

CULTURAL ORIENTATION AS A PANACEA FOR MITIGATING IDENTITY CRISIS AMONG YOUTHS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Abstract

The study is an analysis of cultural orientation as a mitigating tool against Identity crisis among youths in a globalized world. The study adopted cultural dimension theory by Greet Hofstede. Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is a framework for cross-cultural communication. It shows the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members and how these values relate to behavior, using a structured factor analysis. The research study used secondary method of data collection through the instrumentality of documentary research method. Content analysis was adopted as the techniques for data analysis. Findings from the study revealed that with the increasing tempo of civilization buoyed by revolution and changes in technology, notably in transport and communication, the culture of communities in Nigeria are under severe threat. It further revealed that with this development, the future of Nigeria cultural identity is bleak. The study recommended that, there should be value orientation by Nigerian youths, so that they can appreciate the good side of their culture. It further recommended that the family, school and government should encourage the revival of cultural festivals and ceremonies, so as to bridge generational gap in culture administration and promote, present, preserve and document our cultural heritage, which is the gateway to revive our cultural manifestations facing extinction.

Keywords: *Culture, Globalisation, Identity Crisis, Orientation and Youth*

Background to the Study

There is no gainsaying the fact that cultural orientation is the process of education, of making people aware of the elements and commands of the culture that gives identity to a people. It is both the formal and informal system of promoting consciousness about the symbols, values, attitudes and philosophy or ideological outlook that defines and differentiates one community from another. There are no two communities that have the same cultural traits or orientation system. It is a socialization process through

which people in a society know the essential characteristics of a cultural constituency and the mechanism for transmitting and perpetuating those attributes. With the advent of globalization and its resultant effects of advancement in communication, transportation and information technology, typified by internet, the world in general and Nigeria in particular is vulnerable to the collapse of cultural boundaries and also beset with a myriad of developmental anomalies to the extent that Nigeria has a negative balance sheet in the globalization scorecard. This is evident in all sectors of our daily life ranging from our educational system, mode of dressing, eating/ cuisine, near extinction of indigenous languages/music, marriage and burial ceremonies, among others, and the adoption and replacement of western style of living particularly by Nigerian youths. This has led to an astronomical rise in crime rates viz; gangsterism, drug abuse, cultism, prostitution, kidnapping and a host of other social vices in Nigeria. The trend is worrisome and if not carefully handled could spell doom for the present generation and generations yet unborn. Hence, the need for all hands to be on deck, family, school and government to rise to the occasion and arrest this ugly situation.

Conceptual Framework Culture

The concept culture, though very topical, yet very simple. It has defied any precise definition and it is now reputed to be among the two or three most complex words in English language. Already, there are over three hundred interrogative anthropological definitions of the word "culture". It is what Michael Foulcote called a repetition of the same when he said " *there is nothing else to say, all there is to say have been said, the rest is repetition*".¹

Culture is dynamic and it varies from one society to another. There is a distinct cultural system in each human society which makes the members of one society behave differently in some significant respects from members of another society. There are networks of values, attitudes, customs and behavioral patterns that define the way of life and world in which men and women act, decide and solve problems, secure food, clothing, shelter and whatever goods and services they require in day to day living. Accordingly, Taylor as reported by Darret had over a century ago defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".² Culture is thus reflected in this definition as the

integrated system of learned behavior patterns which characterized members of a society.

Culture is not genetically inherited and cannot exist on its own, but it is always shared by members of a society. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another”³, which is passed from generation to generation. It changes all the time because each generation adds something of its own before its transmission. Hofstede argued that before a manifestation becomes a cultural practice it must have undergone some processes and generally accepted by the society in question. Culture is a complex concept and no single definition of it has achieved consensus in literature. So, out of the many definitions examined, the following definition guides this study: culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterized a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.⁴

Bello in a brilliant essay stated that, culture is a conduit pipe of value, meaning and practice which the individual imbibes to be a member of society.⁵ From these definitions above, it is clear that our culture is our identity stamped on the individual. Therefore, no society can survive without culture because it is what structured the individual perfection of his role and his identity in a particular socio- economic, political and cultural setting. Essentially, what is referred to as culture is the traces left behind by man in his quest to eke a good living out of the very difficult, physical and metaphysical environment. In this journey of survival, the knowledge of the past and present is harnessed to assist how to navigate the uncertainty of the future, that is the essence of culture.⁶ The above assertion is the reason why technological innovation cannot be divorced from the cultural background from which it emerged. This is the singular reason why China has emerged as a global technological power. All Chinese innovations and breakthrough were based and rooted in Chinese language which is the bedrock of any culture. It therefore affirms the age long saying that “fluency in one’s mother tongue is the measure of intelligence”. This is not the situation in Nigeria where inventions and innovations are not domesticated and based on local contents, rather on foreign models and handouts from our colonial masters. With globalization, if concerted effort is not made in reorienting the youth culturally, Nigeria may slip into an abyss of culture lessness.

Orientation

Orientation is the process of education, of making people aware of the elements, contents and commands of the culture that gives identity to a people. It is both a formal and informal system of propagating and promoting consciousness about the symbols, values, attitudes and philosophy or ideological outlook that defines and differentiates one society from another.⁷ A person's cultural orientation is the set of values, beliefs and behavior that they use to self-identify with various groups to which they belong. Cultural orientation in generic or archetypes allow us to study the general tendencies of a cultural group. This is important and helpful when we are trying to understand how people in cultural group tend to act or tend to think. In studying cultural orientation, there are four types worth mentioning; horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism.⁸ However, conceptualizing these four types of cultural orientation is not a task that must be embarked upon in this study because of paucity of space.

Globalization

Globalization like most concepts means different things to different scholars. Lexically the word is derived from the noun 'globe' which means a ball, a round body or sphere. In the same vein, the earth is also referred to as a globe. However, in the context of this discourse, globalization is the emergence of a world-wide system in which socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural events in one part of the world affect people in other parts of the world simultaneously. It involves the unification of societies globally, or the interconnectedness of nations and people all over the world.⁹ The term globalization is a popular word which means different things to different scholars. According to Aniele, globalization is a political tool of dominant neo-liberalists who employed certain discourse and images of world politics to justify their political agenda.¹⁰ It is believed to be the cause of the changes and turbulence in contemporary world affairs. As an agent of change, globalization is diluting or dissolving the cultural boundaries of the various people of the world, particularly the countries that were previously under colonial rule. Nigeria is a good example of colonial amalgam constituted by people of different ethnic nationalities whose cultural identities were steadily supplanted by western culture.

With the increasing tempo of westernization, buoyed by revolutionary changes in technology, notably in transport and communication, the culture of communities in Nigeria are under severe threat. It means the future of Nigeria cultural identity is bleak, unless there is a conscious effort by

Nigerians to rediscover and preserve cultural heritage and manifestations bequeathed by our fore fathers. Awonusi noted that globalization is a complex terminology that implies the reduction or contraction of our world into a small unified community or village where the members receive information fast, act or respond to information fast.¹¹ This definition by Awonusi implies that, globalization refers to universalization of the concepts of socio-political, economic, cultural, technology, information, communication, markets and all other human activities in the context of a compressed world. With globalization, it is easier to go round the world than to traverse a village of one kilometer, which equally makes adoption of socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural activities seamless. The countries at the receiving end are the developing countries or the emerging democracies as they are fondly called. These countries consume everything circulated around hook, line and sinker without tinkering with it to know which is good and which is not good for adoption and consumption thereby exposing our vulnerable youth to myriads of overbearing foreign cultures.¹²

Cultural Globalization

Cultural globalization refers to the spread of a culture throughout the world. It is the process through which the values, ideas and experiences of a specific culture are transmitted and disseminated across the world. The process of cultural globalization has significant effects on international relations and interactions between and among different cultures in the same country. The effect of cultural globalization is also many, including, but not limited to homogeneity, the transmission of prominent ideas from one culture to another, the replacement of one aspect of local culture with the dominant norms of a foreign culture and the raise of stereotypes regarding members of a particular culture.

Effects of Cultural Globalization

Cultural globalization has lasting cultural implications especially on other cultures. Cultural globalization is the process through which the culture of one country or society spread to other countries. It can be instigated in many ways and through many sectors. For example, many aspects of the ‘culture ‘ of the United State of America have bled into many other countries, this is called Americanization. This trend portends a very dangerous development that threatens to completely eradicate local cultures. Cultural ideas, values, beliefs and commodities are transmitted through direct contact with tourists as well as business people travelling

from one country to another. These peoples bring their own particular set of ideas, and beliefs that are potent and can influence another culture overtime. Other factors that contribute to cultural globalization include various means of communication, such as social media, especially western celebrities who seamlessly reach an audience of millions around the world with their opinion on fashion or pictures of what the latest style of clothing is, which is in turn adopted by millions of our youths seamlessly.¹³

Youth

The youth segment of any society is the most potent agent of change because they are the most dynamic and passionate segment of that society, with appropriate physical, mental qualities, capacities and capabilities needed for dreaming dreams, envisioning possibilities and actualizing them. The aspiration of every youth is a tall dream of greatness in life. Such was the dream of the late Martin Luther King (Jnr.) in his famous speech “I have a dream” which became a rallying point and was instrumental to the legal abolition of racial segregation in the United States of America.¹⁴ If the youth are truly the leaders of tomorrow then, they should be well equipped socially, politically, economically, psychologically and culturally for the onerous task and challenges of sustaining the developmental stride bequeathed to them by any generation. They should be guided against invasion by foreign ideas to avoid being swayed by such ideas. Some of the identity crises are mode of dressing, greeting, culinary and table manners, community bonding among others.

Way Forward

The trend and changes arising from globalization are caused by four fundamentally interconnected type of capital movements throughout the global economy. These are human capital, financial capital, resources capital and power capital. The flow of human capital, immigration, migration, emigration, deportation etc. is the most basic, because human beings are the hub around which globalization processes turn and bear ultimate responsibility for its outcome.

The cultural dimension of globalization can be seen in greater international cultural exchange which manifest in various forms. It encapsulates the spread of multi-culturalism and improves individual access to cultural diversity. Globalization promotes international travels, tourism, and immigration. Increasing pop culture, pizza, cuisines/food, dressing etc. can justifiably be ascribed to globalization.

Before globalization, the ways of life of Nigerian people were profoundly affected by colonization. This was by the suppression of clearly identifiable aspects of our culture such as human sacrifice, killing of twins, trials by ordeal etc. practices which were at odds with the basic principles of European civilization. Naturally there was resistance by the people against colonial policies which attempted to impose the language, pattern of education and other modes of European civilization as the basis for the official culture of Nigeria.

Through such education, Nigerians became increasingly attached to the values of European culture, had access to new knowledge which it provided and they were to a certain degree alienated from traditional values and customs. With the adoption of western education, other aspects of western lifestyles were also copied by Nigerian youths. Indigenous languages now play a second fiddle to English Language and the mode of dressing, greeting, culinary and table manners, underwent transformation as well. Globalization has expanded and deepened the dislocation of indigenous socio-cultural institutions, prompting some of its critics to describe globalization as an imposition of cultural imperialism.¹⁵ Cultural global ties spread through globalization, new ideas and fashions, commerce, travel and media (social media with emphasis) circulate worldwide with remarkable speed. This is popularly called cultural diplomacy. Globalization encourages the spread of international foods and learning of foreign languages as people from different countries meet and interact. This is why Nigeria as a country need to go into the emerging global space with clearly defined characteristics that would distinguish her contributions and requirements while participating in the global economy.

The dangers posed by globalization to indigenous culture are enormous due to growing westernization; local cultures in Nigeria are dying out gradually as the incursion of westernization continues unabated. Many Nigeria youths, sometimes supported by their own mother tongues- this is a very serious matter because a person's creativity is enhanced if he or she is fluent in his or her mother tongue. This according to is because, fluency in English Language is not a measure of intelligence as widely believed in Nigeria.¹⁶

A significant number of Nigerian youths are addicted to watching foreign programmes and listening to music which promotes bad aspect of western culture. Some of these programmes and music glorify violence, pornography and gangsterism. Social ethics such as respect for elders, mode of greeting, recreation and others have all been neglected, leading to

the production of generation of youths that know next to nothing about traditional ways of doing things.

A typical Nigerian youth in an urban centre has imbibed a sizeable dose of western culture and ways of life. This has led to the devaluation of the traditional value system. Cultural alienation has a number of consequences. The culturally alienated youth lack some ingredients of cultural identity which are necessary for defining the social character of people. Such a youth is likely to manifest what Frantz Fanon described as black skin, white mask problem in which the person is neither firmly rooted in indigenous culture nor fully integrated into the alien culture.¹⁷

Some unique cultural heritage of Nigerian people is steadily being lost because the youth which form the nucleus of the most dynamic segment of the society are not interested in their culture. A good example is the traditional festival, during which masquerades and dancers display their skills which are largely viewed as fetish and diabolical by Nigerian youths. The only way to preserve, promote, present and document these cultural festivals is to bring the youths on board cultural activities, reorientate them, so as to avoid generational gap in transmitting those cultural manifestations and heritage.¹⁸

Empirical Review

In research, cultural orientation field is a fertile ground for researchers. A lot of studies have been carried out in this area. Some of the studies carried out by scholars in this area are as follows:

Kalejaiye conducted a research on cultural orientation as a vehicle for Nigeria's cultural diplomacy. The focus of the study was the emphasis of cultural orientation as a vehicle for the promotion of Cultural diplomacy which according to the research is the fountain of relationship between peoples and societies, which he said is the basis for meaningful socio-economic and political development among nations.¹⁹

The research used documentary sources of data collection and content analysis as the technique for data analysis. The study revealed that cultural diplomacy through the instrumentality of cultural orientation has achieved lofty reputations for many countries among the comity of nations. The study recommended that, effective deployment of cultural orientation could further enhance and promote cultural diplomacy for Nigeria and the world at large. However, the study did not dwell on globalization which is the focus of this study.

Smith conducted research on cultural orientation as a tool for promoting socio-engineering process of integration.²⁰ The researcher used

documentary sources of data collection as his method for collecting data. The findings from the study revealed that cultural orientation does not only function to promote, preserve and propagate socio-historical, cultural and natural resources of communities, but also enables different countries to appreciate the differences in cultural trait and harmonize same for peaceful diplomatic co-existence. The study recommended re-invigorating government's effort in cultural education and orientation to achieve diplomatic unity. This study also failed to highlight the impact of globalization on youths.

Oladokun conducted a research on the dominant and irreplaceable role of cultural orientation as a conveyor of cultures, philosophies of a people in Multi-National community.²¹ The study revealed the galvanizing role of cultural orientation in terms of specificity pertaining to origin, cultural make-up and its significance. The researcher used documentary sources for data collection and content analysis as the technique for data analysis. The study recommended that there should be an instructive observation of deep historical meanings, cultural ideologies and timings of orientation activities which should be deployed to enhance cultural tourism and international cooperation, but did not address the issue of globalization.

Ayakoroma conducted research on parochial perception of cultural festival.²² The study revealed that the vast potentials inherent in the culture sector is fraught with a lot of debilitating factors like preservation, presentation, sustenance and engineering of cultural activities to appeal to both local and international audience and participation. Survey research and documentary method of data collection was used. The study recommended that government and stakeholders should take the sector seriously and develop infrastructures to attract tourists. This too did not address the role of cultural orientation in mitigating globalization on the youth.

From the foregoing, a noticeable gap exists and cultural orientation as a panacea for mitigating identity crisis amongst the youths in a globalized world can be explored.

The youth which is the engine room of any society is not adequately represented in the studies reviewed so far. The relevance of cultural orientation goes way beyond the quest for revenue generation especially in a multi-ethnic and cultural nation like Nigeria.

With the volatile and restive nature of the Nigeria Society, Viz- youth restiveness, ethnic war, Political hanger-on, kidnapping, drug addiction, cultism and prostitution etc. there cannot be a better time for youths to be brought on board a cultural orientation programme that can heal the above societal vices, hence the gap this study seeks to fill. Identity crisis being

faced by Nigerian youths ranges from mode of dressing, greeting, culinary and table manners to community bonding among others. This research is therefore aimed at bridging generational gap by involving the youth in cultural orientation as a mechanism for mitigating identity crisis in a globalized world.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory in explaining cultural orientation as mechanism for mitigating identity crisis among youths in a globalized world. The cultural dimensions theory as developed by Geert Hofstede is a framework adopted to understudy the differences in culture across countries and to understand the ways that things are done across different cultures. This cultural dimension theory framework is used to differentiate between different national cultures, the dimensions of culture and to assess their effect on national cultures. Hofstede's cultural Dimension theory was propounded in 1980 by Dutch management researcher – Geert Hofstede. The objective of the study is to determine the dimension in which culture varies.

Hofstede identified six categories that define culture

1. Power Distance Index
2. Collectivism vs. individualism
3. Uncertainty Avoidance Index
4. Feminist vs. Masculinity
5. Short-Term vs. Long Term orientation
6. Retrain vs. Indulgence

From the above six categories, the long-term orientation dimension considers the extent to which society/nation views its time horizon.

The study therefore adopts this theory because long term orientation shows focus on the future and it involves delaying short term success or gratification in order to achieve long term success. Long-term orientation emphasizes persistence, pursuance and long-term growth. Short-terms orientation on the other hand focuses on the near future, and involves delivering short-term success or gratification and places quick results and respect for tradition. Hofstede's insightful cultural dimension theory is a great resources to the understanding of the impact of culture on the life of a society/nation. The theory can be used to understand different cultural dimensions among countries.

Methodology

The research study adopted both survey and documentary method of data collection. The primary data was procured through observatory survey. According to Obadan, in observatory survey, the researcher can either be a participant observer or a non-participant observer.²³ The researcher being in the culture sector for over two decades has actively participated in cultural orientation programmes, seminars, conferences engaging other participants in focus group discussions and interviews. The data generated from the above exercises were further collaborated with cultural research journals, magazines. Reports of cultural programmes like National Festival of Arts and Culture, Culture of Peace and Dialogues Forum, Children Essay competitions, Cultural Round Table Discussions, Colloquium etc. as confirmatory secondary sources. Content analysis was used as the technique for data analysis in this research study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The youth segment of any society is critical to the continued existence of that very society since they serve as the bridge linking the young to the old. Thus, if they are not prepared through both formal and informal education for that role, then the society risks its indigenous cultures being superseded and subsumed by western culture. The acceptance and adoption of western education, health care delivery system and industrialization are beneficial aspects of contact with the west. However, it should have been done in the same way some Asian countries like Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore etc. did by adapting certain aspects of western culture and also holding on to their traditional ones and using their indigenous language in adopting those western cultures. There should therefore be value reorientation by Nigerian youths so that they can appreciate the good elements of their tradition and culture.

Conclusion

The family, school and government have important roles to play in this. At home, parents must teach their children to speak, read and write in their mother tongues. Also primary and secondary schools should act as agents for the preservation and transmission of culture for pupils and students. Parents, elders and teachers can teach the youths cultural values of the people which promote stability, peace and social cohesion in traditional society. Parents must be firm in ensuring that their children are not left on their own, the kind of films the youth watch, the kind of music they listen

to and the type of recreation activities they participate in must be strictly monitored.

Government must engage in the revival of cultural festivals and ceremonies and youth involvement in these festivals should be emphasized to bridge generational gap in culture administration in Nigeria. Globalization is an octopus, its tentacles are widespread and if not checked can lead to Americanization, Europeanization, Chinanization and even Indianization or Asianization of our youths.

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