to taste. In the highlands the elaborately woven basket-table or mesob is the receptacle for the huge, soft sourdough pancake or injera of teff with a taste and texture found in the breadbaking of no other country. There are hundreds of variations of wot based on chicken, lamb, beef, fish, vegetables

or pulses bound together in a complex sauce with a least a dozen spices punctuated by dried, ground red chili peppers or fresh green ones. For non-fasting meals the sauce is prepared with specially aged and spiced butter; at fasting meals one of the rich-tasting Ethiopian oils, such as nug will be used. With the food the honey-wine known as tej may be poured into a bottle with a slender neck which must be held in the left hand for drinking, while the injera and wot are eaten with the right hand. The host or hostess will wrap a few choice morsels of the meal in injera and pop a gursha into the mouth of a favoured guest, child or servant. Ethiopian cuisine is another successful cultural export as traditional Ethiopian restaurants win customers and critical acclaim from Nairobi to Washington to Toronto.

Of course, all cultural expression depends upon the resources of the natural environment. The famous 14th century churches of Lalibela and the 12th century obelisks of Axum required the type of stone found in the vicinity for their construction as well as the inspiration and skill of their builders. Shemma weavers need cotton, which requires certain soil and climatic conditions. The gold mines of western and southern Ethiopia have long produced the raw material for creation of necklaces, earrings, rings and bracelets usually worked in 22 karats. The beautifully decorated traditional leather baby carriers used by women in northern Ethiopia are easy to produce because Ethiopia is Africa's leading supplier of hides.

The natural environment has also been inspiration to literature and the arts. Wildlife species unique to Ethiopia, such as the nyala, walia ibex and the Semien fox, as well as beautiful birds found only here have been drawn and painted by both Ethiopians and foreigners. The delicate pink climbing Abyssinian rose has attracted many watercolourists. Of course, the wild meskal daisy is a favourite artists' subject especially at the New Year. Motifs in hand-woven carpets and baskets often are influenced by Ethiopian flora and fauna. Traditional and popular poetry and songs speak of the natural beauty of the volcanic lakes, the Blue Nile falls, the Semien forests and curiously carved mountain peaks.

Just as culture and the environment are interdependent so is the school curriculum an embodiment of both but not in immutable form. For culture is composed of the modern as well as the traditional and the environment changes along with scientific knowledge about it.

## II. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

### (a) Curriculum Objectives

The role of culture and environment in curriculum must be seen in the context of the aims of education in the new Ethiopia which came into existence after the 1974 revolution. The National Democratic Revolution Programme in 1976 proclaimed the general aims of education in the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to be:

- Education for production
- Education for socialist consciousness
- Education for scientific consciousness

This new education is intended to produce socialist citizens with allround personalities.

In 1984 the Workers' Party of Ethiopia stated:

The education that is given in the classroom in limited fields is not sufficient to create a new generation that is fully humane and capable of actively participating in the building of socialist society. Therefore due attention will be given to formulating and implementing programmes that will enable the youth to actively participate in production, science, technology the arts, sports, military training and other spheres; as well as to spend their leisure time rendering service beneficial to the society, in broadening their horizon of knowledge and in recreation.

and

In accordance with the objective realities of our country unsparing effort will be made to provide all school-age children with eight years of education which will enable them to be employed after acquiring a certain level of education on the one hand and to successfully pursue this education at higher levels on the other. (pp. 98-99)

In line with these statements of policy a process of curriculum reform has been underway. In 1980 it was formalized with the issuance of "New Educational Objectives and Directives for Ethiopia" representing the consolidation of five years of work integrating factual data assembled within the MOE, data, views and documentation from socialist experts from other friendly countries as well as Ethiopian comrades with experience in other socialist countries. From this document specific objectives relating to culture and the environment are presented as examples of the new orientation of the curriculum.

1. Education for production.

The culture of a socialist mode of production will emerge through the unity of theoretical learning with production. (p. 10)

2. Education for socialist consciousness.

The teaching of moral education and ethics based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism will be an important element and the teaching of aesthetics and physical education will be given appropriate emphases (for ... the all-round development of socialist man and woman. (p. 11)

3. Education for scientific consciousness.

The system will be planned in such a way that an environment for scientific enquiry and experimentation is created. (p. 11)

The new curriculum consists of six dialectically interrelated areas: intellectual education, ideological education, handicrafts, aesthetic education, physical education and labour education. Each area contains objectives regarding culture and the environment, but certain areas give more emphasis.

Aesthetic education ... which includes literature, graphic and pictorial arts, music and song, oratorical arts, sculpture and the plastic arts, and drama and dance ... has these specific objectives:

- the stimulation of cultural research
- ensuring that culture becomes the property of the masses
- the proper appreciation of natural and man-made phenomena
- the role and application of culture in the raising of living standards of the masses
- the preservation, conservation and rational use of the environment.

By 1988 a further refinement of the educational objectives was printed in Article 36 of the draft PDRE Education Act. Of the 15 objectives listed there are four with specific reference to culture and the environment.

- To stimulate the aspiration for creative work and life-long education
- To develop the understanding of literature, arts, music and proletarian culture
- To popularize Ethiopian history and culture
- To develop the habit of safeguarding public property and natural resources.

(b) Specific objectives of separate subjects

Turning to the separate subjects, specific objectives relating to culture and the environment are seen in these examples from "The Ethiopian School Syllabus for Grade 1-6: 1984."

(i) Primary science

- Demonstrate understanding of the basic differences and similarities of simple objects, phenomena and processes in the environment.
- Acquire fundamental knowledge of science from the immediate environment.
- Acquire practical skills for changing and utilizing simple objects, phenomena and processes in the immediate environment.

(ii) Social science

- Develop awareness of the local, national and global social and physical environment and understand that the basis of social development is material production.
- Develop awareness that national resources are the collective property of all Ethiopians and should be properly and efficiently used for the common good.
- Create awareness and develop skill and habits of preservation and conservation of resources such as soil, water, air, vegetation, wildlife and cultural antiquities for the use of future generations.
- Appreciate the cultural diversity of Ethiopia and understand that the unity of Ethiopia rests on this very fact.
- Develop awareness of the fact that the development of society is governed by objective laws, that social changes come as a result of change in the mode of production and that man has the ability to mould nature.

It is further expected from social science that the learner will develop a positive attitude towards: all crafts and professions, cultural differences and habits, cultural differences and identities of the various ethnic groups.

(iii) Amharic

- Appreciate and understand different literature at their level.
- Apply useful customs and experiences from what they see, listen to and read for the benefit of self and society.

(iv) Art

- Develop awareness and understanding of their immediate environment and foster positive attitudes toward local resources.
- Develop their own creative power in terms of their own needs, interests and abilities and the culture of their society.
- Appreciate their own and other people's past and present artistic and cultural heritage.

(v) Music

- Learn the systematic way of playing traditional instruments based on modern musical notation.

(vi) Handicraft

- Abolish feudalistic attitudes towards handicrafts.
- Learn about the historical development of handicrafts and their present status.

(vii) Agriculture

- Develop the ability to observe and study the environment.
- Develop consciousness of the need for conservation of their heritage of natural resources and be able to act positively.

(viii) Home Economics

- Develop an awareness of the customary dietary practices of their locality and develop good eating habits.
- Develop skills in maintaining personal and environment cleanliness.

- Develop and acquire skills in making use of the resources available in their locality.

### III. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT CONTENT

From those subjects where the greatest emphasis to culture and environment is given some illustrative examples of content are presented.

(i) Primary Science

Students learn about their environment: useful and harmful animals, water sources and communicable diseases. They compare traditional and modern measurement systems. The concept of sound is introduced in connection with traditional music instruments. Traditional food processing is studied from a scientific aspect.

(ii) Social Science

Ethiopia, its geography, people, history and culture and Africa, its geography, people, history and culture as studied.

(iii) Amharic

Pupils learn social customs, such as introductions and leavetaking. They are exposed to traditional oral literature, humour and folk tales. Reading passages in grades 1-6 textbooks are composed from nine major areas of content: production, administration, conservation, ethics and morality, primary needs, aesthetics, communication, transportation and politics.

(iv) English

In English instruction, which begins in grade 3, simplified Ethiopian folktales are included in reading passages.

(v) Art

Cultural content is found especially in the history of art, which is expected to include knowledge of ancient Ethiopian artists and their work, study of the art of slave society, study of artists in different epochs including the renaissance, and study of artist and reality in socialist art.

(vi) Music

Content includes the introduction to local folk songs and dances and Ethiopian folklore and music. There is a brief history of Ethiopian music and the use of traditional and modern instruments.

(vii) Physical education

Traditional minor games collected from traditional sources from various parts of the country are suggested in the syllabus.

(viii) Handicraft

Drawing, clay modeling and paper work is done in the lower primary and drawing, painting, ceramics, wood and leather work in upper primary using traditional and improved methods and materials.

(ix) Agriculture

Based on the local environment, plants, soil, agricultural tools, domestic animals and their uses are learned about. Gardening, crop production and forestry are introduced in the upper grades along with land management and the role of cooperatives.

(x) Home Economics

There are five major areas in this subject. Human relations is concerned with festivals and ceremonies in family life and social changes and resultant changes in living conditions. In clothing the textiles pupils learn about Ethiopian customs reflecting different religious and cultural traditions and traditional and modern clothing production techniques. In food and nutrition they study different kinds of national foods and improving traditional methods of processing and preparation. The home management area includes decorating and beautifying the home using local materials. Health and sanitation gives attention to keeping self, home and surroundings clean and disease-free.

#### **IV. TEACHING-LEARNING STRATEGIES**

Teachers' guides for the various subjects, periodic directives from the MOE, radio broadcasts on pedagogy and methodology for primary teachers, in-service training workshops, visits from school inspectors and the pedagogical centre network all influence the strategies employed in teaching.

A brief description of the pedagogical centres is important since they are an example of a successful innovation playing a key role in education about the culture and environment. Within the ICDR the Awraja Pedagogical Centre (APC) panel currently oversees a growing network of 106 APCs, or almost one for every three awrajas in the countries. In turn, each APC serves the schools in its locality, each of which has its own School Pedagogical Centre (SPC). The main task of both APC and its SPC branches is to support the classroom teaching-learning process. This is done by preparing prototype teaching aids ... as much as possible from locally available materials ... giving short-term training to teachers and

making informal studies of the awraja environment and culture as a basis for adapting the curriculum, in social science in particular, to the locality.

There are several pilot projects aiming to diversity teaching-learning strategies by making both teachers and pupils more active participants. In the Environmental Education (EE) project the teacher training institutes, primary schools, community skills training centres and basic development education centres (the latter two for adults) are encouraged to carry out conservation activities in their respective compounds such as: growing tree seedlings, terracing for soil conservation, constructing small dams to control erosion, using irrigation to grow plants, studying their environments and making teaching aids. Inservice training for project staff includes the relation of EE to science, social science, agriculture and home economics; the role of pedagogical centres in strengthening EE; agro-forestry; watershed management; environmental health and other topics. The project's intent is to use existing educational institutions to change attitudes toward natural resource conservation and general environmental protection through cooperative activities to solve severe land degradation problems faced by communities.

The trial of the general polytechnic curriculum in 70 pilot primary schools aims to introduce new teaching-learning strategies which much more closely link the classroom to the world of work. Thus all subjects are supposed to give scope for development of practical skills and positive attitudes towards work. Environmental science, given in grades 1-3 of the trial curriculum, takes a unified approach to culture and the environment and stresses problem-solving methods. Even the subject mathematics in the trial curriculum aims to link the "culture of mathematics" to the learner's environment stressing that there are mathematical roots in Ethiopia in the traditional tasks of the learners' forefathers. For example, construction of a tukul needs knowledge about circles, cones and right angles. Carpentry and knitting require special knowledge about symmetry. The mathematics teaching-learning strategy suggests using fruits, stones or clay balls to support the introduction of set theory and the notion of number and using an orange to demonstrate fractions.

Above all, it is expected today that the school interact with its community: influencing it and being supported by it. These community schools are seen everywhere and are recognized by their gardens and farms, their cultural exhibitions, their community improvement activities and the real participation of elders on school management committees.

## **V. CRITIQUE OF CURRENT PRACTICE**

As is well known, there is often an implementation gap between what curriculum developers plan and what is practiced at classroom level. It is perhaps only realistic to expect considerable variation in practice given the cultural and environmental diversity of Ethiopia. Still, what is somewhat surprising is the similarity of the problems faced throughout the country.

The use of Amharic as the language of instruction is still evolving. While it is recommended in theory that mother-tongue instruction is best for young children, in practice lack of materials and skilled teachers for the over 80 languages spoken in Ethiopia makes use of the vernacular, except as a bridge, impractical. In this situation, the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to culture and the environment may be hampered by lack of mastery of the language by those whose mother tongue is not Amharic.

In a curriculum with eleven subjects or more those which are examinable at the end of the primary cycle receive more attention. Thus the importance of art, music, handicrafts, physical education and home economics, in spite of much cultural and environmental content, may be diminished.

Great efforts have been made to Ethiopianize the curriculum and all textbooks are prepared and printed here. Still, the shortage of paper and printing capacity and of trained and experienced writers means that there are not enough textbooks and that they cannot be revised often enough to reflect important new knowledge about culture and the environment. Even activities which do not depend upon textbooks, such as having pupils record the history of their communities, is restricted by the severe shortage of pupil exercise books.

Many types of cultural expression require teaching aids and raw materials. Pupils cannot themselves visit Ethiopian historic sites or art exhibitions in the capital, however, pictures or films (where there is electricity) could provide the vicarious experience but are scarcely available. Pupils who wish to draw or paint have no implements or colours. Not all teachers are musically talented, but if they were supported by music cassettes and if the schools had cassette players they could introduce pupils to the rich musical heritage of Ethiopia. Such items are not yet in use.

Teaching pupils to improve and maintain their environment and to make it more productive faces somewhat different problems. Too often schools have no water with which to practice horticulture. Many curriculum activities ... science experiments, health education, handicrafts ... are constrained by the non-availability of water.

Many schools have tools for environmental activities, but clearing land, cultivating soil and planting seedlings, for example, are not always considered by pupils and their parents as educational. Unfortunately, the belief still exists that pupils should have clean hands and clothes and be prepared for office work through concentrating on academic subjects. Equally unfortunately, the practice sometimes persists of assigning labour in the school compound as punishment. Such beliefs and practices are vigorously opposed in the labour education programme, which is supposed to be followed in every school.

Because primary teachers in their one year of preservice at the teacher-training institute with a 17 subject curriculum receive little exposure to methodology they tend to rely upon their own experience as primary school pupils and teach as they were taught: using rote learning and chalk and talk. Creativity, flexibility, innovativeness and improvisation are talents many primary teachers may possess but they are infrequently displayed. Since each teacher teaches only his or her special subjects in several grades the necessary integration of culture and environmental content and concerns across various subjects is quite difficult.

## **VI. SUGGESTED PROGRAMME OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

It is not suggested that additional subjects or additional content regarding culture and the environment be added to the primary curriculum. As seen in sections 2 and 3 of this paper, the curriculum is quite adequate. What is required is strengthening the implementation at classroom - and at community - level, of what is already there in the syllabus. In particular, the use of an activity approach should be popularized. Some examples could be:

1. "Earth Day" annually at schools with demonstrations, exhibitions and discussions related to local environmental issues.
2. Cultural exchanges where staff and pupils from one region visit another and present examples of local handicrafts, folklore, drama, music, song and dance and then teach some of them to their host school.
3. Production of illustrated easy-to-read supplementary books such as "Little girls of Arsi", "Siraj goes to school in Sidamo", "Growing up in Gondar", etc.
4. Encouraging UNESCO school clubs to sponsor cultural and environmental activities.
5. Using the Teachers' Association newsletter to disseminate examples of noteworthy cultural and environmental projects in primary schools.

Realistically, it must be acknowledged that most of these suggestions will require some resource inputs: vehicles for transport, paper for printing, etc. However, it is hoped that the international community, of which Ethiopia has been a proud member for a very long time, would participate in efforts at enhancing the place of culture and environment in the school curriculum by its moral, technical, material and financial support.



**CHAPTER EIGHT**

**CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM  
DEVELOPMENT: WHAT THE SCHOOLS  
PRACTICE IN THE GAMBIA <sup>7/</sup>**

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<sup>7/</sup> See Note 7 of Annex I



## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: WHAT THE SCHOOLS PRACTICE IN THE GAMBIA**

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#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Human beings have increased their number since time immemorial within the ecological super-system called biosphere, and culture and environment have also been the inseparable elements. In this respect, culture, on one hand, can be defined as the systems of beliefs, norms and values which are either manifest or latent practices of a people who have established a settled community, while on the other hand, environment may be defined as physical or cultural elements which constitutes the surroundings of a people within which they interact with one another for a variety of purposes.

Undoubtedly, human culture does not exist in isolation from the environment. For example, in an African context, the seasons of the year and the annual festivals have both cultural and environmental connotations and under normal circumstances, the African concept of time and variety of economic and cultural activities are environmentally determined. Among other examples are the planting and harvesting seasons and the performance of passages of rites within the calendar year.

Thus either physically or culturally, man influences the environment as the environment influences man. Since culture constitutes those fundamental human belief systems, norms and values (i.e. the standard way of doing things and the importance attached to the recognized rules and regulations of behaviour of the members of society) these cultural elements are environmentally determined. Among certain scholars who belong to the environmental determinism school of thought argued that the inhabitants of the various ecological zones of the Third World act and behave in accordance with their environment. For instance, the cultivators, the fishermen, and livestock raisers simply follow the dictates of their environment. However, the members of the other school of thought commonly known as Possibilism also argued that human beings are capable of altering the shape, the pattern and the distribution of their physical environment. These have been manifested by the conversion of the desert sand forests into arable lands.

Nowadays, owing to the environmental degradation, and its resultant shortage of water, salt water or sea water is being converted into fresh and drinkable water. Also, certain species of plants and animals have been bred and adapted to the required environment. The environment in this regard, is no longer a determinant factor in the socio-economic activities of people. Nevertheless, the rapid increase in human population, and its concomitant of urbanization are major threats to the cultural and physical environment. In this context, we can take a look at the Natural Environment.

## **II. CRITICAL AREAS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The ecological supersystem called biosphere constitutes the following basic elements: land, air, and living things. This sphere of life forms an envelope surrounding from beneath the surface of the soil and the seas to the upper reaches of the atmosphere.

Life is unevenly distributed within the biosphere, it is everywhere interconnected. Threat to the integrity or survival of any part or element of it could have ramifying consequences deleterious to other aspects or to the planetary life - support system as a whole. Thus deteriorating air quality could affect plant and animal life, modify weather and ultimately alter climate. Or misuse of land could cause the siltation, salinization or contamination of lakes, streams and coastal waters with destructive effects on marine life and, in extreme cases, could modify climate.

The quality and the continuation of life, not excepting humanity, depend upon maintenance of the life-supporting elements of the biosphere. Human welfare, comfort and the satisfaction of material and psychological needs depend upon the continuing integrity of the natural environment.

Until very recently, the public awareness of the impact of environmental hazards on the public utilities has not been profound. However, the rapid growth in population, urbanization and industrialization has created public interest in the destructive processes of the environment, and this has led to the formation of environmental protection societies all over the world. The major concern of these world wide environmental protection societies is focused on the following:

1. Land-Use
2. Coastal Zone
3. Inland Waters
4. Air Quality and Weather Modification
5. Natural Areas and Wildlife
6. Critical Aspects of Man-Environmental Relationships
7. Energy
8. The Economy and Growth

9. Environmental Health
10. Quality of Urban Life, and
11. Institutional Behaviour

With reference to these major areas of public concern, education can play a significant role in creating public awareness of the dangers involved and the need for protecting the environment. In an attempt to include in the school curriculum at the various levels of education, the environmental education can take different forms. For instance, at the elementary school level, water and air pollution and conservation of the flora and fauna from the major topics. For secondary and higher education levels, topics such as Land-Use, Coastal Zone, Inland Waters, Air quality and Weather Modification, Natural Areas and Wildlife, critical aspects of Man-Environmental Relationships, Energy, the economy and growth, Environmental Health, Quality of Urban life, and Institutional Behaviour may be included in the curriculum.

The Gambia being part of the Sahelian Zone of West Africa, the conservation of her fauna and flora is given due attention at the national level. In this regard, the government encourage people to engage in tree planting in an attempt to conserve the flora and protect the environment. For a long time there was a big campaign to encourage Gambians wherever they live to engage in tree planting. All Gambians have shown keen interest in the national tree planting week.

Also, in the New Education Policy for The Gambia, environmental education is emphasized in the Science and Social Studies curricular both at the elementary and secondary school levels. Topics ranging from Air and Water pollution to the conservation of the flora and fauna are included in the science and social studies syllabuses. Reafforestation and soil and water management programmes are included, and the important environmental exercises being performed by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources are also considered.

Furthermore, the conservation of the fauna in respect of fish, shrimp and animals is an activity which attracts the interest of the private fishing companies and allied educational organizations such as Action Aid of The Gambia. The tourism industry has also been encouraging the conservation of wildlife by reactivating the crocodile pools and ponds throughout the country. The New Education Policy has taken cognisance of the need for protecting and conserving the wildlife of the Gambia. Throughout the country, Reserved Forests have been natured and well maintained by the Department of Forestry. In this endeavour the felling of trees indiscriminately has been made illegal as well as charcoal burning. Fuel for cooking and other domestic uses is being substituted by gas cookers and groundnut shells. The purpose is to discourage the heavy dependence on wood for domestic needs.

In a nutshell, culture and environment are those variables in the social, cultural, economic and political practices of a people. Therefore, the two variables - culture and environment, are indispensable. The institutionalization of the cultural

and environmental practices is best illustrated in the Curriculum Development. And Curriculum Development is an attempt to plan, devise ways and means of integrating the preparation and development of teaching methods and Instructional materials. Education being the most significant agent of change in society, the cultural and environmental issues are therefore, the fundamental features of the Curriculum Development in The Gambia, particularly in the primary school sector. At this level, education is geared towards the cultural and environmental needs of The Gambian Society. In particular, the social studies and science primary school curricular, cultural and environmental education is emphasized. Thus pupils are taught and also required to engage in activities relating to the concepts of: the family, the types and the needs of the family, the domestic animals and pets at home, the causes and effects of social and environmental problems such as the water pollution and indiscriminate felling of trees, the concepts of interdependence, differences and similarities, the inculcation of desirable attitudes and values in the young children through social studies and science lessons. The major concern is to make education meaningful and relevant to the need of The Gambian society. And above all, to conserve and protect the environment and cultural heritage for posterity.

In these respects, therefore, the following objectives in the primary school education have been formulated:

1. that by the end of the primary school education, the pupils should be able to understand their physical social, political and economic environment, thus developing in them an awareness of the contribution they can make towards the preservation of the environment and development of their society;
2. to develop an interest in, an understanding of current affairs, and understand the social and economic Interdependence of all peoples and nations of Africa and the World at large;
3. to help children acquire skills, concepts, positive attitudes and values, thus helping them to learn how to learn and work amicably with others.

### **III. PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

The primary school curriculum is planned and implemented with special reference to:

- a. knowledge
- b. skills and
- c. attitudes and values

**Culture and environment are the central focus in the primary school curriculum.**

The primary school objectives are formulated by the National Advisory Council on Education, and they are further translated by the subject panels with the help and guidance of the curriculum subject specialists at the (National Curriculum Research and Development Unit [NCRDU]).

The determination of the content of culture and environment in the curriculum is dependent upon the various levels of the primary school education, and its duration, which is six years. Therefore, the content, scope and sequence of the cultural and environmental education in the primary school curriculum range from the first year of schooling through to the sixth year

TOPICS such as: PRIMARY ONE: LIVING AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL  
 PRIMARY TWO: LIVING IN OUR VILLAGE/TOWN/CITY  
 PRIMARY THREE: LIVING IN OUR DISTRICT  
 PRIMARY FOUR: LIVING IN OUR DIVISION  
 PRIMARY FIVE: LIVING IN THE GAMBIA and  
 PRIMARY SIX: THE GAMBIA IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY

Each of the above topics include cultural and environmental components. They feature prominently in the social studies and science curricular.

Similarly, the identification of culture and environment with the related content and methods which are being used in the classroom is done by the subject panels, and specialists who meet at the regular intervals at the (NCRDU) National Curriculum Research and Development Unit. The cultural and environmental components of the Primary school curriculum are based on the concept of the widening environment. In other words, from the pupils familiar cultural and environmental aspects to those concepts which are unfamiliar, through the spiral curriculum. This Centre has recommended strongly for the use of the child-centred approach to education as opposed to the teacher-centred approach. The discovery and inquiry methods have been encouraged. i.e. allowing the child to interact with the materials. Field trips are also a special method used for basic research by both the students and the teacher.

Nonetheless, the above mentioned methods and activities do not conform to the culture of The Gambians, because traditionally, the young people are not supposed to question the elders, particularly with regard to certain cultural norms and values. For example, sexual intercourse is a taboo in The Gambian society where half of the population is Muslim, and they follow the strict Islamic Laws. Also, the young children are not supposed to be told certain secrets of the tribal groups for the fear that they may be misused by the enemies. Discussion of certain cultural issues only takes place within the school environment. Furthermore, many parents of the school children still hold the belief that the only appropriate

place for their children is the classroom. They entertain the doubt that children learn nothing if they are taken outside of their classroom. Some teachers also use the lecture method at the expense of the other methods, consequently children are spoon fed instead of making self Discovery and develop the skills of critical thinking. Lecture or traditional teaching methods often discourage the development of Decision-making skills and critical analyses of the learning situations. Pupils become dormant, and thus expect even the solutions of their problems must come from the teacher. This makes both the educator and the pupils very passive in the learning process.

Nevertheless, new innovations in the teaching methodology are being utilized by the teachers, especially in the areas of social studies and science, within which cultural and environmental education feature prominently.

On the other hand, the development of activities to promote the teaching of culture and environment in the classroom takes various dimensions. For example, at the primary school level, pupils perform Role - Play of the Workers in their community such as the head of a family, the chief, the Police Office, the Health Inspector, the Primary Health Care Personnel and the Village Development Committee members. Thus simulation games and field trips are popular activities in social studies with reference to cultural and environmental education. In addition, Quiz and other current affairs competitions are organised for the Primary school children annually. Essay competitions, Drawing and painting are also popular. Holiday camps are also organised for the pupils of the upper primary classes. At least once in a year, cross cultural and national holiday camps are organised for the primary school children from different tribes and countries. Children at this camp learn about the languages of each other, they eat the foods of one another, they play games, sing songs and dance to the cultural dancing styles. Boy scouts and Girl guides do organise holiday camps for the Primary school children. Undoubtedly, this variety of activities are organised with the view to promoting the teaching of culture and environment in both classroom and outside of it.

#### **IV. THE EDUCATION POLICY OF 1988 - 2003**

One of the ten basic aims of Education reads:-

To develop an appreciation of the cultural heritage of The Gambia and of the cultures of other peoples. The Education Policy has also called for the use of three of the National Languages as medium of instruction in Grades 1 and 2 and as subjects from Grades 3 upwards. These are clear indications of Government's concern and support towards the teaching of culture in the schools.

With regard to the identification of chapters and passages in the primary school textbooks which stress and incorporate or treat cultural and environmental aspects in an exemplary way are best quoted in the Social Studies and Science

texts. For example, social studies Teacher Handbook and Pupils Workbook for the primary schools:

**PRIMARY ONE: THEME - LIVING AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL**

- UNIT:**
1. The home
  2. Needs of home
  3. Domestic animals and pets in the home
  4. Links between home and school
  5. Our school
  6. The home and school environment

**PRIMARY TWO: THEME - LIVING IN OUR VILLAGE/TOWN/CITY**

- UNIT:**
1. My village/town/city in which the school is situated
  2. The origin and growth of the village/town/city
  3. Important people in the village/town/city (past and present)
  4. Organization and government of the village/town/city
  5. Some practical needs of the village or area
  6. Social services in the village or area
  7. Social/religious life in the village or area
  8. A day's activities in the village/town/city

**PRIMARY THREE: THEME - LIVING IN OUR DISTRICT**

- UNIT:**
1. Our district, its composition
  2. Story of the district, important people, monuments and antiquities in our district
  3. Social and economic links between towns and villages in our district
  4. Administration of our district
  5. Occupation of people in our district
  6. Children from other lands living in our district
  7. Communication in and around our district
  8. The district as part of the division

**PRIMARY FOUR: THEME - LIVING IN OUR DIVISION**

- UNIT:**
1. Knowing our division
  2. Places/peoples/heroes of historical importance in the division
  3. Ethnic groups in the division and their origins
  4. Natural resources and industries with the division
  5. The administration of the division
  6. People who serve in the division
  7. Changes in our division
  8. Links with other divisions

**PRIMARY FIVE: THEME - THE GAMBIA**

- UNIT:**
1. The Gambia's membership of international organizations
  2. The environment
    - a. The Gambia - German Forestry Project
    - b. Pollution - industrial and nuclear wastes, air and water pollution
  3. Women's Bureau - the socio-cultural integration of The Gambian women in the economy development of The Gambia
  4. Education - citizenship education with special emphasis on virtues, cultural norms and values of The Gambian society
  5. The Gambia since independence
  6. Tourism
  7. Sports and culture

**PRIMARY SIX: THEME - THE GAMBIA AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY**

- UNIT:**
1. The Gambia as the human rights centre
  2. The conservation of fauna and flora
  3. Common social problems
    - Drugs and alcohol
    - Teenage pregnancy
    - STD Aids
  4. Land reclamation in Banjul as the capital city of The Gambia
  5. Family health and infant mortality
  6. The relationship between the population and environment
  7. National communication network
  8. Industrial development

**V. SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Culture and environment in this paper has been discussed with particular reference to the primary school education: the demands of the curriculum and what the schools practise in The Gambia.

The key elements - culture and environment have been defined. Both elements have also been treated in the light of The Gambian Primary School Education. Thus the inclusion of cultural and environmental education in the social studies and science curricular for primary schools in The Gambia, the formulation of objectives, determination of the content and methodology have also been dealt with. The cultural conflict with the activities in the school and the culture of the people, sample activities have been dealt with, and also some activities have

been identified concerning the promotion of the teaching of culture and environment in The Gambian Primary schools. As a matter of fact Government has formulated a cultural policy. Finally, chapters and passages in the Primary school social studies textbooks which stress or incorporate cultural and environmental aspects have been quoted.

With regard to the recommendations, the following points have been taken into consideration:

- .1. Culture is best taught and understood by means of interaction and communication between the school children of different countries. Visits and correspondence should be organised for children of different schools and countries.
2. Ethnocentrism is a false cultural concept which many people including young children believe that one's culture is better than the others. Exchange programmes for the schools and the children should be organised in order to discourage the concept of Ethnocentrism.
3. Simulation games provoke the imagination of the pupils. They should be encouraged to feature prominently in the activities of the primary school children.
4. Children can easily learn the languages of one and another. This should be encouraged informally in the primary school.
5. Post cards, stamps and posters can best illustrate the culture and environment of other people in other parts of the world. Cultural and educational institutions should be encouraged to send post cards and posters to the schools.
6. Primary social studies and science textbook sample books should be made available to the ACO member countries for diffusion of the teaching materials and new methods.
7. Children should be encouraged to visit sites where environmental degradation is taking place. Coastal areas where sea erosion occurs, mining areas where human beings have interfered with the natural landscape, etc.
8. Industrial estates should be visited by the children so that they can acquaint themselves with new developments.
9. Places of historical and geographical importance should be visited as part of the field trips.

10. Trans-African Radio Programmes should be initiated and provision made for their dissemination so as to promote the teaching of African culture and environment in African schools.
11. Concerted and collective programmes of instruction should be devised for dissemination about the dumping of the Toxic and Industrial Wastes in Africa. An attempt should be made to educate the public about the need to conserve and protect the environment.

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**NOTE OF CONTRIBUTORS**

The Articles in this, Monograph are a collection of papers presented for discussion at the seminar/workshop held in Nazareth, Ethiopia from 26 November to 6 December 1989 under the theme "Culture and Environment in Primary Education: The Demands of the Curriculum and What the Schools Practise". The contributors of these papers are as follows:

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