Globalization, Culture and Human Development in the 21st Century Nigeria

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Abstract

The world has been described as a global village due to enhanced global communication and interaction among people of different nationalities. Culture is not left out in this global interaction as there are available means or mechanisms through which ideas and information are exchanged among citizens of different countries and seekers of knowledge around the world. This paper examines issues on globalization and its impact on culture, cultural values and its implication on the 21st century Nigeria. In order to have a clearer understanding of the subject matter, the paper has been segmented into sub-headings, clearly stating the content analysis of the study. The objective of this paper is to carefully examine the impact of globalization on Nigerian culture and the effect on human development. It assesses the influence foreign culture on Nigerian children and the society at large, it considers the position and future of the Nigerian culture at the face of globalization. Careful assessment of these facts reveals some gaps on Nigerian culture and value system. This study has used secondary sources such as text books and journals. It has suggested the way forward considering the challenges faced by the Nigerian.

Introduction

Origin of globalization has been traced back to the period between 1450 and 1500 A.D. A period referred to as the mercantilist period dominated by the development of trade, imperial efforts and the

desire for markets outside Europe,[1] since this period, there have been incredible advancements in transportation and information technology. Globalization has reduced the world to one global village. Initially, globalization was seen as an economic phenomenon as some economists still define it from a purely economic perspective. It is now clear that although it was initially propelled by economic intentions, it has far reaching links with all aspects of life such as politics, culture and technology. Globalization is a complex and diverse phenomenon. It is the process of international integration as a product of exchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture in which worldwide exchange of national and cultural resources occurs in the process.

Many factors contributed to the development of globalization for example the advancement in transportation and communication. The current wave of globalization is nothing but the result of the evolution in technology along with interaction of many actors at different levels of the economy. Globalization means different things to different people, for some it creates positive political, economic and technological progress. Globalization is not a debate about divergence or convergence, but it is a dialectical process which can both integrate and fragment along with creating both winners and losers. Globalization effects are not optional for developing countries like Nigeria, but as compelling and imperative. Developing countries are pulled into global political, economic and social relationship without their consent. Coincidentally, for the mere fact that global wealth is unevenly distributed, globalization today is often seen as a refined version of capital imperialism. As according to Ojo, rather than fostering a sense of common interest in the global arena, neo-liberal economic

practices are bringing the world back to the Darwinian jungle of the survival of the fittest in which everything exists in perpetual state of fierce competition in pursuit of self interest[2].

Globalization and Culture

This paper, discusses the effect of globalization on culture and human development in Nigeria. Bello defines Culture as the value system, customs, education and knowledge of a people. Culture is the vehicle through which knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits of a society are transmitted to members of that society from one generation to another generation" [3] Culture links people to their historical past, it is a way of people's behaviour, ways of acting and thinking, it encompasses everything that people do. Culture is dynamic and it is a known fact that globalization has greatly influenced the cultural structure of different societies in Nigeria.

Before the surge in global interaction which became pronounced in the 1990s, every society used to have its own unique culture, such as the language, social norms, dressing, civic sense, food and greetings. With the advent and advancement of media technology, millions of people across the globe are daily influenced by cultures of technological advanced countries and this has affected cultural institutions of various Nigerian societies through individual in these societies. Any society following their life style without being influenced by western culture is now seen as 'uncivilized' and it is believed that this is a cunningly designed propaganda of the west to promote and extend their culture to other parts of the world. Accordingly, culture consists of values and rules people live by, their ideas of good and evil, language and religion. Culture gives people identity. The dominance of culture by the West is an

attempt to leave individuals Nigeria without identity. The overall effect is that people become mindless in a globalized world and without any historical past.[4] Maduagwu believes that Africa's interaction with Europe through colonialism has made it difficult for, "African countries to independently articulate their own history, culture and identity".[5] The effect of this could be seen on how Nigerian culture is largely influenced by the perception and worldview inculcated through colonial and post-colonial experience, education and finally by the current trend in economic globalization. Currently Nigerians undervalue contributions Nigeria's cultural heritage can make to the nations contemporary developmental efforts[6].

Africa became integrated into the global system as a result of the efforts of Europeans in their quest for an extension of their imperialistic powers to other parts of the world. The search for new markets and source of raw materials as result of the industrial revolution led to the establishment of international commodity markets, mercantilist trade and connected Africa Europe and by extension to the rest of the world. After the Second World War, the world became more inter-connected through scientific innovations and advancement, travel, transportation, communication and information.

Globalization involves the process of stretching or extending and intensifying human activities, relations and networks across the globe. Ogoko, sees globalization as the aggregation of compliant nations of the world into a community wherein their territorial boundaries dissolve into ideological insignificance while retaining their political sovereignty as independents nations, in principle the countries remain sovereign and autonomous, but in practice the

restrictions, the obstacles, and cross border problems that tend to hinder easy integration and cooperation amongst nations and other social activities that encourage full integration and cooperation are encouraged. There is total trade liberation but only as a scheme to re-determine the fate of other nations.[7] In his definition of globalization, to Nsibami, globalization is a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world's countries and people facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural values, systems and practices. He added that globalization is not a value free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international socio-political-economic and cultural private corporations among international agencies and civil society organisations.[8] In line with this definition, Kwame Yeboah sees globalization as a process of linking regions or nations of the world together which is facilitated by information flow or communication, inducing changes in the pre-existing socio-cultural, political and economic order, structures and systems of nations and peoples.[9]

Experiences in Nigeria, have exposed the negative consequences of globalization and few advantages of the phenomenon. Some scholars like Aborishade believes that globalization is western imperialism, particularly American imperialism which seeks to impose its hegemony on other subjugated and exploited nations.[10] To him, globalization does not only deepen inequality between the core and the periphery nations, it also seeks to wage unprecedented attacks on the right and welfare of the poor nations. Others classify globalization in the same category with colonialism and imperialism.

Fridah argues that, globalization is primarily not an impersonal process driven by laws and factors of development, such as technology, operating outside of the human control and agency. Rather, it is a conscious programmed process of reconstructing international economic and political relations in line with particular set of interests, the profit motivations of businesses, especially the transnational corporations of the advanced economies and the dogma of the primacy of the free market and of private enterprise in all processes of human development.[11]

When culture is mentioned, what come to mind are values and norms people have which make them live in a particular way. It is a way of living in a particular community. It is therefore, the sum total of peoples way of life including their religion, symbols, languages, native songs, stories, celebrations, clothing, dressing, food, technology, architecture, kinship, interpersonal relationships, political and economic systems. Culture is learned and such learning does not take place through natural inheritance neither is it genetically transmitted. Rather, it takes place through a process of absorption from the immediate environment, deliberate instruction and socialization. Culture is dynamic and it is never static as result one can learn other cultures that may not be his own through instruction and socialization. In this case there may be an interaction of local and foreign culture through these processes. Presently foreign cultures have been become accessible through globalization. As a result of globalization, western cultures and even the destructive ones have become accessible to different Nigerian societies irrespective of the nature and damaging effect it may have on the society. However, this does not suggest that Nigeria has nothing good to learn from the west, indeed, there are many. Societies are now and then transformed culturally. It

changes exactly the same way human beings change. This transformation is so gradual and not sudden or abrupt. According to Fridah, culture is a continuous process of change but in spite of the change, culture continues to give a community a sense of identity, dignity, continuity, security and binds society together.[12] The dynamism of culture casts doubt on the possibility of a global culture. Part of this dynamism is that each culture has its own personality. But central to globalization is the idea of a global culture.[13] However, there are only a few scholars who accept that a global culture is in the making. A "cultural ideology of consumerism" driven by symbols, images and anesthetic of the lifestyles and self-mage – has spread throughout the world and is having some momentous effects including standardization of tastes and desires. [14]

Impacts of Globalization on Cultural Development
Proponents of globalization claim that it will lead to convergence of income, access to knowledge and technology, consumption power, living standards and political ideas. Integration of economies would lead to increase in economic growth and wealth. They also argue that more people would be able to enjoy the fruits of modernization and civilization. Critics of globalization argue that it is hegemonic, antagonistic to the poor and vulnerable. Therefore globalization has both positive and negative impacts. At this point it will be good for us to look these impacts of globalization on cultural development of Nigerian Societies.

The positive impacts of globalization include: integration of Nigeria's culture into the international system that allows people from various parts of the world access to Nigerian culture. This gives opportunity to a global access of Nigeria's culture. Modern

technology will help in the preservation of cultural values as cultural information could be stored or preserved through this medium for a long time. As a result of the globalized world, Nigeria can borrow ideas that are beneficial to her own development from other cultures.

Globalization has some negative effect on Nigeria's cultural values and these negative impacts are more pronounced than the positive ones. Akande seems to understand more of this negative impact when he said that western adventures made efforts to undermine the cultural heritage of various peoples around the world through colonization, imperialism and now globalization. He said that cultural imperialism left the colonized in a state of cultural disorientation which is vulnerable to socio-cultural invasion.[15] There is apparent domination of Nigeria's culture by the West, could be seen in the areas of dressing, music, feeding, language/communication and belief system. Nigeria markets are increasingly bombarded with foreign images, foreign music, foreign clothes and foreign values.

The impact is that the familiar way of life and the traditional system are being discarded. The negative impact is so strong felt among Nigerians particularly the youth who believe that what they see online is the best, most Nigerian societies have embraced western culture and this has negatively affected Nigerian culture. The problem is that these traditional values will be lost because they cannot compete at the international level and they are no longer cherished at home. This has implication on the identity of Nigerian peoples (who they are) and traditional values. Akande's summed it up with these words that the effect "is a crisis of cultural confidence, combined with economic uncertainty and

crime which global integration often brings".[16] In the area of region, the arrival of Christianity and Islamic have also affected negatively the traditional religious beliefs of different societies in Nigeria as many see the traditional system as evil and fetish. Globalization has aided the spread of the two religions. It is now possible for any religion to spread its faith beyond national borders. Globalization has also affected negatively cultural norms, socialization processes and values. This could be seen in the area of dressing, interaction and greeting.

The very concept of globalization is a major challenge for existing conception of world culture. Samuel P. Huntington remarks that the fundamental conflict in the world will not be ideological or political. But the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. He also argued that nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.[17] The breaking up of space and time as a result of electronic media has a lot to do with the global interaction regardless of the disparities. The use of English in the academic circle is an obvious example of how one culture can gain dominance in the world with power and legitimacy when economic and political forces enable the spreading of cultures and values.

Culture, Globalization and Human Development
Culture has been defined in diverse ways by different scholars. Okpeh sees culture as "a specific and concrete mechanism employed by a particular animal organization in adjusting to its environment".[18] He also sees culture as essentially an adaptive mechanism which makes possible the satisfaction of human needs

from both biological and social perspectives. To Yinger culture can be adaptive in the sense that it is a unique human attribute which man interposes in order to ensure his security and survival. Thus, we may resolve that the creations of individuals and groups into what they now are called the culture of the society.[19] The basic components of culture are norms and values. Norms are expectations that define what is acceptable or required in a social situation as rules of social behaviour which are both prescriptive and descriptive, they specify how people should and should not behave in various social institutions as for values, they are standards set by a society which should serve as guides to what is right and proper for people in that society. Thus, the values are the basis of the judgments people make as to what is desirable, correct and good as well as what is undesirable, incorrect and bad. Like norms, most values have both positive and negative features and they differ from one society to the other. In Africa, the pre-colonial system of governance emphasized communalism as a political value. Irrespective of these differences, certain cultural values are shared among groups and across nations.

In the contemporary world as a result of interdependence, there is a lot of cultural contact and borrowing. In Nigeria, because of her colonial relations, there has been a lot of cultural assimilation on the part of the people. Colonialism encouraged the assimilation and the imbibing of the cultural values of the colonial master. Therefore, colonial influence had an effect on the indigenous cultures of the people through distortion and domination. Colonialism exposed Nigeria to the world and this helped in de-orientation of the people from their indigenous socio-cultural values and practices. The situation has worsened by the spread of Western cultural values through the process of globalization. This

new trend obviously has implications for human development in Nigeria and by extension national development. People no longer abhor or respect their cultural value and norms. What is acceptable in different society seem to be accessible and accepted in other societies as a result of globalization. There is liberalization of ideas across the globe. However, globalization has improved access to technological innovations to people in Africa and Nigeria.

Conclusion

Globalization is seen as an extension of the Wests colonizing efforts, the spread of European views and ideas across the world particularly in developing countries. This paper highlighted the benefits and implications of globalization on culture and human development in Nigeria. The power of globalization is in its ability to spread different ideologies to different corners of the world, with the dominant cultures crushing the emerging one. However the ability of the West to dominate in the global process is because of their control of technological capabilities and use of such to propagate their ideas. Nigeria can only survive in this if there is a consistent effort by the government to encourage the study of Nigerian cultures in schools. If not the implication is the Nigerian cultures will be eroded and human development will be negatively affected.

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