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PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE NEW NINE-YEAR-BASIC-EDUCATION CURRICULUM: TOWARDS MUTUAL PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN NATION

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Abstract
This paper considered the new curriculum for Universal Basic Education in Nigeria with the view to pointing out the teething areas which seem to work against peace and development, covertly and overtly. The paper adopted the method of philosophical critique which helped to expose and chal lenge the new curriculum and its features through a prescriptive mode which offered the possibility of having mutual peace and actual development in Nigerian society via some modifications in the new basic education curriculum. Findings from the study exposed some germane issues bordering on mutual peace and meaningful development in Nigeria. These issues bordered on priority in subject-placement; right direction and focus; approriate nomenclatures; rightful or wrongful additions and subtractions, among others. The study recommends that children should be prepared adequately for the challenges they will encounter in life immediately after basic education. In this vein, teaching Home Economics, Agriculture and Entrepreneurship as introductory subject should be changed to full immersion into the world of vocations. Thus, a change of nomenclature from Pre-vocational Studies to Vocational Studies is necessary. The option of Arabic language should be removed totally from lower basic education curriculum. It should however come up as an alternative to French language at the middle and upper basic education curricula.

Key words: Basic Education, Education, Mutual Peace, Development and Curriculum.
Introduction
The relationships between education and peace on one hand, and education and development on the other hand, have long been established by various scholars (Ottaway, 1962, Obanya, 2007, Oni & Akinsanya, 2015, Akinsanya, 2008 & 2012, Stephen, 2001). To foster peace in the society, people must be enlightened on terms of fairness and justice. They must realize that when they relate unjustly and unfairly with their neighbour, they are not only affecting them (their neighbour), they are equally depriving themselves of the possibility of living peacefully. Education helps in this realization and enlightenment, and such education has to begin from the elementary level or basic education in the case of Nigeria.

Again, there can be no actual development of any nation when its education is not rightly focused and appropriately channeled. A nation whose educational system places more importance on another culture, relegating hers to the background, cannot be said to be rightly and appropriately channeled. Scholars (Ottaway, 1962, Obanya, 2007, Oni & Akinsanya, 2015, Akinsanya, 2008 & 2012, Stephen, 2001) had sufficiently demonstrated that the development of any nation consists in its use of her education system to propagate and transform her way of life (culture), first and foremost, and thereafter, such education could take the child through the life and values of other cultures, since we now live in a global village. This means that charity must begin at home. With nations such as China, Japan, Russia, France, Arabia, etc, charity has always begun from home. After a good study of their cultural heritages, children in the afore-listed nations are subsequently, as a matter of choice and preference, predisposed to other languages, other values, other cultures.

Statement of the Problem
Mutual peace seems to elude the Nigerian society, especially in recent times. Mutual suspicion and attacks (verbal and physical) across many divides – tribal, political and most notoriously, religious are quite rampant. There is Boko haram, threatening every man to abandon his religious faith, for the profession of Islam. Christians are always shouting that islamisation of Nigeria is on fast speed, even as the Muslims are echoing a reverse of the song. Ethnically, Fulani herdsmen are on the rampage, placing the lives of cattle over humans, and sacrificing anybody who challenges their activities. Political parties are at each other's throats, threatening to bring the nation down if they do not have their way.

While Nigeria struggles to realize mutual peace among the citizenry, real development is equally proving unachievable. The culture of the people, her language and her values has not been its rightful place, and these variables are inadvertently connected with actual development of any society. Given the connection existing among education, peace and development, one would expect that the upbringing of the Nigerian child, especially at the basic education level, would focus majorly on peace and development. In its present state, on the contrary, it leaves much to worry about. This paper thus considers the new curriculum for Universal Basic Education in Nigeria with the view to pointing out the teething areas which seem to work against peace and development, covertly and overtly, and thereby make possible suggestions for a way forward.

Research Methodology
This study adopted the philosophical critique which helped to expose and challenge the new curriculum with its features. The philosophical mode of prescription was also adopted to offer the possibility of having mutual peace and actual development in Nigerian society via the modification of the new basic education curriculum.

New Curriculum for Basic Education in Nigeria and Its Challenges
The new curriculum for Basic Education in Nigeria reflects some re-ordering of subjects, some new injections and majorly, some mergers. While the re-ordering and injections were internally motivated, the merger was necessitated by the desire of the federal government to conform to the latest educational practice all over the world, which reduces heavy loads of subjects on the child and offers him/her the opportunity to concentrate on fewer subjects with possibility of mastery. In this vein, United States of America had to reduce her subjects at the basic education level to six; Kenya to seven subjects; Tanzania to eight subjects; Malaysia and Indonesia to nine subjects (Bidmos, 2017). Wambui and Amukowa (2013) pointed out that the new curriculum is an integrated approach which is the fusion of related subjects that had been taught separately; an infusion through merging
of different themes, topics or areas of learning that were hitherto considered separate subjects and examined by separate studies. Thus, we have the following, as published by the National Education Research Development Council (NERDC):

Table 1: Lower Basic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Curriculum (Primaries 1-3)</th>
<th>Exploratory Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. English Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Official national language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Medium of instruction in schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The subject predisposes itself for the following Road Safety Education, Disaster Risk Reduction Education, Consumer Education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Subject includes Literature in English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Mathematics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fundamental discipline for science and technology development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Important in everyday life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Nigerian Language (One Nigerian Language)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- National Policy on Education (NEP) stipulates that the medium of instruction should be the language of the immediate environment of the child. Schools are free to select such Nigerian Language to be taught.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Basic Science and Technology (BST)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Basic science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Basic Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Physical and Health Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information Technology (IT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Each of the listed components will serve as themes for the Basic Science and Technology Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Climate change is part of the Basic Science theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disaster Risk Reduction Education and Consumer Education are included into Basic Science and Technology Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create enabling environment for the subject in all schools by making computer available in schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Religious and National Values (RNV)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Christain Religious Studies (CROSS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Civic Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Security Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listed components will serve as themes in the Religious and National Values Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contents are planned for all children to take Social Studies, Civic education and Security Education themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Separate classes should be taken for CRS theme and SHER Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consumer Education, Disaster Risk Education and Peace and Conflict Resolution curricula are included in the Civic Education, Social Studies and Security Education themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create enabling environment for the subject in all schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Important forgetting stages of our cultural heritage and fostering creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Arabic Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Optional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
- Maximum of 6 subjects. Minimum of 4 subjects
- Emphasis should be on basic concepts and their explanations
- Teaching and learning activities must be creative, innovative, and practical
- Avoid content repetitions across themes and subjects
- Admit only basic contents from old curriculum

Source: NERDC 2013

Table 2: Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primaries 4-6)
A critical look at the above three tables 1, 2 and 3 raise some germane issues bordering on mutual peace and real cum meaningful development in Nigeria. There are issues on priority, proper direction and focus; there are also issues on nomenclatures; rightful or wrongful additions and subtractions, as the case may be.

The first issue to be raised is on Religion and National Values (RNV) – which is a merger of Religious Studies (CRS & IS) with Social Studies (SS), Civic Education (CE) and Security Education (SE). This is the major aspect of the new curriculum on Basic Education which caused so much uproar in the country, as soon as the curriculum was introduced in 2013 by NERDC. It aggravated the already heated divide across religious sentiments in Nigeria. Christians began to allege that the government was making attempts to islamise Nigeria, while Muslims fought back with same accusation – christianisation of Nigeria. The camp of the traditionalists were not left behind – some adherents sought for the teaching of African Traditional Religions in Nigerian schools. According to them, the inclusion would make the Nigerian child appreciate the religion of his forebears, rather than underrate it. This rancour reached its climax last year, 2018, and one wonders if it had subsided. Although this needless brouhaha was born out of sheer ignorance of members of the public, propaganda by some political saboteurs, and poor dissemination of information from the ministry of education, a cursory look at the nomenclature and what it purports to do will be represented thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral/Ethical Values</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Values</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above simply means that while Religion is expected to teach the child moral values, SS, CE & SE are expected to impart social values on the child. The syllabus of the merger appears to buttress this position, except for the part of religion. This part is expected to be taught...
Philosophical Appraisal of the...

separately (i.e. CRS & IS in separate classes), with each of them focusing on different belief-systems, different explanations about God and reality, and variances on some moral values. These challenges have moved some scholars to call for the outright removal of religion from the curriculum. A notable number of moral philosophers have posited that moral values can be taught without resorting to religion, at least, the experiment of Dr Tai Solarin in Mayflower is a practical demonstration (confer Solarin, 1970; Okanlawon & Fasanmi, 2000). The problems created by religion in Nigeria have further made scholars to push religion back to the family fronts and Religious Homes, while the school is left off the hook. Albeit it makes sense to make this push, since education by its nature has nothing to do with indoctrination which is the trademark of religion, schooling without religion is however parochial, restrictive and one-sided. If education is really an attempt to make the child understand his environment and gain the potentia Is needed to cope with the said environment, then reducing the attention of the child to a mere part of such environment cannot but be one-sided. Since nature, the child’s environment is dualistic (physical and spiritual; material and immaterial; mediate and remote), a complete education of the child thus needs an equal focus on the duality. This means that the child must be made to understand and cope with his immediate milieu, and equally understand and prepare to cope with his remote environment. Religion, in this case, offers the child the opportunity of understanding and coping with the dualistic nature of reality; and this explains the reason for its necessity and inclusion in the curriculum.

Given the foregoing therefore, religion ought not to be excused from the curriculum, but from the subject labelled – RNV. Since we cannot rely on it for the inculcation of moral values, as demonstrated earlier, we should replace Religion with Moral Education in the merger. In this case, Moral Education will take care of moral values (its rightful custodian, Akinsanya, 2007); while SS, CE & SE will take care of social values. This should then change the present nomenclature from RNV to NV (National Values), but because NV would not appear as the right nomenclature for the marriage of SS, CE & SE, the writer thus proposes Socio-Ethical Values (SEV) or Value-Education (VE) in its stead. Religion, which has always been taught in the history of formal education in Nigeria as perspectives of different religious sects on the understanding of God, rather than being used to inculcate objective moral values, will now have the advantage of standing alone as a separate subject.

The second issue to be considered on the new curriculum is the placement of subjects in tables 1, 2 and 3. Although it is not explicitly or overtly stated that importance is attached to subjects in the order of arrangement and presentation, it is however covertly and explicitly construed that curriculum planners arrange subjects in the order of precedence and importance. A careful look at the above table reinforces this opinion. Due to the fact that English is Nigeria’s major official medium of communication, expected to be learnt and understood by all school-attendees no matter where they are residing in the country, curriculum planners ipso facto (by that fact) had put English studies as pre-eminent in the scale of preference, by putting it first on the three tables. It is only a naive-minded observer who will take it for granted that such consistent placement is not significantly consequential. It is simply to pass a message that English studies is the first and major focus of basic education in Nigeria. This kind of placement would therefore drag us back to the drawing table – to the discourse on the relationship between education and culture; school and society.

Scholars, especially from the socio-philosophical and sociological bent, have demonstrated that there is a great relationship between the culture of a people and the education put in place to preserve, transmit and transform such culture. It is a symbiotic relationship (Dewey, 1899, 1916; Ikare, 1982). Akinsanya (2012) pointed out that a society’s culture is the expression of historical situation and of a view of the world, of life and death, of man’s significance, of the tasks he has to discharge, his prerogatives and limitations, and of what he has to do and what he may hope for. All these functions are, however, passed down to man from one generation to the other through the instrumentality of education. It means that without culture, education makes no meaning, and without education, culture becomes unknowable. This explains the reason for Obanya (2007) considering culture and education as inseparable, as they are two sides of the same coin. The two concepts are, in his opinion, indistinguishable as the primary definition of education is acculturation. This is why it is often said that the cultured man is the educated man. The relationship however connotes that the two
Philosophical Appraisal of the...  

Concepts have some responsibilities to each other. While culture determines what education should transmit (i.e., what is to be learnt, why it is to be learnt, when and where it is to be learnt) and provides the vehicle, education helps culture with two functions: conservation and transformation. By the former, it is the process through which cultural values and behavioural patterns of the society are handed over to its young and potential members. By this, the society achieves a basic social conformity and ensures that its traditional modes of life are preserved. The latter simply means criticality and creativity, which prop up the ability to make new inventions and discoveries and willingness to initiate social changes. So, education assists the society in conserving and transforming its values, norms and etiquettes.

From the foregoing, therefore, it is expected that the child should be integrated first into his culture (language, values, etc.) before later being introduced to other cultures, in the spirit of globalization. This is what every well-meaning and real developed nation does – Japan, China, Russia, USA, etc. (Akinsanya, 2012). Children in these nations start by learning their cultural values (most especially languages), before being introduced to other cultural values and this is reflected in their curricular placement of subjects. Nigeria’s placement of subjects in the above curriculum is indicative of two things: that she is still running a colonial education, and that she is yet to have a focus on how to rightly run her system of education for the actual development of her local contents primarily. Closely connected to the above on the issue of placement of subjects is Cultural & Creative Arts. Under the section of explanatory notes in the three tables, it was indicated that the subject is important for preservation of our cultural heritage and fostering creativity. If this is really so, and the policy makers really meant this point, then it ought not to be put on item seven in the three tables; it should rather move to number two in the three tables, immediately next to Nigerian languages in hierarchy. Nigerian languages and Cultural & Creative Arts should follow each other in the line of hierarchy. The two subjects are the major reasons for setting up Nigerian education system. The National Policy on Education (2013) confirms this when it emphasized the importance of Nigerian languages to the protection, preservation and promotion of Nigerian cultures and the enhancement of human dignity; and the need to protect our cultural heritage.

Still on language, Arabic language appeared on the first table as optional, meaning that a child at lower basic level could decide to pick Arabic language or not. Mention must quickly be made that this appearance is a paradigm shift from earlier adopted curricula in the history of basic education in Nigeria. One must ask however what motivated this inclusion, and possibly query the status of the subject as optional – as option to what? The featuring of English studies in the first table is quite understandable, as earlier stated in the explanatory notes, it is the ‘official national language and medium of communication in schools’, and one could add that it is the first international language to be predisposed to the consciousness of the Nigerian child after learning the language of his or her environment; but what do you make of Arabic language at this lower basic stage? Without accusing the policy makers of possibly islamizing education in Nigeria, which is the accusation making the rounds at present, one would assume that the intention of the policy makers could be that after the child had been introduced to the language of the environment and the lingua franca, the child should be further introduced to another international language to help the child cope with the challenges of globalization. If this is the intention, the Arabic language would do well by leaving the first table, and coming to the second table for middle level education, where French language is introduced to the child. As contained in the explanatory notes, French language is to be taught at this level because Nigeria is surrounded by francophone countries and the study of French language will make our children more competitive at the global level.

Nigeria has many stakes and relationships with Islamic/Arabic nations; and the study of Arabic language will make our children more competitive at the global level. Therefore, it will make strategic sense if the child is made to choose from two options of French Language or Arabic Language on the second and third tables. But to put the latter as optional, especially on the first table, leaves one to begin to wonder if there are no clandestine motives behind an option in the midst of no alternatives. By and large, the contention here is that the child should start with the learning of the language of the environment and lingua franca at the lower level, and at the middle and upper level of basic education, the child should be given an option of French or Arabic, with
the view to exposing the child to the international world, beyond the world of the Englishman.

Another important point that should be made on the subjects in the curricula is Pre-Vocational Studies, which shall henceforth be referred to as PVS in this paper. PVS is a merger of three subjects in the old curriculum viz: Home Economics, Agriculture and Entrepreneurship. Although it did not feature in the lower basic education for reasons known to the policymakers, which could be excused on the altar of immaturity of the child, it is however meant to serve as introductory to vocations for the child's later life, at the middle and upper basic levels. This is where the challenge is. Why should Home Economics, Agriculture and Entrepreneurship be taught introductory and not mainly/majorly? At this peculiar period when jobs are not available in the labour market, why would anyone want to handle this aspect of education as if it matters less? This approach even runs contrary to the spirit and goals of basic education in Nigeria (confer FME, 1999). The purpose of basic education is to prepare the Nigerian child with the minimum education needed to cope with life's challenges, after which the child may decide to continue with formal education by going to Senior Secondary School, or pull out into informal training. If the child thus decides to pull out, after being given only an appetizer, where would he/she get the main meal from? Such basic education would have done next to little in helping the child cope with the challenges of later life.

Conclusion
This paper recognizes that there are many factors which will come to play in achieving real development and mutual peace in any society. It however chose to consider one of those important factors, which is education and its policy, and particularly, basic education curriculum. The paper investigated the new basic education curriculum in Nigeria, with direct focus on the issues which border on subject-placement and priority; right direction and focus; appropriate nomenclatures; rightful addition and elimination of subjects, and so on. It concludes that if Nigeria is to witness sustainable development and peace among the citizenry, then she needs to practically and strategically resolve the afore-listed issues posed by the new basic education curriculum.

Recommendations
To take the nation through the path of development, this paper recommends that issues which could impede or frustrate efforts towards the desired goal should be jettisoned. First, on the placement of subjects in the curriculum, the researcher suggests that since Nigerian education system is put up in the first place to preserve and propagate Nigerian culture, as expectedly done in all other functional societies, the learning of Nigerian languages which currently occupies number three position in the three curricula for lower basic education, middle basic education and higher basic education should immediately move to number one in the three tables. Nigerian education should be seen to integrate the Nigerian child into his/her culture, (language), before any other exposure to any other language, no matter how seemingly important such other languages appear to be.

Closely related to this point is Cultural & Creative Arts which was indicated in the tables as subjects meant to preserve Nigeria's cultural heritage and foster creativity, should move to number two in the three tables, immediately next to Nigerian languages in the hierarchy. The two subjects, Nigerian languages and Cultural & Creative Arts should follow each other in the line of hierarchy, while every other subject could follow in any desired order. Allocation of space to these subjects on school time-table should reflect the importance attached to the studies.

Again, it is recommended that the child who receives basic education should be prepared fully for the challenges he/she will encounter after the nine-year-education. He should be fully immersed into the challenges and be taught how to surmount them. In this vein, teaching Home Economics, Agriculture and Entrepreneurship, under the label of PVS, as an introductory subject, would be counter-productive. PVS should rather be taught as a full immersion into the world of vocations. Thus, the writer suggests a change of nomenclature - PVS to VS, that is, Pre-Vocational Studies to Vocational Studies. This change in nomenclature is very consequential, for it will send signals to the teacher, the learner, the evaluator and any other person involved in the process, that the focus of the subject is the full immersion of the learner into the world of vocations. This is rightly needed to help Nigeria develop her potentials for the benefits of the citizenry and the entire nation.
To foster mutual peace in Nigeria, on the other hand, this paper recommends that to avoid misunderstanding and mutual suspicions, especially between Christians and Muslims in the country, the option of Arabic language in the midst of no other alternatives, should be removed totally from lower basic education curriculum. It should however come up as an alternative to French language at the middle and upper basic education curricula. At these stages, the child will have the freedom to pick any of the two languages he/she desires to meet and cope with the challenges of globalization and internationalization.

Again, in the interest of peace, this paper proposes that religion should be excused from RNV, while NV should deservedly change its nomenclature to SEV or VE due to the fact that the four concerned subjects are primarily focused on the teaching of values – social and moral values. Religion does not fit into this category because it does not have the capacity to inculcate objective values. Its valuations are often prejudicial, dependent on the religious sect of the handler. This has been demonstrated over time in the history of education in Nigeria. Rather than excuse it from the curriculum, as opined by some schools of thought, the writer contend that it should gain an independent status for its capacity to predispose the child to 'other' part of reality. However, the present handling of religious studies, wherein teachers teach it from their perspective may be counter-productive. This is what Grimmitt (1987) referred to as learning religion. To get the best out of religious studies, it is suggested that religion should be taught as learning from religion. The difference between ‘learning from religion’ and ‘learning religion’ is that in the latter case, pupils are expected to participate in the beliefs and practices of the religion being taught. Conversely, in the ‘learning from religion’ approach, the distance between the students and the religious content is strictly maintained. It is a scientific study of religion. The sole purpose of this approach is to illuminate the mind of the child in spiritual development, to expose the child to various perspectives and not to compel the child to adopt a particular type of religious system. This, of course, is actually the basis of education.

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