

The Imperative of Effective Socialisation towards Sustaining Indigenous Cultures in Nigeria

Robert, Odey Simon

General Studies Dept,

Consultancy Unit,

NASPOLY, Lafia

greatrobert1st4fame@yahoo.com

Dibie, Godfrey Atunu

General Studies Department

Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia

Abstract

It is high time we collectively stopped or curbed the incessant emerging contemporary trends of gross abuse, negligence, dabbing and endangerment of and attrition/extinction bids to our precious indigenous cultures, especially by the elite and bourgeois classes of our Nigerian society. All these sprawl from the extreme crazy quest for modernism, civilisation and Westernism, pride, Christianity and Islam, globalisation and so on at the expense of our cultures, our rich heritage and indigenous assets. For example, it is regrettable and unfortunate that even the children of some professors, dons and other 'big guns' cannot say a word in their mother-tongues talk more of understanding them. This paper is a scholastic clarion call to all and sundry that collectively constitutes the agents of socialisation to rise to this challenge and savage our indigenous cultures from these infamous nefarious scourges towards a sustained distinct society. The study relies on textual materials besides intuition and non-participant observation.

Introduction

Nigeria, a widely known multi-lingual nation and giant of Africa, is often claimed to have over 250 languages and culture, following classical studies. But now the account has reached 350, which according to Ewrierhoma (2007:7) might be over 350 if fair and true account is given, involving every culture. She further notes that each culture has its own way of life, which manifests in language/dialect, dress, costumes, body adornment, song, music, games, dance, visual arts, rituals, festivals, ceremonies at birth, marriage (matrilineal and patrilineal), chieftaincy, planting, harvest and celebrations of death are also distinct.

These material and non-material aspects of Nigeria's cultures are being married with extinction bids from most Nigerians, especially the elite, all in their ego to show their level of education, civilisation, exposure, contact with alien culture(s), religious commitment, embargoes, diffusion and hypocrisy and re-orientation as well as to distant themselves and their families from what they now dab variously as 'barbaric', 'fetish', gender-prescriptive, 'negative cultures', 'Africa/Nigerian mentality' and so on. The unjustifiable shift from our indigenous cultures in Nigeria and other parts of Africa leaves us with adverse effects/impacts, leading us to wiping ourselves, as we may someday become 'faceless' and 'tasteless', since a people without a culture (language especially) are a lost or extinct people without identity, heritage and own abode.

Describing all our rich cultural heritage as ‘our treasures’ now deserted by many, the poet, Robert, Odey (2014:4) writes,

*Who becomes the owner of our treasures?
Our fertile land is now deserted by many for her unfertile mates
Our decorated invaluable cultures, deserted
By many for the uncultured
Our mother-tongue, silenced for the aliens
Our treasures are totally robbed off [lines 1-6 stanza 1].
Where are our ancient treasures?
Instead of procreation, we bomb them
With raw acid-atomic bomb and
Gradual rapid painful rocket launcher bullets of extinction [lines 10-13 stanza 2].
Where is our religion?
Ours had been swallowed by the alien,
Giving her blasphemous damnation,
Dabbing her fetish, juju, false belief system and thereabout [lines 14-17, stanza 3].
Our treasures are stormed with thunder and atomic bomb
Planted beneath to explode
Day on, day night until they are no more [19-21 stanza 4].*

The above lines and stanzas describe the present ugly situations of our indigenous cultures in the hands of many and in the face of alien cultures purported to be superior, better civilised and truly religious. The poet whinges about the reckless emerging shift from or abandonment of our cultures for the alien- white cultures- upon their hitherto deceits and rhetoric. Robert continues thus:

*It is for this that we are plagued with the woes of nude attires
Even in the media via its products, pornography
And virtuous hypocrisy imported from far-away
Unfertile fertile land where many fly to in troops
Upon the deceit that there is better than here
Our blest fertile motherland
Where is our pride now that all run from our treasures?
Imagine our fertile arts, cultures, customs, values, norms,
Races, religion, literature, language, philosophy, cosmology
Talents and potentials, vegetation, soil
Water bodies, government... coveted by many outside
Neglected, rejected and dejected from the alien
All for white lives that worth not ours [stanzas 5-6].*

Besides describing the rich geography and nature of Nigeria as well as all aspects of her various diverse cultures, the poet blames the mass media, some of the agents of socialisation for their nowadays negative, scandalous programmes and products which culminate into the emerging forces against our cultures in contemporary time. He queries in line 33: *for where are we heading to?* In stanza 8, he muses that our treasures [cultures] are in shabby, trouble and danger of extinction.... The Black now metamorphosed to white by imitation. The poem ends with a poetic clarion call to Nigerians and the Black race as a whole to rise and be proudly ‘Black’/

'Let's own our treasured heritage/ Let's return to them/ Let's live and die for our vast green orchard treasures for new harvest [development/changes]/ Then, they will run to us, not we to them/ Our mother thus becomes proud as we become like then, the owners of our own treasures. The poet expresses the prospects and joy of returning to our cultures, our abandoned treasures.

This emerging near-general trend is a product of misinformation, little/no efficacious orientation, neo-colonialism and poor socialisation. It is an ageing scourge that emerged with the advent of colonialism, westernism, civilisation, globalisation and what have you. This paper thus arouse the attention and consciousness of all to this scourge posing various degrees of threats to our indigenous cultures and nationhood, with special emphasis on the imperative for the various agents of socialisation family, schools, mass media, peer groups, etc. to rise towards ameliorating the odds.

Conceptual Clarifications

Here, our operational words are given fairly brief conceptual reviews for clarification and a better understanding of the whole work. The words include imperative, socialisation, agents, mass media, family sustaining cultures, indigenous cultures, mother-tongue, languages, ethics, religion, education, school and arts.

The word imperative is both a noun and an adjective, with 'the vital' as its direct (first) synonym. It means, among others, 'to do something very important and needing immediate attention or action; 'a thing that is very important and needs immediate attention or action' (Hornby, 2001:599). Imperative is thus used here to describe the importance of our indigenous cultures and the urgent need to assert them via maximum attention, regards, and effective socialisation that would bring about their transmission, preservation, promotion and sustenance for nationhood identities and continuous existence.

Socialisation is the process by which children and adult learn from others, which starts from early days of life and continues all throughout life unless affected or cut short by natural or artificial (human) forces like mental or physical handicap, epidemics, death or so. This learning is usually two-sided. It could be fun as in learning, dancing, arts, sports, craft, fashion, trading, farming, cooking, etc.; skills, techniques or knowledge from parents, relatives, siblings (family); friends, acquaintances, mates, colleagues/peers, teachers, bosses (school); information resources and information services providers (mass media and libraries); and cleric and religious organisations (religion). At other times, it could be painful to learn alien, (unfamiliar) cultures at the expense of the indigenous ones like 'nude dressing' of the West now gradually imbibed and diffused into Nigeria cultures, homosexuality, feminism, moral decadence, flamboyant marriage (wedding), monogamy and so on. Others include wearing suits in an unsuitable environment or corporate dressing all for acquired/adopted organisational norms or rules and regulations, learning how to fasten seat belt, obeying traffic rules, speed less, how to tolerate insults or caricatures from age mates, friends or colleagues (peers), etc.

Socialisation, according to Afen-Akpaída (2008:51), refers to the process in which people learn skills, values, knowledge, motives and roles (cultures) of the groups to which they live. He further notes that socialisation is seen as society's principal mechanisms for influencing the development of character and behaviours; it also prepares the humans to function in social life, it is culturally relative- people in different cultures are socialised differently. This takes effect early in life as a child and an adolescent (Afen-Akpaída, 2008:52). The second phase stems from the increasing complexity of society with its corresponding increase in varied roles and responsibilities, which one experiences throughout life time (Arnett, 1995, Afen-Akpaída, 2008).

From the above, it is thus imperative for Nigerians to uphold, teach and learn, imbibe, practise, transmit, maintain and sustain their indigenous cultures rather than half-haphazardly pursuing others' which are alien, unequal and unfavourable to ours. Effective socialisation is the best means through which the desired otherwise could be evenly attained.

Over the years, the agents of socialisation have been grouped into five basic categories by legions of scholars, viz: the family, the school, peer groups, the mass media, and religion (Arnett, 1995; Coates and Wagenaar, 1999; Afen-Akpaida, 2008; Omoregie and Aluede, 2008; Bamizaiye and Igbo, 2003; Onoguere and Osa-Edo, 2008; Onyeachu, 2008; Kanu, 2006; among others). Afen-Akpaida (2008) points out, with fair explanations and examples, seven types of socialisation, viz: primary, secondary, anticipatory, developmental, and reverse socialisation, socialisation and self and family interaction and parenting issues.

'To sustain' means to provide enough of what somebody or something needs in order to live or exist or to make something continue for sometimes without becoming less (i.e. to maintain something) (Hornby et al., 2001: 1209). Although there are several other denotative definitions of the word 'sustain', the base/root of 'sustaining' used here as a gerund. Therefore, we aver that proper socialisation should be made effective by all its agents in order to incessantly sustain the indigenous cultures of Nigeria and her life. What should be provided enough in order for these cultures to live on without becoming less include thorough informal and formal education on the value for the cores, the beauty and prospects, the uniqueness of our indigenous cultures, the differences among our cultures and between ours and others', the essence of our cultures and their roles in the larger society, and the dire need for us to learn, practise (though dropping or reforming any negative aspects), uphold, imbibe, appreciate, sustain and pass on our cultures endlessly everywhere. This educational task is basically with the family, the school and the mass media, thus the dire need for these socialisation agents to rise to the challenges and save our indigenous cultures from the emerging scourging ruin.

Culture, as a concept, is married with legions of definitions or conceptions by legions of scholars, though all seemingly alike.

Allimi in Yusuff (2005:52) defines culture with a combined quote thus:

“Culture defines a society's identity, its ethos, and its values...

It is continuous, enduring, and it relates past to present, present to future in all encompassing...it is the totality of the life of the people- habits, belief, customs, values, attitudes, laws...” The cultural Policy for Nigeria advocates “effective use of press, radio, television, and film for promoting Nigeria's cultural image and aspiration.”

The above reflects the widely held definition of culture by various scholars in varied ways but all alike, as first given by Tylor (1871:1)- the totality of a people's life which subsumes the whole of 'capabilities' and 'habits' of a man as a part of society (i.e. material and non-material aspects of culture-and the role of the mass media in cultural education orientation, socialisation, sustenance and development through promotion of the positive cultural image of Nigerian indigenous cultures, since the mass media constitute socialisation agent, their role in effective socialization towards sustaining Nigerian indigenous cultures in this seeming culture-cleansing era is imperative, just like other agents of socialisation, as this paper advocates.

Culture is the complex whole of a man's acquisitions of knowledge, morals, belief, art, custom, technology and the tools with which they live, which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. It includes the ideas, values, literature, religion and philosophy of a people

(Ezenwu, 1990; Otite and Ogionwo, 2003; Nwabuizi, 1988). Their definitions capture the cores (both material and non-material) of culture and a culture accordingly.

For Dewey (1939:122), culture is what characterises a people and epoch a whole, an organic intellectual and moral quality. This thus describes the inherent attributes of a people alongside the various periods of their existence and living and social institutions as well as assets, including language, tribe, religion, politics, social, philosophy, etc. with which they are distinctly known.

The reality of all the foregoing is articulated by Taiwo (1988:32) thus: 'Culture is transmitted by learning, and learning requires social interaction'. Social interaction forms the thrust of socialisation of all kinds. Nigerian cultures must have to be transmitted by teaching and learning vis-a-vis social interaction to the present generation and posterities accordingly by these agents of education and socialisation. Our various cultural heritage- language, arts, philosophy, religion, politics, informal education, etc.- are our indigenous cultures that must be preserved and sustained till 'thy kingdom come'. Each has its own ways.

The Family and Child's Education on Indigenous Cultures

The family is the first and most prominent agent of child's education and socialisation in every society. The child depends entirely on the family for his/her education. The basic positive ways of behaviour (living) are usually learnt from the home. It is where the child first learns the culture, tradition, customs, norms, values (ethics and aesthetics), philosophy, occupation, etc. of his/her people. Respect for elders God, language and culture are learnt from the home (cf. Omoregie and Aluede, 20008: 62/3). The earlier the family, the primary agent of socialisation, teaches and prevails on the child on what to do and not to, the better/the more the child gets used to his indigenous culture. That is, when the family prevails on the child to learn, get used to and regard his/her indigenous culture more than any other acquired/alien one(s), the child grows with such orientation and would later inculcate same into their own children/wards in the future, thereby continue cultural transmission. But a situation whereby parents teach their children/wards alien/'absorbed immediate' culture at the expense of theirs, they grow up without any indigenous identity. For instance, instead of teaching a child their mother-tongue/s (in the case of a bilingual mother-tongue), the child is rather taught only English, Hausa or any other Second Language (L2). These other languages could be easily learnt by the child at school and/or the adjourn environment(s) through peers and teachers. But the child would seldom learn his/her mother-tongue(s) from elsewhere when stripped off of his asset(s) by their parents. Unfortunately, this is now the order of the day, practised mostly by the elite for various flimsy reasons that could be worked on/over. A child of a bilingual home (parents) ought to be taught at least their either parent's mother tongue, especially that of the mother who is usually the child closest companion and first/best teacher.

According to Omoregie and Aluede (2008:63), the family is the bed rock of the society. Every person in the society has a background in a family. Every child is born into a family and he takes on the family name. The family exercises a great influence on the child, as the basic learning function begins in the family. It is the duty of the family to present acceptable modes of behaviour to the children and make effort to ensure these are confirmed to. Indeed it is the family that would teach/train the children how to respect, interact, relate with and regard others, elders, mates and young/junior ones respectively. For example, an African child should be at all times taught that he ought to greet others who are older than them; wait for an elder to stretch hand first for a hand shake, not the reverse; be well dressed rather than been nude all for crazy fashion; be diligent and crafty rather than been lazy and covetous; practise all positive, good, reformed cultural traits/practices; obey our respective cultural norms and values and uphold them above

the aliens; and so on. But because most families now fail on their core responsibilities (not mere financial care or pampering), most children grow up knowing little or nothing about their cultures and never bother to, and being indisciplined. They thus indulge in various infamous infamies and social vices, constituting a nuisance to the society. It is high time, we stopped all these.

The family may be defined as a group of people linked by blood or marriage, co-operating economically and sharing the responsibility of the upbringing of their offspring. Part of the functions of the family in the society is the transmission of the norms, languages, values and the culture of the society to the young ones, thereby ensuring the future of the society (Kanu, 2006). Onyeachu (2006) contributes thus: within the family, the basic social skills and etiquettes are given to the child by the older members of the family. This affords the child the opportunity of learning the culture of the immediate family and that of the neighbourhood. Onoguere and Osa-Edo (2008) affirm this when they maintain that it is from the family a person gets introduction into the society. The task of every Nigerian family thus is to introduce her children (members) to her own original culture before being diffused /introduced in/to other cultures.

A family is simply described as a social unit of person's biological origin (Bamisaiye, 1998; Igbo, 2003). Child's education on indigenous culture entails the following from the family:

1. Developing the child's personality which involves striking a balance between the three structures of personality: id, ego and super-ego, where the third has the greatest influence in the socialisation process, that reflects parental and cultural injunctions and restrictions (Nwachukwu and Nwagwu, 2006);
2. Proper foundation or child's character formation that will shape the child's cosmology, philosophy and conduct;
3. Building self-esteem that will propel the child into learning, loving, upholding, sharing and transmitting the indigenous culture(s);
4. Discipline and positive influence on the child in consonance with the ageing indigenous norms and values;
5. Motivation, through which the child becomes interested and immersed in his/her indigenous culture.

The School and Indigenous Cultures

The school is another crucial agent of socialisation which comprises the society, classroom and the teacher. The classroom is often seen as a place where the child is easily faced with socialisation among peers. Since most of the things that children do in the classroom are done in the presence of their peers, they have to learn how to deal with a more formalised group situation. Parental expectations and perceptions of their children's development of both cognitive and motor skills serve to affect the transition to the school environment (Coates and Wagenaar, 1999). Since teacher also plays the significant role in the social development of the child, which is at school, the place of the teacher in the child's education on indigenous cultures is pivotal. Therefore, the Nigerian (African) teacher ought to inculcate the positive knowledge of the Nigerian cultures into the child, the student, rather than promoting the alien cultures at the expense of ours, which are in no way better than ours.

Society refers to a group of people sharing distinct institutions and culture which are transmitted from generation to generation. Education, the thrust of schools, is the means for propagating, preserving, transmitting and renewing cultures. The schools assist in transmitting the culture of the society. They help to socialise new members for the society. The schools help to teach the cultural heritage, skills and knowledge that are required to be part of the society. The younger

ones are taught how to belong to /fit into the society. They help to teach children to be orderly and provide them with the training that make them to have sense of purpose, direction and coordination. Pupils/students (children) are taught skills required to provide labour force that the society needs for advancement (Aluede, 2008:96).

Ottaway (1976) observes that one of the tasks of education is to hand on the cultural values and behaviour patterns of the society to its young and potential members. This task is shouldered by the school, an agent of socialisation. Contrarily, Nigerian schools now hand on the learnt/adopted cultural values and behaviour patterns of the Western society, dabbling variously those of Nigeria. These emerging trends of anti-indigenous culture education in Nigerian schools greatly endanger our indigenous cultures to the point of extinction- neo-colonialism culture clash. Until our schools drop emphasis on (promotion- extreme teaching/learning- of) external (alien) cultures and take up/show case ours like their Western contemporaries do, the younger generation shall keep shying away from our prestigious cultures. And it starts now!

Our Cultures and the Mass Media

Nigeria is a multi-cultural diverse society of over 350 ethnic groups which could co-exist peacefully for national integration /cohesion regardless of the majority-minority dichotomy, if operational, sustained positive cultural journalism is in place. The dichotomy is even what placed the ratio at over 350 since some had been disregarded or submerged else if thoroughly counted, there are over 500 cultural (ethnic) entities in Nigeria. Each of these cultures is distinct and unique but for gross negligence and crave for the alien and the majority dictum. The Nigerian mass media, over whelmed by colonial-western-majority mentality, preach the sermon of gross negligence for a digression from Nigerian cultures, as only the obvious social aspects of the claimed major cultural groups are blended with the adopted Western. This is very pathetic and unfortunate.

Although the cultural policy for Nigeria advocates ‘effective use of the press, radio, television and film for protecting Nigeria’s cultural image and aspiration’, the reverse is unfortunately the case, as little or nothing is yet reckoned with from the press in promoting Nigeria’s cultural image, aspiration and development, thereby, heading towards wiping Nigerian cultures.

Decrying the ugly situation of our cultures in the Nigerian post-independence era especially from the media, the cultural journalist Taiwo Allimi (2005:53) writes,

When you therefore take a global look at the communication channels operating in Nigeria today, there seems to be a successful imposition of alien values, alien faith and alien psychology on our culture. Why should this be so? On radio and television and in the press both privately owned and public owned, we are devoting space and airtime to foreign “non-creative works” which to me [him] is a curious misapplication of valuable communication resource. For instance, must we further the maddening consumption of musical works of foreign artistes on our airwaves...foreign artists whom we owe such obligation? Don’t let’s deceive ourselves. No one says he is giving the public what it wants unless the public knows the whole range of possibilities which the medium can offer and from this range chooses what it wants... Usually if people say they know what they like, it does not always mean they know.

The above describes how Nigeria's over 350 cultures are neglected and relegated for the alien, most especially by the mass media which should ordinarily project, portray, uphold, spread, disseminate, import, promote and develop our indigenous cultures. Allimi further observes,

Our media must promote primarily Nigeria's indigenous music, our sports and arts, culture and much more. We need our music, we need radio and television programmes, we need features and essays that uplift the spirit...that uplift life. But then in Nigeria, we value things alien, not for their relevance to our lives but simply because of their foreignness. Is it not unfortunate that most video movies produced by our own producers and directors celebrate violence and immorality which corrupt our values and cultural norms? [The affirmative is 'it is!']. Why must we promote prostitution as being creative? Take Guns! Guns in video movies and films don't kill. But guns on the streets and in the hands of evil men do kill. Bad, violent language, fetish content of video movies, dirty clothing [bom-short, leggings, spaghetti, etc and sagging, among others], fetish beliefs [voodooism, gay practice and legalisation, etc], page 3 girls are not cultural. These have led to our Nigerian actors and actresses being bad role models in our society...especially to our children [for each real rare Nigerian-African parents become discouraged about, and discourage their children/wards from taking up such careers]. We must also frown at the emerging trend of the preference of advertisers for foreign programmes, especially on television and FM stations nationwide devoting over 80% of their airtime to the promotion of foreign music.

As it is in this era, children tend to learn faster from the media. These uncultured traits, dispositions and rhetoric's are rapidly learnt and diffused by our children, then hatching millions of odds into our blessed society, cursing it. We needn't be others, but ourselves, taking cognizance of the fact that every culture is unique, distinct, and equal to others- neither inferior nor superior to others. The borrowing, importation and diffusion of certain positive alien cultural traits is worthwhile but when otherwise in most cases in Nigeria, it becomes abnormal and crazy, thus relegating and bidding extinction of our indigenous cultures which should not be.

It is thus imperative to take note of the following:

- i. The orientation of the Nigerian mass media must change; media practitioners especially cultural journalists must have to preach, disseminate, uphold, promote, and develop our indigenous cultures.
- ii. Cultural journalists must be the vanguard for portrayal of our good positive cultural norms and values to our children through relevant arts music, dance, drama, sports, crafts, etc, with which we will return to and revive our cultures, towards realising their past glory and potentials;
- iii. The press must realise the place of the family in our cultures and thus put it back accordingly;
- iv. There is dire need for recruiting and training enough cultural journalists to take up this crucial task;

- v. The media should challenge the biased and prejudiced perception and ideology of Nigerians about their indigenous cultures;
- vi. Nothing might be so peculiar about Nigeria and her cultures, however our traditional systems and cultures must be incorporated as both the foundation and centre of our development process, which should be championed/shouldered by the media;
- vii. The media, through their image-making and development functions, should develop and promote our cultures, like in the case of Asia (the Asian tiger) borne out of having taken cultural variables into consideration in the pursuit of more overt economic development;
- viii. Cultural journalists should always examine cultural media contents, as to evaluating what a given cultural content/trait/orientation means to our cultures and values, whether it is capable of improvement, change and development (advancement), and selecting alien cultural media contents and programmes;
- ix. And, if the media live up to their expectations, peers and religion as well as the society will only complement the socialisation processes of returning our new generation(s) to our prestigious cultures rather than pursuing shadow culture(s). Then, the family and the school would finish up the remaining task, while playing their cards well within their own respective jurisdiction (cf. Edozor, 2008:116-124).

Conclusion

Returning to our seemingly and gradually lost cultures, following the pursuit of the alien and globalisation trends, rather than the otherwise is imperative. This will be best realised through effective and sustained regular socialisation of children and general cultural re-orientation and image-building by the family, the school and the mass media whom peers, religion and the society would rely on in contributing to the whole process. If we become serious with our cultures and resources, the rising cultural declined vices, the national question issues, unemployment, illiteracy rate, negative attitudinal problems, poverty, corruption, and what have you will be drastically reduced to the barest minimum. The task is enormous yet insignificant if willing and tackled head on. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to accomplish the mission, especially the contemporary Nigerian elite who are the like of Sekyi's 'Brofusem', a major character in 'The Blinkards' (cf. Sekyi 1974). The imperative of effective socialisation towards our indigenous cultures is the proactive return to and revival of our cultures for a sustained and developed multi-cultural diverse society- Nigeria now and later.

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