

AFRICAN CULTURE AND ITS PERCEIVED TRANSMISSION CHALLENGES AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES LECTURERS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

A nation that retains its identity in the global world will maintain its culture. Culture can be maintained through transmission from one generation to another. In recent times, foreign cultural practices are dominant in Africa, especially among youths. Therefore, this study investigated African culture and its perceived transmission challenges among social study lecturers in Oyo State, Nigeria. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and a descriptive research design. Social Studies lecturers at the colleges of Education formed the study population. All Social Studies lecturers were purposively selected from each Oyo state's two colleges, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education and Lanlate College of Education. Those Social Studies Lecturers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the contemporaries' issues in Social Studies, among which nation-building issues. The instrument for this study was a structured open interview for Social Studies lecturers on the challenges of cultural transmission in Africa. The results revealed that Africa is confronted with several challenges in the area of cultural transmission, which has caused many political, social, and economic setbacks. Therefore, it is recommended that every African nation's government deal with several issues that militate against African cultural heritage by engaging in several programmes that can encourage indigenous culture over foreign culture.

Keywords: Culture, Transmission, Heritage and Erosion of cultural values, African Culture

Introduction

Culture embraces several human phenomena, material achievements and norms, beliefs, feelings, manners, and morals. It is the patterned way of life shared by a particular group of people who claim to share a single origin or descent. In an attempt to capture the exhaustive nature of culture, Bello (1991) sees it as –the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours.

The culture of a people is what distinguishes them distinctively from other human societies in the family of humanity. The full study of culture in all its vastness and dimensions belongs to the discipline known as anthropology, which studies human beings and takes time to examine their characteristics and their relationship to their environments. Culture, as it is usually understood, entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people if it distinguishes them from other peoples or societies. These peculiar traits include people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing, and so on. It also includes people's social norms, taboos, and values. Values here are to be understood as beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.

Culture has been classified into material and non-material aspects. While material culture refers to the visible tactile objects that man can manufacture for human survival, non-material culture comprises the norms and mores of the people. While material culture is concrete and takes the form of artifacts and crafts, non-material culture is abstract but has a very pervasive influence on the lives of the people of a particular culture. Hence, beliefs about what is good and what is bad, with norms and taboos, are all good examples of non-material culture. From the foregoing, it is obvious that culture is shared because it consists of cherished values or beliefs shared by a group, lineage, religious sect, and so on. Apart from this, culture is dynamic in the sense that it is continually changing. Culture is not static.

We must be quick to point out that the idea of African culture risks being a fallacy because of the intimidating diversity of Africa and Africans. In spite of this diversity, there are central cords that bind this contrasting diversity of culture and people in Africa. Central to these cords is religion. Mbiti (2019) has submitted that the African is –in all things religious. He further affirmed that –religion is in their (Africans') whole system of being (p. 3). Closely woven around religion are ancestors, community, marriage, kinship, household, inheritance, vocation, government, judicial processes, festivals, rituals, and taboos. This culture oozes out of people's daily interactions with the physical and spiritual world. Anyanwu (2013) noted that Africans –culture is not established because of empirical research but as a product of the African experience in the world (p. 24). These structures are important because what we call African culture has been greatly influenced by other associations, especially European and American cultures (Falola 2016, Rodney 2015). However, in spite of these influences, we subscribe to the African culture representing the totality of the meaning-making schemes of the African. Our use of culture aligns with Anyanwu's (2013) summary that –the African cultural process is one of discipline. It insists that the individual should be seen considering the whole family, group, community, past and future generations (p. 24). Africans culture pivots on corporate existence with a holistic worldview. Despite other influences, some elements remain in African societies that survived colonial experiences. For example, the

Yoruba who find themselves in multiple places have contributed to ideas about reality of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Tolerance is a core element in Yoruba character as we do not seek cultural insularity but cultural inclusion (Falola, 2016).

It is worth noting that in the traditional African setting, the younger generation did not need worry about their future occupations because their culture catered to the vocations of the younger generation. This value was naturally imbibed in the younger generation as they served as apprentices in the trade of their fathers/mothers or the men/women who took care of them. Typically, a hunter's son will follow the status quo, as will a farmer, carpenter, or goldsmith's son. Regarding the societal level, Idong (2015), in what he captures as the „economic value“ of African culture, noted that groups in the same vocation will come together to help a member and this will continue when others need the same. In the Nigerian set up, this form of cooperative working and helping each other is termed „osusu“. Among the Akans of Ghana, if farmers engaged in the same, it is termed „nobua“. With this system at work, hardly any member of society remained unemployed, except for those who were lazy and did not want to fend for themselves and their families.

Character formation is yet another tenet that we seek to explore within Africans culture to promote quality education for sustainable development among the Akan of Ghana, the elders, like other Africans, used storey (mostly called „anansesem“ among the Adkan of Ghana) to instil into members of the society obedience, hard work, manners, fairness, good behaviour and submission to authority (Pinto, 2008).Thompson (1946) reflects on the excitement that was generated when families gathered by the fireside to entertain themselves by way of the elders artistically expressing their imagination to engage, excite and amuse their audience. We are of the firm belief that aside the stories that were told as a way of imbibing in people, especially the younger ones, virtues held in high esteem by their societies, the art of sitting together, singing together and perhaps sharing roasted corn or a local drink was enough to help socialise the younger ones and newcomers into the society. Again, it helped to get people to live, reason, and develop together, an equivalent of cooperative living and learning from the West and a strong means of character formation among Africans. *

Regrettably, African philosophies have not been able to permeate our educational setups as strongly as Western philosophies have done We are in no way arguing that Western philosophies are not helpful. Our argument is that local problems can best be solved with local solutions, hence a call to incorporate Africans culture into our schools“ curricula. Cues from South Africa have emphasised the philosophy of oneness or humanity (Ubuntu), which is an important aspect of the indigenous African system. As captured by Van Wyk (2018), institutions of higher learning in South Africans are engaged in strategies to transform their curriculum with a focus on integrating decolonization, Africanism, Ubutunism the already existing curriculum.

An equivalent of the Ubuntu concept in Nigeria and Ghana is captured in what (Idang, 2015) captures as the „social values“ of African culture. Idang has articulated how festivals and customary laws have worked together to ensure that people work together for the good of society. Undoubtedly, Idang has made a strong case for how African social values help bring unity among its people. We argue that Idang's statement is limited to the context of festivals hence, incorporating these social values into the formal education system will, to a large extent, help bring about oneness among the people. In the long run, cooperative existence and

learning found in African societies can also be emulated in educational circles.

As is common with African settings, storeys come in the form of folklore, folktales, proverbs, etc., and these forms of African culture do not recognise borders. This explains why the same folktales or proverbs can be heard in several distinct African ethnic groups, but not without the local spice. This argument is validated in Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart*, in which she states, "Ikemefuna had an endless stock of folktales. Even those whom Nwoye knew were already told with a new freshness and the local flavour of a different clan" (p.25). The beauty of these storeys is that they always ended with good omen for good characters and the reverse for those with negative tendencies. In effect, these storeys were not just to praise the heroic exploits of characters who mainly were fictitious: rather, they were meant to ignite in the listeners a fire to emulate the good things they heard about those good characters. Despite the richness of African culture, many of its great values have been wiped away by western culture acculturation in Africa. Therefore, this study investigated African culture and its perceived transmission challenges among social study lecturers in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objective of this study is to identify transmission challenges of African culture and the way out

Research Questions

The following question was asked to guide this study:

- i. What are the perceived transmission challenges of African culture?
- ii. How can the transmission challenges of African culture be resolved?

Methods

The research focused on the interpretive paradigm. This implies the need for interpretative data analysis by the researchers, which can only gain meaning if the researchers understand the subject's language and all its attendant nuances. This study used a qualitative approach because the researchers interviewed the lecturers' respondents to allow them to explain their perceptions. The study adopted a phenomenological research design because it attempts to understand people's (lecturers) perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of the transmission challenges of African culture.

Social Studies lecturers at the colleges of Education formed the study population. All publicly owned colleges of education were purposively selected for this study: Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. All Social Studies lecturers in each College of Education were selected for this study, subject to their availability. Seven (4) lecturers were available from Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate, and six were available in Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, making a total of ten(10) lecturers as participants. The instrument for this study was a structured open interview for Social Studies Lecturers' perceptions of the transmission challenges of African culture.

The researchers believed that the population chosen was relevant and suitable for the study since the lecturers are well grounded in the emerging issues in social studies, among which African culture is a prominent topic. In this study, the researchers used non-probability sampling. This type of sampling does not require a large population. Participants for this study were purposively selected from two Colleges of Education. The researchers were the

only ones who undertook the fieldwork. The duration of interviewing was 2 weeks. The researchers placed the raw data from the interviews into meaningful categories to examine them holistically.

Results and Discussion: The research question constitutes the themes of analysis from which sub-themes will emerge for data analysis.

Research Question 1: What are the perceived transmission challenges of African culture?

Many of those lecturers' opinions regarding perceived transmission challenges of African culture are stated here:

There was an opinion that our family structure has been narrowed down to individualism, which has led to the barrier to our cultural transmission. The opinion was stated as follows:

Lecturer 1: *Our family structure, i.e, from knit-family structure to family individualism*

The opinions of Lecturers 4 and 2 were in accordance with Lecturer 1

Another lecturer emphasised that:

Lecturer 9: *Effects of foreign aid and unequal exchange of trade, leading to master-servant relationship etc.*

Another lecturer sees it from the decline of the African language point of view

Lecturer 7: *Decline in the African language due to Western culture and civilization led to the creation of the elite and masses*

Lecturers 2 and 6 also agreed with this by saying:

Lecturer 6: *Embracing Western Education in all aspects of our cultural values* **Lecturer 2:** *Preference for foreign languages over African*

Research Question 2: How can the transmission challenges of African culture be resolved?

Lecturer 10: *Citizens should cherish and practise our cultural values/heritage at home. Charity begins at home. If we don't blow our trumpet, nobody will.*

Lecturers 7, 3, 2, and 1 agreed with the view of Lecturer 10

Lecturer 5: *African citizens need training in global citizenship*

Lecturer 8: *There is a need to pay attention to differences in culture; no culture is superior to another.*

Lecturer 2 stated a similar view as follows:

Lecturer 2: *There is a need to bridge cultural gap with good communication skills.*

The study revealed that African individualism family structure negatively affects African culture transmission terms of proper socialisation of African children into African culture. Africans embrace Western culture to the detriment of their own culture, that is, Africans promote foreign culture above their own culture. Africans see their own culture as inferior to foreign culture; therefore, proper attention is not paid to their own culture. Foreign culture receives much attention from Africans over their own language. All these points, as mentioned earlier, hindered African culture transmission. There is a need for every African citizen to cherish and practise their cultural values/heritage at home and abroad. Charity begins at home. If they do not blow their trumpet, nobody will blow it for them.

Conclusion

Culture makes every society distinct from others and is also a means of differentiating groups of people from one another. No nation is without culture because culture is human. Without human beings, there is no culture because culture is man-made. African culture is rich in values and must not be neglected. African culture differentiates them from other races in the

world. It has been noted that there are many challenges confronting African culture transmission to the next generation, as many other nations of the world transit their cultural values to other generations. African culture declines due to contact with foreign culture that makes Africans see foreign culture as superior to their own culture, and this attitude from Africa poses a threat to their cultural values. There is a need for every African country to look for means to ensure that their cultural heritage is being embraced by their citizens at home and abroad.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers make the following recommendations: African citizens must undergo global citizenship training to understand how to appreciate their cultural heritage without making foreign cultures superior to African culture

African people must pay attention to cultural differences and recognise that no culture of any nation is superior to another culture

There is a need to bridge the cultural gap through good communication

Finally, every African citizen must cherish and practise their cultural values/heritage at home and abroad because if they fail to blow the trumpet of their culture, no nation will do it for them.

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