

THE CONCEPT OF GLOBALIZATION AND HARMONIZATION OF THE POLYSEMIC CULTURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper attempts to investigate the nature of the Nigerian culture. It studied specifically the polysemic (different) problems of Nigerian culture which has made it very difficult to describe Nigeria as a nation which according to Longman (1995:942) is "a large group of people of the same voice and language". Hence Nigeria is better described as a nation-state. Two research questions seek to find out to what extent the divergence and the convergence of Nigerian polysemic cultural heritage could be harmonized. It also sought how social studies could promote cultural harmony and national integration in Nigeria. The paper concluded that, though Nigerian culture is polysemic, the application of the ideals of social studies education is a sure way of solving the problem. It recommended that legislations should define and defend the right of Nigeria citizens and teaching of social studies should be given a boost at all level of schooling in Nigeria.

The paper attempts to investigate the nature of the Nigeria culture. This is done on the background of the concept of globalization of cultural harmonization as it affects national integration. Furthermore, it studied specifically the polysemic (different) problem of Nigerian culture which has made it very difficult to describe Nigeria as a nation which according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995:942) is a large group of people of the same voice and language. Hence Nigeria is better described as a nation-state. This is because; the culture of Nigeria is gradually eroding due to globalization. This is especially noticed in modern Nigeria, where the culture is almost taken over by Western cultures. Also, the present wave of global integration among the races of the world, America and Europe being the leading figures; have also contributed to the ongoing dismantling of the Nigerian traditional institutions, making it difficult to pursuit cultural harmony in Nigeria. The effect is seen in the lack of National integration in the Nigerian society (Idowu, 2010).

Similarly, since the early 20th century, there has been the campaign for global integration among committee of Nations. It was this advocacy, according to Culture link (1996:8) that brought about international cultural cooperation. However, the above study revealed that, Nigeria's global interaction with the western countries is mostly based on the presentation of Nigerian arts, crafts and music to the western audiences and on the transfer of knowledge on cultural institutions and activities from the West. Although, Nigerian cultures are very scarce in the West.

Furthermore, there is also cooperation among Nigeria, United Nations (UN) and particularly UNESCO. Consequently, it is through this organization that the Nigerian cultural institutions or associations join specialized international association and organizations. Thus, globalization deals with international cooperation, involving, cultural integration, economic and trade, socio-political and other exchange programmes including, education, army, multinational and so on, among cooperating nations with signed agreements, either bilateral or multilateral.

Conceptual Clarifications

Polysemic: This is a derivative term from the adjective POLYSEMOUS, which according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995:1091), is used technically to describe a word or situation that has two or more different meanings. By implication, it describes the different cultures in Nigeria that has affected its harmonization. In addition, this differences has made it difficult to experience national integration in Nigeria. Whereas, the world economy in this millennium is emphasizing global interaction and inter-cultural harmonization. According to Manning (2005), the term global interaction, is being understood as a process in which people from different parts of the world influence each other culturally, economically and politically. It is this term that broadly conceptualizes, globalization.

Historical Origin of Global Interactions

In addition, several researches noted that globalization started with the dispersal of homo-sapiens from

East Africa around the world from about 80,000 years ago until the present. Furthermore, this first wave has a hugely divergent effect in cultural, linguistic and genetic terms. With the development of sedentary agriculture about 10,000 years ago and the increasing contacts between polysemous cultures and politics (through trade, war, labour migration), a number of areas, slowly but surely, began to show a degree of convergence.

Moreover, Geschieve and Meyer (1998) added that, "the flows of social and cultural homogenization began to merge with an increase in the diversity of inclusion and exclusion process". Also, it is the merger of the forces of commerce, scientific activities, artistic, political, diplomatic and religious networks that connected Asia, Oceania, (South) Africa and Europe from 3000 BCE, that set in motion the exchange of, at first, goods and ideas. But later also people, which had a major impact on the development of cultural and social relations,

Thus, from earlier on, large parts of the world, with exception of America, were cross-linked with each other. Similarly, in the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire there was a constant process of negotiation between and within groups, in which language, education and normative culture were unifying factors, promoting the exchange of differentiated ideas and good. In the middle ages the expansion of the Nordic Vikings, Central Asian horse people and the Arab expansion in Africa and Southern Europe ensured the continued exchange of people, goods and ideas.

Therefore, the process of convergence and 'thin' globalization' (or 'archaic globalizations') underwent an important acceleration in the 19th century, with a transportation and communication revolution which culminated in thick globalization; where different parts of the world became, in respect of culture, economics, political-culture, and linguistics, more intensively involved with each other than ever. This increase in national and international uniformity under Euro-American power was, however, far from linear and homogenous and had all sorts of counter movements, especially in the fields of identity and culture.

Finally, power centers-political, economic as well as cultural-have continuously shifted over the last ten thousand years resulting in polysemic forms of competition, cultural exchange but also violent conflicts. Thus, it is this layered dynamic of human interaction in a global perspective that is central to the Nigeria quest for cultural harmonization. It is clear that cultural harmony in the Nigeria context remain a complex issue because of its homogenous and heterogeneous complexity. It is on this note the paper raised the following questions to guide the discussion thus:

Research Questions

1. To what extent could the divergence and convergence of the Nigeria polysemic cultural heritage be harmonized?
2. How would social studies education promote cultural harmony and national integration?

Nigeria Divergence and Convergence Cultural Heritage

Nigeria is paradoxically described as a nation of divergence and convergence characteristics. This is because, before 1914, Nigeria as a people lived in divergence, as a heterogeneous people. But because of imperial interests, the colonial rulers, forced on Nigeria to converge. This is the beginning of the homogenous nature of the Nigeria society. In addition, 1914 to 1960, the year of Nigeria independence, the process of cultural harmonization was laid. Also, from 1960 to the present, the process and the machinery to harmonize the Nigeria culture have not been successful. This has not been made possible because Nigeria culture is polysemic and dynamic.

Cultural Context of the Nigeria State

Studies in culture link (1996) reported that Nigeria is one of the largest (923, 768km²) and geographically, socially and culturally most diversified African countries. It is the most populous country of Africa (the population estimated at 110 million in 1990) and potentially one of the richest.

However, recent demographic reports put it at 150 million people. The above study agreed to the fact that Nigeria has a diversified culture. Furthermore, the study observed that:

The ethnic diversity of Nigeria society is reflected in the fact that the country has over 250 identified ethnic groups. Three very large ethno-linguistic entities dominate: the Yoruba, the Ibo and Hausa-Fulani in the North. The Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Ibo, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Nupe, Ibibo and Ijaw groups account for almost 80 percent of the population. The Muslims comprise more than 50 percent of the population. Christians account for about 35 percent, while the balances of the population are animists.

Similarly, the Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia (2010) upheld the view that Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, with varying language and customs, creating a country of rich ethnic diversity. However, he pointed out in addition that, the official population count of each of Nigeria's ethnicities has always remained controversial and disputed as members of different ethnic group believe the census is rigged to give a particular group (usually believed to be northern groups) numerical superiority.

Furthermore, other studies have shown that Nigerian culture reflects African, Islamic and European influences. As Islam traditionally forbids the representation of people and animals, art forms such as ceremonial carvings are virtually absent in the north. In the south, indigenous peoples produced their own art long before Europeans arrived. Thus, Nigeria's rich and varied cultural heritage derives from the mixture of its different ethnic groups with Arabic and Western European cultural influences.

Also, music and dance are integral to Nigerian culture, and each ethnic groups has its own specialties. Traditional instruments include various types of flutes, trumpets, musical bows, xylophones, and wooden clappers, as well as many varieties of drums. Music is used to celebrate rulers and to accompany public assemblies, weddings and funerals, festivals and storytelling. At one time the Edo of the kingdom of Benin distinguished between urban music that was performed at the palace and less complex music that was played in rural areas.

Again, dance also has many varieties: Ishan Stilt dancers in colourful costumes twist themselves in the air; while one Tiv dance, called ajo, features male dancer who work in pairs, and another involves team of women who perform a dance called icough by composing songs about current events. Dance for the Ubakala shows their value system, helps resolve conflicts, and also institutes changes. Ekiti Yoruba dancers wear head masks so heavy that they can only do processional dances. The Hausa who do not consider dancing to be a craft, divide their dances into the categories of social dancing and ceremonial boorij dances (Culture, 2010). The above graphic analysis of the Nigerian cultural context has made it difficult to pursue a harmonized cultural interaction. Nevertheless, there are some variables that seems to bring Nigeria together. This is especially noticed in her contemporary socio-cultural interest.

Contemporary Socio-Cultural Harmonization Process in the Nigerian Society

There are a number of social events and economic interest that give Nigeria a common identity. Some studies point to cultural heritage as a factor in the process of harmonizing the Nigeria culture. This is because; cultural heritage is widely recognized as the most important input in defining the national and ethnic cultures in Nigeria. Hence, all Nigerian governments, notwithstanding their political backgrounds and developmental orientation, proclaimed their intention to preserve cultural heritage and allow for its full recognition. The evidence of the above is shown in the establishment and management of National Archives, the National Museum, and the National Library. Also, all the existing universities have taken over the task to work on research, restoration and preservation of the Nigeria Cultural heritage. In addition, both federal and a few state agencies working in this field are fully supported form the federal funds.

Again, cultural integration all over the world observes a cultural developmental process. In the Nigeria case, neither in the sphere of economics, nor in the sphere of politics, Nigerian authorities and Nigerian intellectuals has ever denied culture a very important role. Because, from recent happenings as observation has shown, the need to integrate cultural activities and values in all spheres of life has been very loudly pronounced in the post-independence development of Nigeria. However,

Culturelink (1996) examined the opposing force between westernization and traditional culture in Nigeria in the following, stating that:

The clash between modernization (westernization) on one and the traditional cultural values on the other side could not have been avoided. The traditional cultures have been more or less left to the local initiatives. In the context of rather radical developmental changes, they have generated different types of pop-cultures: pop-music based on the strong authentic traditions, pop-literature (market literature) produced for the barely literate audience and expressing the general popular concerns, performing arts and groups inheriting the status of traditional performers (like for instance popular theater performances by more than 100 Yoruba professional popular ambulant groups) and so on. (p. 7).

The finding above gives us an insight of the slow but so far advances in the developmental effort in achieving that objective of cultural identity and national integration in Nigeria. Similarly, it reveals the pace at which the restoration initiatives of both the Nigeria government and her intellectual property are moving towards

departure from western culture.

However, the most important issue of cultural development is certainly the issue of creation of either national Nigerian, or affirmation of ethnic cultural identity. This is so an important political issue, as the Nigerian federalism tried to put together the achievements of the modern democratic West European state and the local culture traditions. The whole process of restructure and adjustment: is in fact the process of defining the identity of Nigeria people and individuals. In the same vein, development of education, establishment and growth of cultural institutions and cultural industries all reflect the constant process of change in Nigeria life and Nigerian cultures. Although, it is impossible to quantify these processes, but it is evident even now that the cultural growth is reflected in the new type of Nigerian culture and identity. Hence, the concept is not based on the merging of different cultural traditions, but it implies a certain selection of values that would define a modern cultural identity of Nigeria. Therefore, scholars in the field of Social Studies research are of the opinion, that the broad nature of social studies contents can be used as indices to promote cultural harmony in Nigeria.

Social Studies Education, Cultural Harmonization and National Integration

There is no doubt that social studies researches and teaching at all levels of schooling is a pivot to cultural harmonization and national integration in Nigeria. Focuses in Social Studies learning take cognizance in preparing citizen to face the realities of national integration in multi-ethnic states. Especially, focusing on issues of culture, identity and environment (geography) it derives from the extant literature on national integration a set of interrelated ideology that describe how a state's foreign ties affect the degree of unity and solidarity among its constituent ethnic and regional groups, In this regard, social studies investigate how foreign ties influence the cultural characteristics and ethnic consciousness of the people in a state, both symbolically and actually. Also, it examines how foreign policy becomes a key element in the construction of national identity as an object of political contestation between groups with different visions of that identity.

The above theoretical framework is consistent with the National objective for social studies education in Nigeria. An outline of this objectives is contained in the studies of Akinlaye (2003); Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) and Odor(2002). These studies revealed that social studies is very much concerned with the following ideologies.

1. National consciousness and national unity.
2. Awareness and understanding for our environment
3. Peaceful co-existence among the various groups in the country,
4. Concerned with human relationships
5. Inculcate right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
6. Develops desirable socio-civic and personal behaviour.

In addition, Osakwa and Itedejere (2005) argued that:

Social studies is an informative subject that has to do with development within a society. The information in Social Studies is usually current and up-to-date... The information so gathered is expected to be used in fostering national cohesion and the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes, (p. 26).

Again, one characteristic of national cohesion is the rights and privilege and equal opportunity of citizen. Thus, equity is a strong consideration in cultural harmonization and national integration. In the opinion of Odor (2002:46), a citizen is person who has full rights, privileges and benefits as well as obligations, which a member of a country is entitled to or obliged. By implication individual that make-up of the entity should have the sense of belonging, they should be recognized as members of the group without any form of gender differentiation. It is this ideal that social studies education is out to teach. This is why it is believed to be a veritable means toward achieving the desired goal of cultural harmonization and national integration. In addition, Wikipedia (2010:112) stated that, national integration is the process of uniting different people from all walks of life into a single whole. This is the most significant socio-cultural issue facing the Nigeria society in present situation.

Social Studies for Global Interactions

In another development, social studies is concerned with global issues. It employs investigative research design in its interpretation of international politics, tourism, acculturation, occupational mobility and several other paradigms. Based on its inter-disciplinary nature, it could examine favourably global events by the means of critique, analytical and experimental evaluation of various items on the international market and

economy of other nations.

Similarly, social studies thus act as a link between the global scene and those at home. This is because it makes global interaction possible through the assessment of global heritage with the intention to bridge the gap by providing its finding for national consideration. The University of Leiden (2010) explained global heritage as follows:-

process of memory formation and negotiation of the continuity of materials culture resulting from mobility. That formation of memory and identity is very diverse. It takes place at many levels - spatially, politically, culturally, socially and economically. Moreover, it is also like migration a features of human societies., in all cases valuable elements of cultural heritage are transmitted, transformed, or defended.

The finding above presupposes the relevance of social studies participating in global interactions and inter-cultural understanding. This implies that social studies is able to harness global heritage for the benefits of cultural harmonization and national integration in Nigeria. Furthermore, the Institute of Education University, Ibadan (1984) discussed the polysemic culture in Nigeria as part of human problem. The study believed that social studies deal directly with the problems resulting from the different cultural heritage in Nigeria. Also, that the concepts and knowledge of the discipline tries to develop the behaviour of citizens towards cultural harmonization. Because, it stresses cooperating, comradeship and religious tolerance among others.

Conclusion

The implication of the above is that, though Nigeria culture is polysemic, the application of the ideals of Social Studies education is a sure way of solving the problem of cultural diversities in the Nigerian society.

In addition, Nigeria international cultural cooperation has brought the world cultures to us. But, it has done more evil than good to the Nigerian culture. This is because; the Nigerian traditional and cultural heritage is being neglected, while western culture is more preferable to majority of the Nigerian society. Therefore, there is the urgent need for Nigerians to have a rethink in order to restore the cultural heritage once valued by Nigerians.

Recommendation

Consequently, arising from the conclusion, the following are some recommendations;

- i. Government should provide legislation that will defined and defend the right of Nigeria citizen irrespective of ethnic background and cultural differences,
 - ii. Nigeria citizen should learn the doctrine of give and take. This implies that, though we are of many cultural heritage, we should appreciate our unity in diversity, iii. The prgramme of rebranding Nigeria by the federal government should be vigorously pursued. It will to some extent deemphasize ethno-cultural dealings in the Nigeria society. As such, more emphasis will be on being a Nigerian, iv. The teaching of social studies should be given a boost at all level of schooling in Nigeria.
- This is because, the tenents of social studies provide the principle of harmonious association, inter-dependency, and inter-cultural understanding, which today has become a global concern.

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