Is There Really a Relationship Between Culture and Development?

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper should expectedly arouse diverse perceptions or expectations for equally diverse individuals due to its universal appeal in a world in constant search for new ingredients for sustainable growth and development. However, it must be emphasised that the paper is not intended to provide a network of definitions on what culture and development are or are not. The major intentions are: providing simplified definitions of 'culture' and 'development'; discussing some issues that could have accounted for the gradual disintegration of our cultural heritage; assessing the culture-development relationship; and seeking avenues for nurturing that relationship.

THE CULTURAL REALM

Culture is a term that should connote different things to different individuals. As such, often, people trivialize the limitless scope of the term with definitions of culture as simply music, singing and dancing. To them, the goal of culture is nothing but entertainment (Ayoade, 1989:5). If this is not the goal of culture, what then is culture?

Most definitions of culture, describe it, as the way of life of a certain group of people in a particular society for instance, the nomadic Fulani should possess similarities in language (Irish and Prothro, 1965:19; Ukeje, 1992:395; Shoremi, 1999:94). Ukeje (1992) added that culture is the totality of a people's way of life as deduced from material and non-material aspects of their life such as clothing, values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings and customs. This should include traits imbibed by all healthy individuals in the course of growing in a specific society.

Andah (1982:4-5) presented a more embracing definition:

> Culture embraces all the material and non-material expressions of a people as well as the processes with which the expressions are communicated. It has to do with all the social, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic, and technological expressions and processes of a people usually ethically and/or nationally or supra-nationally related, and usually living in a geographically contiguous area; what they pass on to their successors and how these are passed on.

Culture could therefore depict glaring similarities between people within the same territorial space that fosters a feeling of oneness that they would wish to preserve for future generations.

In addition, Shoremi (1999: 94) is of the view that "…any culture is a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men…cultures produce needs as well as provide a means of fulfilling them." In essence, an individual born into a society would through social interaction, unconsciously imbibe certain traits that could build up personality or act as boosters for adjusting in that society. Some other researchers (Oyeneye and Shoremi, 1985: 3) also highlighted certain features of culture as:

- Culture is shared by members of a society;
- Culture is not genetically transmitted;
- It is historically derived and … transmitted from one generation to another;
- Culture is created… through the process of adjustment to the social setting;
- Culture is universal-found in every human society;
- Culture is dynamic.

In summary, culture is a network of traits that could be learned, based on interaction or derived from history. Whatever culture is, it definitely regulates our lives by unconsciously shaping our attitudes, values, goals, behaviour or personality. From all indication, man is definitely nothing without culture. Little wonder that Dabaghian (1970: 103) stressed "…the pride of any society lies in its culture since no society in the world could be considered great without reference to its tradition and culture."

AFRICA: OUR CULTURE, THE WAY WE WERE AND THE EVASION

The African society had prescribed ways of educating their young ones before the colonial period. Such education could be through art forms, music, artisanship, and initiation camps for maidens and young men. There was also the role of oral tradition in passing our cultural heritage to emergent generations through legends or folklores.

During the colonial era, our traditional culture and values were seriously threatened. This could be because of dividing the African territories without regard for the traditions, languages and values of these African people. Sometimes, African subjects were forced to imbibe the cultures of their colonial masters. And with the introduction of western education and ideas, our cultural heritage slowly filtered away. In extreme cases, Gbotokoma (1996:21) reported "…the colonialists categorically denied the existence of African cultural values and worse still, taught the Africans themselves to despise them"

Cultural Disintegration: The African Perspective

Cultural disintegration in Africa could be attributed to internal and external factors, which include wars, conquests, the slave trade, migrations, contact with Europeans and colonialism, urban overcrowding and industrialization. An important aspect of contact with the western world was the creation of a vacuum in the colonized people that derided a proper fusion or blend of cultures that would have created a balanced reintegration.

Cultural disintegration could be explained as that destabilization instituted when cultural changes go beyond the control of the people in the affected society. We have historical instances of such cultural disintegration in the Ancient Mali, Songhai and Egyptian empires. In fact, it is evident from history that dominant cultural systems in Africa were irreparably torn apart to create room for the exploitative western rule. This disintegration of political set-ups, made them easily malleable. This could be likened to the reckless disruption of sculptures in the 16th century in the cover of Christianity and fight against fetish practices. This wanton destruction persisted until the beginning of the 20th century.

One may need to ponder on Gbotokuma's (1996: 23) stance that if Africa has been weighed down by 400 years of exploitation, alienation, cultural and economic dismantlement, the white man's recent deliberate political absolution of his conquests by renouncing colonialism, does not change anything.

What is Cultural Dynamics?

All countries are prone to a tendency towards either stability or change "…because the individuals in the society or the 'cultural architects' constantly modify their cultural plans, improve and adapt their behaviour to the caprices and exigencies of their physical, social and ideological milieu." What may however remain a puzzle, is ascertaining in what ways, at what periods, for what reason and where cultural elements are included, lost, replaced or blended. It may be deduced that stability and change could be positive and negative factors in cultural dynamics. More importantly, cultural dynamics could breed negative changes that result in cultural dearth.

The Realm of Development

Olutayo (1985:200) explained that Nigeria adopted and has since practiced a model of development entrenched on the modernization theory. The modernization theory traces the root of Nigeria's underdevelopment to absence of technology and incomplete disentanglement from primitive modes of life.

To correct this situation, the modernization theory holds that a state of development can be reached through a transfer of technological ideas, institutions, attitudes, values and cultures to the undeveloped nations. More specifically, Osagie expressed the opinion of psychologists and sociologists that a transfer of modern attitudes reduces the presence of "absurd" traditional attitude and fosters an atmosphere for growth in western markets on which rests "the wealth of nations." In essence, such "free trade" visualised by the researcher, is an "osmotic" relationship whose benefits could only be reaped by the toughest countries. For Olutayo (1985), the implication is "Europeanization," in which Europe is perceived as having the "higher" culture which the "lower" culture of the undeveloped nations need to develop. If this "higher" culture is rightly

imbibed, the undeveloped nations will, ultimately develop. In essence, undeveloped nations would need to imbibe the higher culture of the west to develop. This corresponds with Dabagan's (1970) summation of acculturation: " when an individual goes from one culture to another, he gradually superimposes the way of life of the second culture on top of the first. In some ways, he is still a member of the culture in which he is born, but in many ways, he has become a member of the culture in which he now lives." However, this does not explain whether there is a limit to acculturation or what may be called the better brew. What if more of the alien culture is consumed and almost nothing of the host culture is left. What then is the benefit of acculturation?

Based on the preceding discussions, what then is development?

First, Osagie (1985:129) visualized "development" as multi-faceted with its cognate notions and Victorian terms of "growth" and "progress" respectively.

Also, when the term development is mentioned, there is a tendency for economists to dwell on the indices of Gross National Productivity, increasing productivity, developing technology in the bid to increase productivity based on the conception that development is the route to economic growth. Similarly, Osagie (1985) presented an encompassing definition of development thus:

> Development however, is a more inconclusive concept with its social, political and economic facets. It is the qualitative and quantitative positive transformation of the lives of a people that does not only enhance their material well-being but also ensures their social well being, including the restoration of human dignity.

The assertion is that development is a warm, gradual and considerate process in its attempt to alleviate man's economic and technological standard or conditions without disregarding or disrespecting any aspect of man's existing social, cultural and political values. This implies that development does not bring only ill tidings after all, with colonization; Africans were introduced to a new religion, education, technology and industry. The important thing is that we should learn to filter the good from the bad to mature into self reliant and actualised individuals. In other words, development cannot be divulged from man's culture, for culture makes a man and man cannot be developed in a vacuum.

Cultural Dominance: How Deep-seated in Africa

What really is the cultural dominance of the West? The cultural domination of the West is entrenched in imbibing the western way of life and thus making our political, economic and development aspirations conform to this alien way of life. Very often, we wonder why certain tourism, trade, and technological ideas implemented by our leadership go wrong. Not surprisingly, such should be the fate of projects fashioned strictly within the western way of thinking thus disregarding our cultural heritage.

It can never be said that there has been cultural exchange between the economically and politically strong western and African countries. Notions of exchanges are mere myths.

One may also point out that news on Africa and about African people published in the western press are written by westerners and without doubt, are prone to diluted accounts of Africans through the eyes of the west.

There is also, absentminded transfer of some technologies that deride the essence of our cultural heritage. As Professor Joseph Ki Zerbo cited in Gbotokoma (1996: 22) stressed, "…no technical object is culturally neutral, in the sense that it carries with it the stamp of the society in which it was conceived. Every manufactured product is an ambassador of a certain culture, while the raw materials and finished products exported by Africa carry no social or cultural message." A deplorable situation indeed- when considered in the light of the vibrant cultural, social and moral values of the African heritage. Maybe what Africans need is a cultural re-orientation targeted at sieving that which will always radiate the beauty of our Africanness to create a balance between modern and traditional outlooks.

After Colonization

At the end of the colonial period and the acquisition of political independence, what do we as Africans have to show for this period of forced boundage? Nothing! Nothing but an inability to govern ourselves, resusticate or protect those cultural values that were laid to sleep during the colonial period.

In fact, the new breed of africans are more concerned with passionately accusing the colonialists of contributing to a derision of our cultural values. But are we being completely true to ourselves? For how do we explain the rampant sale , disappearance or importation of Africa's priceless works of art.

At the same time, we should also be accused of been willing recepients of western cultures without making concerted efforts to project our African heritage as attractive and unique enough to be assimilated or emulated by others.

In reality, our world is gradually moving to a time when exchanges should be promoted because no nation should be completely satisfied with reclining in an arm-chair waiting to savour what others have to offer.

(i) Effects of Cultural Disintegration

Major effects of colonial domination and eventually cultural disintegration in Africa could be the biting problems of industrialization and congestion in Africa. With technological advancement, there has been an exodus of young people from rural to urban areas in search of white-collar jobs. Thus, the alien traits of depersonalisation and deculturisation were introduced. (Gbotokuma, 1996: 20). Before this, life in the African traditional setting was never without a feeling of oneness- because there were laws; family values and community assistance schemes that ensure the helpless are never left despondent. In the urban setting, man is alone, only responsible to his immediate family, uncaring of his moral and cultural values.

Not surprisingly, an abandonment of the restrictive strength of cultural behaviour evident in mode of dressing, respect for parents and elders, opened the gate to the negative urban traits of crime, unemployment, alcoholism, debauchery and divorce.

Similarly, Agbaje (1989: 46-47) described colonialism as a disruptive force that tried to replace long-tested traditional cultural practices with socio-political and economic policies that had been developed and tested in Europe. For Agbaje, when the traditional checks and balances for governance and social responsibility have fallen short, cases of abuse of office and inappropriate behaviour would be aggravated.

More importantly, colonialism put on hold cultural pluralism and moved to disrupt the essence of our African unity by creating conflict among erstwhile peaceful groups, breeding the monster called tribalism which Davidson (1991: 16) described as a major raison d'être, instrument and facilitator of corruption in the post-colonial era.

The Culture-Development Relationship

For a clearer understanding of the culture-development relationship, there is a need to briefly assess the activities and stance of the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the issue.

The organization (UNESCO) has from inception, stressed the connection between culture and development. This is emphasised in its mission of "advancing through the educational, scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of peace and the common welfare of mankind." Culture became increasingly important in the 1960s or postcolonial era with the evident deficiencies to cultural diversity in the currently adopted development model. The liberated people had become aware of mode of existence and persistently challenged the notion that modernization had to mean westernisation-rather than been based on their own tradition. In response, in 1966, the UNESCO General Conference in Article1 of the Declaration stated that "each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved" and that "every people have the right and the duty to develop its culture."

- The Intergovernmental Conference on the Administrative and Financial aspects of Cultural Policies was held in Venice in 1970 and spearheaded the process of introducing culture to the heart of policy making agenda. The hallmark of this conference, was Rene Maheu, then UNESCO Director-General's message to the world:

  Man is the means and the end of development; he is not the one-dimensional abstraction of homo economicus, but a living reality, a human person, in the infinite variety of his needs, his potentials and his aspirations… in the concept of development the centre of gravity has thus shifted from the economic to the social, and we have reached a

point where this shift begins to approach the cultural.

• Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Europe was held in Helsinki in 1972 and the major observation was that any growth that is based solely on the economic aspects of life, is definitely maladjusted or out of touch with the environment.

• Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Asia was held in Yogyakarta in1973 and advised member States to formulate their economic and social objectives within a cultural framework for healthy societal growth.

• Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa was held in Accra in 1975 and stressed that cultural development is boosted when cultural authenticity and technical progress continually complement each other. It is my perception that based on the meeting, the Festac 77' Festival was organised probably to collectively display the uniqueness of the African culture. But the whole idea was merely a waste of resources for the host country, Nigeria and like all projects initiated by Africans, there was a lack of continuity.

• Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies on Latin America and the Caribbean's was held in Bogotá in 1978 and emphasised that cultural development should be targeted towards alienating the living conditions or life of individuals.

• The World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT) was held in Mexico City in 1982 and came up with the unique definition that links culture to development: "culture…is…the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

To further fulfil the objective of making cultural factors the focal point of all strategies for development, the World Decade for Cultural Development was initiated and spanned between 1988-1997. Within those ten years, UNESCO, earmarked four key objectives:

(i) Acknowledging the cultural dimension of development;

(ii) Affirming and enriching cultural identities;

(iii) Broadening participation in cultural life; and

(iv) Promoting international cultural co-operation.

Within that decade, projects exceeding 1,200 were launched in almost every country worldwide. And more recently, the intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development came up with an action plan on cultural policies for development and identified some crucial principles for development. It must be emphasised that man's development is enhanced when man is both socially and culturally fulfilled.

Fostering the Culture - Development Relationship

Yes, for me, there is a relationship between culture and development! For it would be unreasonable to think that, any development task would be successful if it does not have roots in a people's culture. There is also the belief that culture is one basic assessment of whether a society is either developing slowly or rapidly. Undoubtedly, no society exists in a vacuum, as such, existing cultural patterns of the people will determine whether and to what extent that society welcomes or rebuffs change.

In support of these assertions, Isamah (1996: 31) reported that, " Numerous studies of anthropologists have shown that the traditional values of a people are closely related to the pace with which such people accept or reject the demands of modern industrial or commercial operations." While Morris (1976: 15), cautioned that change "does not necessarily involve instability, and provided change is gradual and innovations are steadily tested and absorbed, the stability of society and all its institutions is not seriously affected." In other words, any agent or advocate of change should be judicious enough to assess changing situations within the society, assess that change and adjust to it if it is relevant to that society's development.

More so, how do we contemplate a mission of development when we are still weighed down by the shackles of ignorance, insufficient exposure and incompetent leadership? We are in a world where we are born free yet find it so difficult to express that which is the soul of our existence- that which categorises us as belonging to a certain race, colour or language unit. When we talk about liberation what immediately comes

to mind are the economic, social and political aspects of the term. Little regard is placed on cultural liberation. Yet culture has daily played an invisible role in determining our customs, values, morals and growth in the society. If we truly aspire freedom from the shackles of underdevelopment, there is also an urgent need to break away from the confines of western cultural systems evident in our dressing, language, music, artwork, attitude to innovations and search for that which made us proud to be Africans before colonization.

For the liberation process to be triggered off, one should address the ugly trend that makes western countries inventors of cultural and technological initiatives that are ultimately consumed by African countries.

A major step in addressing the issue of an African cultural policy is commissioning professionals in the area of conservation of our African heritage to present an inventory of our works of art, art forms, folk history or oral tradition and practices. Such documentation should take into account the element of cultural contamination caused by mingling with people from diverse cultures or ways of life.

It is a puzzle why research for the revitalization of our African heritage is restricted to intellectual workings. There is a need to awaken an interest in those countries calling for a cultural revolution to assist in suggesting strategies for packaging these cultural ideas to be shared with other continents.

There is also the language problem. To understand a people adequately, one should understand their language. With this in mind, the colonialists started a process of destabilising our African heritage by imposing not only their languages but also their culture on the colonised. The crux of the matter is simple- the earlier Africans began emphasising the use of their national languages as official languages rather than the English, French or Portuguese languages of their colonial masters, the soul of many Africans will never be truly African. In my view, it really is a sad situation where many African children can neither speak nor understand a word of their native languages. Some may consider it an aspiration to glamour or modernization but I consider it an outright betrayal and disregard for that which our ancestors handed down to us. The language issue may pose adjustment problems with the elimination of already familiar and functional colonial

languages. However, a gradual process is required and strategies should be formulated by which prominent African languages are made appealing via press, radio, literary publications, films and other publicity gimmicks. The key intent is a projection of our cultural values, ideals and unique identity.

Quite often, it bothers me that we, as Africans with specific reference to Nigerians, do not know much about preserving, revitalizing and saving our rich cultural heritage. If we do, then how do we explain why our continent's rich tourist attractions have been inadequately managed despite their huge economic, social, cultural, scientific, educational and ethical potentials? There is a need to formulate attractive strategies to promote interest and awareness among international tourists, regional travels and even local inhabitants about a nation's cultural heritage. For instance, UNESCO, with the assistance of Member States, the World Tourism Organization, UNDP, NGOs and the World Bank, tour operators, museum experts, are interested in contributing to and tackling the tourism-culture challenge. A useful strategy proffered by UNESCO (2000), could be "influencing tourist projects and policies through research, training and awareness-raising activities, the setting up of networks and the implementation of pilot projects, and also to clarify choices for decision-makers, sensitise the general public and promote culture as a factor of peace and development." When properly managed, culture could be an important vehicle for intercultural exchanges and sustainable development.

It would be imperative to always remember that Africa is a community-oriented community. Thus, the community moulds and nurtures an individual's personality. As such, all-new orientations toward development for Africa must be community focussed.

From the foregone, it can be deduced that contact with and acquisition of western ideas have contributed to Africa's cultural identity crisis. Not surprisingly, a continent that so haplessly neglects its own development paradigms to welcome alien outlooks will experience such progressive disintegration that only judiciously applied medication and therapy can repair. Nevertheless, some may argue whether Africa would ordinarily have had a faster development without the destabilizing interference of western colonisation.

CONCLUSION

Seeking Desirable Remedies

A leadership interested in the technological, political and economic advancement or development of its nation should never disregard the role of culture. A nation consciously or unconsciously allowing for a deriding of its cultural identity would ultimately loose some of the respect it would have received from the outside world. Implausibly, the western world has immense respect for the cultural heritage, values and ideals of the African nations. If not, how do we explain the disappearance of our ancient and priceless works of arts to foreign museums and persuasive art collectors. For once, we need to be true to ourselves. We as Africans are the ones more interested in imbibing all that is western. This is evident in our quest for western clothing, ideals and values thereby causing all that our ancestors handed down from one generation to the next to experience a slow dearth.

In addition, a search for and protection of our cultural heritage is the start point of any meaningful attempt at African cultural liberation and development. An African development that should begin with an identification of Africa's condition as well as solutions for correcting these conditions, formulated by Africans for Africans. It must also be enunciated that for as long as Africans remain armchair recipients of western cultures, without learning to do things targeted at their awakening, the development challenge will persistently remain an illusion.

ABSTRACT Several studies have addressed the themes of culture and development either separately or as related entities. However, this paper attends to the possible relationship between culture and development from the perspective of the interaction of the African culture with Western culture or civilisation and the relevance to development in the African continent.

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