

INTEGRATING YORUBA CULTURAL VALUES INTO THE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA: A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY AND ADDRESSING INSECURITY

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Abstract

The challenges of Nigeria's declining economy and increasing insecurity present a serious threat to the nation's stability. This paper explores how Yoruba cultural values can contribute to revitalizing the economy and addressing insecurity in the country. Anchored in sociological theory, which emphasizes the connection between literature and society, the study highlights core Yoruba values—such as honesty, hard work, humility, respect for elders, good character, moral integrity, and respect for authority—as potential remedies for these issues. Effective education should incorporate and emphasize these values. The paper suggests that Yoruba cultural values be taught as a distinct, official subject at the basic education level in Southwest Nigeria, where Yoruba is the mother tongue. This initiative aims to instill these values in children during their formative years, fostering a generation grounded in cultural ethics that support societal well-being.

Keywords: *Declining economy, Insecurity, Basic Education level, Yoruba Cultural Values, Education delivery.*

Introduction

The present political, social and economic nose-dive in Nigeria is causing so much concern to the government and the people in the country that a lot of stern and panic measures notably, salary increase and recent hike in prices of petroleum prices have been adopted as means of economic revitalization. It is common knowledge also that coupled with the huge challenge of dwindling economy is the multi-dimensional nature of insecurity in the country. The spate of insecurity is characterized by, and expressed in kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, cultism, broken home, moral decadence manifested by indecent dressing, vulgar utterances, disrespect for elders, examination malpractices, prostitution, political thuggery, drug addiction, armed robbery, pipe-line vandalism, vandalism of electricity installations, cyber crimes and a myriad of

other forms of social vices among Nigerian youths.

Evidence abounds that there is nexus between poverty and the rise in social vices in Nigeria.

According to Bakkihs and Tor (2020),

There is feminization of poverty in Nigeria, where it affects more women than men. This is due to gender inequality in employment, education, land ownership and other economic opportunities. There is also increased number of households headed by women. Thus the impoverished women are faced with no choice but to turn to prostitution which as social, economic and health onsequences. (p. 137)

Bakkihs therefore recommends government provision of social protection services for single mothers, female house heads as well as make poverty alleviation programme more gender-sensitive. In their study, Apase and Yawe (2019) found out that quality education delivery can be used to avoid entrenching disparities and development of

grievances which are factors for social vices and youth restiveness. If the result of education cannot meet these expectations, it calls to question the quality, relevance of education provided and the segments of the society receiving such education.

Apase and Yawe went further to state that:

Education can be an instrument for construction or destruction depending on the kind provided. Education can help introduce the benefits of inclusive and constructive integration of individuals and communities, socially, politically and economically which can contribute to prevent social vices and youth restiveness. Social vices are associated with a combination of economic, governance, security and social conditions that can have unpleasant influence on quality education and its provision.

From the foregoing therefore, a strong quality education for young males and females is an antidote for social vices and youth restiveness. In her own submission on the ways and means of combating banditry in Nigeria, Adesope (2021) proposed a long-term solution to the social malaise. According to her, Yoruba oral literature could go a long way in curbing banditry in Nigerian by teaching the age-long time-tested Yoruba poems of “Ix1 L00g5n *x1: (Work is the antidote of poverty and “T-j5 8wz rc” (Preserve your good character), to the children right from their sensitive, delicate and impressionable basic education level. Against the background of the foregoing information, the objective of this paper is to identify the Yoruba cultural values that can be inculcated to the children at the formal education level to enhance their moral rectitude and make them a total personality. It is perhaps in doing so that social vices leading to ailing economy and hydra-headed insecurity can be nipped in the bud.

Theoretical Framework

This article is anchored by the sociological theory. The sociological approach to literature examines the relationship between a literary work and the society in which it was created and/or read and received. Literature is never produced in a vacuum. Writers live in a particular

society and that society influences them and their works. The sociological approach studies those influences. In this article, this theory is adopted because of the nexus between literature and society. Quoting Caudwell (1997), Ogunsina (2006), Opefeyitimi (2014), Adesope (2021) maintains that the term sociology of literature was developed by a French philosopher, Tai (1828 – 1893). Tai argues that literature cannot be separated from the society because it (literature) contains people’s way of life, their customs and beliefs.

In the same vein, Adesope (2021) went further to quote Olawuwo and Atolagbe (2014) as saying that:

Sociology of literature is a subfield of culture. It studies the social production and literature and its implication. Sociology is a fusion of two distinct disciplines of sociology and literature.

The implication of this assertion is that literature mirrors happenings in the society. It is in this regard that this article examines the general challenges of the Nigerian ailing economy and the social malaise of insecurity and the role that Yoruba literature can play in improving instructional delivery in Yoruba language at the basic education level of the Nigerian educational system in Southwest Nigeria.

The Dwindling Economy and the Spate of Insecurity in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy is currently characterized by high level of inflation and continued depreciation of Naira. It can even be stated that the recent hike in the prices of petroleum products account for the current inflationary pressure in the economy. This phenomenon, no doubt has caused high cost of living and low standard of living among the populace. There is also high level of unemployment among the youths coupled with poverty and hard living conditions. According to Olubayo and Aderonmu (2015), Nigeria has the highest concentration of poor people in Nigeria with 70.2% translating to 109.96million. He also noted that more than half of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. It must also be stated that there is widespread corruption in the land

leading to poverty, vandalism, kidnapping, youth unemployment, armed robbery and other social ills that are prevalent in the country and that constitute the effect of bad governance.

Sadly, government's anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt and other related Practices Commission (ICPC) seem to have yielded little or no result. There is therefore the need to evolve a long-term strategy that could nip these societal ills in the bud. It is the right kind of education that can turn the people into a crime-free society that is worth living in. The mere fact that all the unethical practices and social ills happen in the society reveals a certain lack of morality which reflects a failing in Nigerian educational system (Ojetunde, 1996). It is the right kind of education that can inculcate in the children, the meaning and significance of honesty, loyalty, patriotism, efficiency and cooperative relationships. Appropriate education would explain to children, that malingering, tardiness, absenteeism, lying, fighting, stealing, uncleanliness, profiteering, hoarding, smuggling, extravagance, avarice, lust, arson, embezzlement and other unwholesome activities in the society are acts of indiscipline and are anti-social. Therefore, following from the foregoing discussion, one can aver that if culture is a veritable instrument of development, then the inculcation of Yoruba cultural values and its lessons could help revive the Nigerian economic morass and the spate of insecurity in the country.

Citing Mayor (2012), Bolarinwa and Amusat (2014) stated that security is the degree of resistance to, or protection from harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation or organization. In other words, national security is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory, to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms, to preserve its nature, institution and governance from disruption from outside, and to control its borders (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, cited in Bolarinwa and Amusat, 2014).

The implication of insecurity in a country therefore, is that, no national growth and development can take place in an atmosphere of insecurity. This truism was exemplified by Abraham Maslow (1943) in his theory of hierarchy of needs. According to him human needs can be fundamentally and universally classified into five as follows:

- i. Physiological needs for food, water, clothing, sleep and shelter which are the bare necessities for anyone's survival;
- ii. Safety and security
- iii. Love and belonging
- iv. Esteem
- v. Self-actualization

This shows that after satisfying his need for food, clothing and shelter, the next stage of human need is that of security. Security, therefore, must be given priority of place in any society for the stability of that society.

Rejuvenating Yoruba cultural values as a step towards revamping the dwindling economy and checkmating insecurity in Nigeria.

Yoruba Cultural Values

Culture is the totality of the ways of life of a people. According to Odanye (2003), culture is the aggregate of all society-acquired characteristics which is transferred from one generation to another. It involves a people's beliefs, religion, moral behavior as well as their available materials and knowledge, language, literature, music, dancing, dressing and technology. This implies that culture entails all aspects of life of a people.

Similarly, Tallunie (2014) describes culture as the customs, arts and social interactions of a particular nation, people or other social group. It can also be defined as an appreciation of the arts and human intellectual development. It should be stated that different groups of people have different cultures.

Following from the foregoing definition and description, the highly cherished Yoruba cultural values as espoused by

Ologundudu (2008) consists of respect for: elders, parents, religion, culture, others, oneself, one's name, in-laws and high spirit of interpersonal relationships. Other values include, but not limited to, love, kindness, strong sense of morality, extended family relations, greetings, apology or being remorseful, humility, honesty, hardwork, gentle character (8wz p211), good character (8wz rere), calmness (8wz j1j1). One of the greatest Yoruba cultural values is good character. Ologundudu stressed that Yoruba believe that in order to have success in life, one must have good character and that without good character, all that a person has can be lost to someone else.

According to Ologundudu (2008):

Bí a lówó bí a kò ní'wà

Owó olówó ní

Bí a bí mọ bí a kò ní'wà

Qmọ qlómọ ní

Ẹ sá má a hùwà rere

Ìwà. Ìwà là níwá. Ìwà

Ìwà rere lẹsọ èniyàn

Ìwà níbá ní dé sàréè

This Yoruba aphorism is translated thus:

If we have money and don't have character The money belongs to someone else
If we have children and don't have character. The children belong to someone else

We should have good character

Good character is what we are looking for

Good character is a treasure for humanity

It is good character that follows one to grave.

It is in the light of this aphorism that Adagbada (2014) and Adedayo (2018) submitted that an 'ṣe' in Yoruba culture is a person of high integrity and who stands above board at all times. In addition Akanbi and Jekayinfa (2016) dwelt on the need to adopt the concept of 'ṣe' as a means of adding value to education in Nigeria stressing that the introduction of the concept is the standard for value re-orientation in the Nigerian society that is bedeviled by social vices and fear of disintegration.

Sadly, in these times, many of the Yoruba values are being eroded and de-emphasized by western cultures due to western education and technological advancement. There is therefore the dire need to revitalize the cultures in order to bring about the total development of the personality of the Nigerian child at his impressionable and formative years.

Need to inculcate Yoruba cultural values into the Basic Education Curriculum

The Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the belief that education is an instrument for national development and social change. In its national policy on education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) states, among others, the following goals of education.

- Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen.
- Inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity.

The policy states further that the quality of instruction shall be oriented towards inculcating the following values among others;

- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual
- Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions
- Moral and spiritual principles in inter-personal and human relations.
- Acquisition of functional, skills and competencies necessary for self-reliance.
- Inculcate social, moral norms and values.
- Stimulate in the child, good habits and team spirit.

In addition to these provisions in the policy, government also states that it (government) shall take measures to ensure that the culture of the nation is kept alive through the teaching of creative and cultural arts and visits to museums. All these laudable measures can lead to quality education relevant to the need of the Nigerian economy if teachers at the classroom level can nurture the children's minds to create a good society devoid of man-made social evils. The policy also stipulates that the medium of instruction should principally be mother-tongue at the

early childhood care, development and education (ECCDE) 0-4yrs in a crèche or nursery. At present, this is not being practised and hence may not inculcate the desired values expected to develop the child's personality.

This writer opines that the Yoruba language should be the medium of instruction at the basic education level (Basic 1-9), that is Primary One to Junior Secondary School 3 (9years). If this is done, then Yoruba cultural values should be taught as an official subject on its own at each level of the basic education level. Topics should comprise the much-cherished Yoruba values of hardwork (the antidote of poverty), honesty, respect for elders, good character, humility, religious tolerance, inter-personal relationships etc.

In the subject, unethical and social ills should be identified and de-emphasized. They include but not limited to the following:

- Smuggling: This is an enemy of the nation and it involves illegal importation of essential commodities.
- Hoarding: This entails a deliberate restriction of the distribution of goods to create artificial scarcity and hence rising prices. Hoarding was responsible for the recent scarcity of petroleum products (PMS).
- Deliberate, conscious and persistent production of sub-standard goods and services: This has caused building collapse and loss of human lives.
- Fake units of measures used as standard and deceptive packaging: This consists of design of packages that appear to contain a greater volume of contents that they really do.
- Adulteration of products: This may involve mixing petrol with water/kerosene/diesel, removing accessories from imported cards, or from electronic equipment, false labels on products. Advertisement that are false and filled with half-truths in order to increase sales and not to meet consumer desires.

All the afore-mentioned sharp practices do affect the economy negatively thereby encouraging spate of insecurity.

Summary and Conclusion

This article examines the Yoruba cultural values that can help, as a long-term measure in improving the dwindling Nigerian economy and checkmating the spate of insecurity in the country.

It calls for the teaching of "Yoruba Cultural Values" as a separate official subject at the basic education level of the educational system in Southwest Nigeria where Yoruba Language is the major language of the people. Among others, the paper emphasizes the teaching of honesty and other values to the children. Honesty or trustworthiness is an essential value for children because it can affect everything in their lives, from friendships to school work and even their relationships with parents, elders, siblings. If children can be taught to develop this affective domain of their education at a young, delicate, formative and impressionable age, they will grow up having the ability to eschew unethical behaviour and social ills.

Based on the above conclusion, it is therefore recommended that Yoruba cultural values should be taught at the basic level of education in Southwest Nigeria as an official subject in the curriculum. Meanwhile, the National Orientation Agency should carry out mass education against profiteering, hoarding, smuggling, extravagance, avarice, arson, kidnapping, ritual killings, banditry and other social vices. This orientation should be taken to churches, mosques, social and family gatherings in order to bring about desirable changes in all Nigerians.

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