

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON AFRICAN  
CULTURAL VALUES: AN ACCOUNT OF NIGERIAN SITUATION**

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***Abstract***

*This article attempts an objective assessment of the influence of western education on African cultural values, with focus on Nigeria. It undertakes an exploratory tour of the colonial administration era in Nigeria, especially the latter's adoption of education, trade and religion as strong strategies to perpetuate its administration. The study examined the attendant socio-developmental effects, namely: the abandonment of the African cultural values, by tracing the remote causes of the subject-matter on the African continent and Nigeria in particular. The paper specifically focused on an examination of some of the cultural values of the Yoruba people of the southwestern Nigeria, such as: respect for the old and elderly, co-habitation, inter-personal relationship, good neighbourliness, collective responsibility, dressing, language, hospitality, chastity before marriage, seen to have been among others, are serially eroded for foreign ones, robbing the continent of its development; and interrogates how some of these values could be recalled to serve as panacea to the country's present hydra-headed social, moral and ethical challenges to engender relative sustainable development. The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data gathering and used simple descriptive analysis and inferential statistics to analyse them. The study, being explorative in nature, adopted the survey-type methodology and used the sustainable development theory as its theoretical framework to explore the rationale behind western education influences on Africa's cultural values in the face of supposed development on the African continent amidst its cultural values' sustainability. The study findings revealed that, the goals of western education, inter-alia, are not achieving desired social balance. The article concluded that, whereas education, religion among other European influences are essentially major agents of socialisation and development, they however cannot achieve this outside of due consideration for the way of life of the people and values which, promoted morality, integrity, ethical balance and even development.*

**Keywords:** Education, Culture, Values, Colonialism, Trans-Atlantic Trade, Indirect-Rule Policy, Educated Elites.

### **Introduction**

A major negative effect of colonial rule in west Africa and other colonised African sub-regions was cultural imperialism. *Johnson Ugoji Anyaele (2003)* submits that, colonialism imposed foreign cultures on the people of west Africa arguably through the instrumentality of education, and compelled them to imbibe their own culture which was quite alien. Incidentally, African cultures were jettisoned. For instance, African names were changed, local languages abandoned, traditional culture was relegated to the background and foreign things were considered better and superior to Africa's. Foreign languages, religions, names, education, dress and dressing, music, sports and even food, among others, replaced African ones. At a point, people began to change their native, indigenous names for foreign ones to the level that, they instantly hated to be called by their native names. In short, it was a thing of pride to bear English names. This replacement of African cultural values with foreign ones was achieved through the instrumentality of education and religion both of which succeeded in brainwashing Africans into believing that their culture and values were inferior and as such should be done away with.

In African communities, there are proverbs, maxims used to inculcate social and moral values in order to regulate their inter-personal relationships, among others. Education was used to pursue other ambitions, which equally led to further relegation of Africans and their cultural values. These include religion, indirect rule administration, and trade. Religion was used by the colonialists, through the missionaries, to pursue the desire to replace the African religion, which was largely considered fetish and pagan, with their Christian religion. It was conceived that there were lots of African black idolatrous practices that needed to be replaced with the light-bearing christian religion. No doubts, Christianity actually illuminated the world of darkness, Africa inclusive; the education that accompanied it succeeded in eroding certain useful aspects of African cultural values. Meanwhile, it is important to infer here that religion was both western (Christianity) and eastern (Islam). In that regard, these different religious inclinations were inspired by two forms of education, namely: Western and Arabic educations respectively.

Another aspect of the influence of western education on the indigenous African culture was in the area of the implementation of the indirect-rule policy. This could not have been executed without western education, notwithstanding that Africans trained in the process (African Educated Elites) were sidelined in the

administration. Illiterate traditional rulers were preferred for use in the administration instead in the indirect rule administrative system. The end result of all these is their direct influence on the African cultural values one way or another.

The point needs to be made and emphasized that this paper is neither holding brief, canvassing for a recognition of African black fetish and pagan practices nor advocating for an entire rejection of western education and culture, as it would be both impossible and unthinkable. Rather, it attempts to point out certain good values contained in the African culture, as highlighted in the work, which has been abandoned due to the influence of western education. The paper thus suggests the need for these values to be revived as their absence or lack of knowledge of them appeared to be partly responsible for the diverse social, moral and ethical challenges in the continent today. The paper seeks for the possibility of devising ways of recalling some of these African cultural values so as to help solve some of these social, ethical and moral challenges steering African countries, particularly Nigeria in the face.

### **Literature Review**

Certain concepts considered germane in this study are hereby clarified and then analysed for purposes of advancing empirical knowledge delivery and brazing up to level considered acceptable in modern research. This is done with robust utilisation of relevant literatures on the title.

### **Culture**

According to *Awoniyi Sunday (2015)*, culture is a concept that is acknowledged universally, though its phenomenal relevance varied from society to society because what is acceptable in one society may likely not be accepted in another. This becomes a rather complex issue in the Nigerian situation, with its multi-diversity. This view by *Awoniyi* derived perhaps from the fact that culture is an all-embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It encompassed every bit of his life and experience. This, perhaps accounts for why the concept has myriads of definitions from different scholars, though revolving round a similar meaning. However, those of *Tylor (1958)* and *Malinowski (1931)* are adopted in this study as its working definitions. According to *Tylor (1958, cited in Awoniyi, 2015)* culture is conceived as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. *Malinowski* on his part, sees culture as a functioning, active, efficient, well

organised unity, which must be analysed into component institutions in relation to one another..., and to the needs of human organism...in relation to the environment, man-made as well as natural (*Malinowski,1931 cited in Adegoke et.al.*).

**Table 1:** *Some Examples of Cultural Values from the Yoruba Nation of Southwestern Nigeria*

S/No.	Values Fostered	Examples of Proverbs/ Maxims
1	Respect and honour for elders	<i>A i le bu owo fun agbaa ni o je ki aye o gun</i> (Failure to give regards to the elderly is the fundamental cause of societal abnormality)
2	Regard and appreciation for one's family and benefactors	<i>A ki i fi owo osi juwe ile baba eni</i> (we should not point at our father's home with the left hand)
3	Self-control and courtesy	<i>Falana gbo tire, tara eni la gbo</i> (Falana-a generic name, mind your business)
4	Virtues of forgiveness, harmony and peaceful co-existence	<i>Bi a ko ba gbagbe oro ana, a ko ni ri enikan abasere</i> (Unless we overlook the past misdeeds, we will not be able to relate)
5	Diligence and industry	<i>Ise ni oogun ise</i> (Hard work is the cure for poverty)
6	Truth and honesty	<i>Otito ki i sina iro nii fi ori gbogbe</i> (Truth does not make mistake, falsehood lead astray).
7	Unity and co-operation	<i>Ajeji owo kan ko gberu de ori</i> (One hand cannot lift a heavy load to the head)

**Sources:** *Falade, D.E et. al., (2009). Proverbs as Traditional Means of Moral and Social Learning among the Yoruba of Nigeria. Ajayi, A. and Fabarebo, S.I (Eds.) Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture (CBAAC), 485-489. Adopted from Awoniyi Sunday (2015)*

### **Traditional African Cultural Values in Modern Africa**

Many of the cultural values and practices of traditional Africa discussed, however, can be considered positive features of the culture and can be accommodated in the scheme of African modernity, even if they must undergo some refinement and pruning in order to become fully harmonious with the spirit of modern culture and to function most satisfactorily within that culture (*Gyekye 2002:174*). These are some of the traditional African values that are fully harmonious with the spirit of modern cultures and as well function most satisfactorily and bring about sustainable development in modern Africa.

**Humanity and Brotherhood:** Traditional African cultures recognise the dignity and integrity of the human being as a creature of God. Our common brotherhood is intrinsically linked with our common humanity. There is only one universal family, to which all human beings belong. This family is fragmented, however, into a multiplicity of peoples and cultures. The recognition of all human beings as brothers in the light of our common membership in one human species is a lofty ideal that is of great importance to the African people. A revival of this African value will no doubts help restore the people's right to life and perhaps proffer solution to the wanton killings going on all over the place in Nigeria and other African countries.

**Communalism and Individualism:** The value that traditional African societies place on communalism is expressed in the sharing of a common social life, commitment to the social or common good of the community, appreciation of mutual obligations, caring for others, interdependence, and solidarity. At the same time, the claims of individuality are recognised. African ethic, however, urges the avoidance of extreme individualism, which is seen as potentially destructive of human values and of the whole meaning and essence of a human society. Attempts are therefore made to balance communalism and individualism so that they can co-exist. One's neighbours should relate with him, not as neighbours but brothers.

**Morality:** The morality espoused in both traditional and modern cultures, and societies of Africa is a social, non-individualistic morality. This kind of morality is held as enjoined by social life itself. There is a pre-occupation with human well-being in the African moral thought and practice. The African moral system puts the ethic of character and responsibility above that of individual right (*obirin so iwa nu oni oun o ni ori oko*). Interpretation: A wife lacked character only for her to conclude that she is not fortunate to secure a good husband, though the latter are also given due recognition. Therefore, the importance of character as the engine of moral life in practice is stressed here.

**The Family:** Marriage is considered as a valuable institution, for without it there would be no family, that is, the basic unit of social life. Without the family there would be none of the kinship ties that are essential to a comprehensive social life, with an intricate network of social relationships. It is rated by Sociologists as a major agent of socialisation. Values associated with the family include recognising the responsibility to share life with a wife or husband and children in the nuclear family and with members from an entire lineage in the extended family, recognising the need to have and to care for children, respecting parents, taking care of our parents in their old ages, and so on.

**Economic Ethics:** Africans seek and put a high-value on wealth, both private and family (clan). The right to, and the importance of private property are recognised in the traditional African economic system, where private ownership exists side by side with public (command, state) ownership. Families (i.e. lineage, clans) operate independently of the chiefs, who, thus, do not control all the dynamics of the traditional economy.

**Chiefship and Politics:** In the political thoughts and practice of the traditional African society consultation and consensus are highly valued, for they are outstanding features of political decision-making. This practice allows for the involvement of all the people in the political process. The chief who is the highest political authority, rules with the consent of and in accordance with the will of the people. In the actual exercise of power, the people in effect, are the sources of authority, directly or indirectly through their representatives on the chief's council. The political authority of the Chief is based on a trusteeship principle that ensures his accountability of the people. Freedom of expression, of political opinion is appreciated and practiced. Misrule by a chief is not tolerated and can lead to his being disposed.

**Human Rights:** The most important values in which human rights are rooted are put into practices in the traditional African cultures. These include individuality, personal responsibility, the dignity and integrity of every person, the intrinsic values of every person, consideration of every persons as an end in himself or herself and worthy of respect and equity of the moral worth of all people. Other rights that are acknowledged and protected include: the right to the use of lineage land, right to food and protection from hunger, the right to a fair trial and the right to own private property. These rights are fundamental to the social structure, customs and ethic of the traditional African society and do not need to be vociferously demanded and belligerently fought for.

**Knowledge and Wisdom:** In the traditional African culture, knowledge is highly valued especially practical or empirical knowledge. This type of knowledge is based on observation and experience. Practical wisdom is most relevant in the reconstruction of the African society and the promotion of human well-being.

**Aesthetics:** Art in traditional African cultures has both functional and aesthetical dimension. Beauty is seen not only in works of art and in the human figure but also in human conduct, in humanity itself and in a person's character. Among the 10 criteria of aesthetic value and judgment are appropriateness and fittingness. For instance, music, dancing and even clothing must be appropriate to the occasion.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The *sustainable development theory* is adopted as theoretical framework in this study to explore the rationale behind education in the face of supposed development on the African continent amidst its cultural values' sustainability. Sustainable development is the idea that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In specific terms, it is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. This long-term existence is by no means tied to the apron strings of such society's institutionalized way of life. Hence, realizing that it could not make a headway in its enterprise, the European colonialists had to import its culture into its colonies to achieve what was termed administrative convenience.

### **Methodology**

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data gathering. Primary data was in the form of questionnaire administration, conduct of in-depth personal interviews, and direct observation. The population used for the study was One Thousand Six Hundred (1,600), drawn purposively from the relevant audiences, namely: traditional institutions, educational institutions, civil society organizations, public opinion polls, centres for African studies. Thirty percent (30%) of this figure, Four Hundred and Eighty (480), was the sample size and was the number of questionnaires administered to respondents. In-depth personal interviews were carried out on Twenty Percent (20%) of the sample size, that is, ninety-six (96) persons/respondents, purposively selected for the purpose. The justification for this selection is exposure and wealth of knowledge on the subject of education, African cultural values, governance then and now, and sustainable development. The direct observation of the researcher, especially on the preponderance of moral and ethical misfits in both leaders and the led of recent generations, added to the data obtained from questionnaire administration and in-depth personal interviews – all at the primary level. Secondary sources were in the form of books, relevant journal articles, periodicals, dailies, magazines, internet sources. These literatures which were analysed and/or reviewed in the paper, were vital data sources that assisted in giving the work a rich content.

The study, being explorative in nature, adopted the survey-type methodology and used the sustainable development theory as its theoretical framework to explore the rationale behind education in the face of supposed development on the African continent amidst its cultural values' sustainability.

### **Discussion on Findings**

The study findings revealed that, the goals of education are not achieving desired social balance because of its abandonment of the cultural values which used to be held in high esteem within the African sub-regions. Perhaps one can submit here that the purpose of education was misconstrued and therefore, abused in the African environment. However, Two Hundred and Eighty-One (281) questionnaires were retrieved out of the 480 administered, representing 58.5% (approx. 59%). However, information from in-depth personal interviews and direct observation sources respectively complemented it, such that the result obtained at the end was representative enough.



**TABLE 2: AN EXAMINATION OF THE QUICK AND SERIAL EROSION OF THE AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES.**

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NO RESPONSE	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Africa has rich and enviable cultural values	214	76.2	51	18.1	6	2.1	-	-	10	3.6
The African cultural values were not products of modern (western) education	166	59.1	89	31.7	13	4.6	1	0.4	12	4.3
Western education was not intended at eroding the African heritage	161	57.3	95	33.8	8	2.8	1	0.4	16	5.7
Successive operators of leadership system in Africa traded the cultural values due to selfish ambitions	22	7.8	179	63.7	68	24.2	12	4.3	-	-
Governments in Africa have been careful in preserving the cultural heritage.	14	5.0	85	30.2	171	60.9	1	0.4	10	3.6
Traditional institutions did not set the stage for the erosion of African cultural heritage.	11	3.9	25	8.9	225	80.1	8	2.8	12	4.3

The said erosion of cultural values is a thing of the mind., as some communities and traditions still hold them in high esteem	4	1.4	21 4	76.2	46	16.4	5	1.8	12	4.3
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Source: Field Survey, 2022

NB: f = Frequency, % = Percentage

#### 4.1 An Examination of the Quick and Serial Erosion of the African Cultural Values with its Attendant Socio-developmental Effects.

This section examined the quick and serial erosion of African cultural values with its attendant socio-developmental effects on society. This is with an aim at measuring the extent to which the African cultural values had been adversely affected by foreign culture through the instrumentality of education.

**TABLE 3:** The Remote And Immediate Causes Of The Subject-Matter On The African Continent And Nigeria In Particular

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NO RESPONSE	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
The conspiracy of traditional rulers with the Europeans	201	71.5	64	22.8	1	0.4	-	-	15	5.3
The cultural diversity of most African states, especially Nigeria	47	16.7	19 7	70.1	32	11.4	2	0.7	3	1.1
Religious bigotry and differences	52	18.5	97	34.5	11 4	40.6	4	1.4	14	5.0
Itineracy of the custodians of African tradition and culture	25	8.9	91	32.4	14 0	49.8	7	2.5	18	6.4

The invasion of religion and education and trans-Saharan trade.	158	56.2	63	22.4	52	18.5	-	-	8	2.8
Inferiority complex of the average African	15	5.3	17 6	63.3	72	25.6	2	0.7	14	5.0
The believe in the average African that anything African is fake	14	5.0	17 7	63.0	74	26.3	5	1.8	11	3.9
The Africans who travel to European countries imported foreign cultures	6	2.1	82	29.2	16 8	59.8	10	3.6	15	5.3
The private school system compelling pupils and students to drop their indigenous languages for foreign ones.	7	2.5	39	13.9	94	33.5	12 9	45.9	12	4.3
Selfishness and greed among African leaders and political elites	10	3.6	28	10.0	44	15.7	19 9	70.8	-	-

Source: Field Survey, 2022. NB: f = Frequency, % = Percentage

**1.2 Test of Hypothesis:** This section deals with the analysis/interpretation of hypothesis of this study. The statistical tool used in the analysis of the data is spearman’s correlation coefficient. The level of significance used in the analysis is 5% (i.e. 0.05).

**TABLE 3: CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES.**

Items	The system of education has brought about far reaching positive influence on African cultural values.			
	Correlation co-efficient (r)	Df	p-value	N

African cultural values seem to have enjoyed the cooperation of relevant institutions and modern educational system.	+0.232	1	0.000	281
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Source: Field Survey, 2022

### 4.3 An Examination of Some Cultural Values of the Yoruba People of the Southwestern Nigeria.

This table examined some of the cultural values of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria which had helped to promote good neighbourliness, communality, respect for old age and the elderly, etc in the area. The result of this exercise serves as an empirical revelation to challenges militating against the propagation of these values among the present generation. As shown in the table, 207 (73.7 approx.74%) agreed that, these cultural values in the Yoruba tradition were still relevant, while a negligible figure of 1 respondent, representing 0.4% disagreed with the standpoint.

TABLE 4: Examination Of Some Of The Cultural Values Of The Yoruba People Of The Southwestern Nigeria.

VARIABLES	STRONGLY AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		STRONGLY DISAGREE		NO RESPONSE	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
These cultural values in the yoruba tradition are still relevant.	207	73.7	54	19.2	5	1.8	1	0.4	14	5.0
The present generation of yoruba youths are oblivious of these cultural values	115	40.9	15 2	54.1	1	0.4	-	-	13	4.6
Our schools within the southwestern Nigeria no longer teach morals and culture	89	31.7	17 6	62.6	-	-	-	-	16	5.7

These cultural values of the Yorubas in Nigeria are meant to regulate conducts	79	28.1	17 8	63.3	2	0.7	3	1.1	19	6.8
Education is not complete without culture and tradition of the people.	8	2.8	11	3.9	15 5	55.2	87	31.0	20	7.1
Culture and tradition are all about fetish practices	10	3.6	32	11.4	14 8	52.7	74	26.3	17	6.0
Inadequate teaching of cultural values is because of the make belief that African ways of life are inferior	28	10.0	22 3	79.4	11	3.9	3	1.1	16	5.7
Parents have major roles to play to inculcate these values in their children.	62	22.1	18 5	65.8	8	2.8	10	3.6	16	5.7

NB: f = Frequency      % = Percentage

**4.4: Revival of African Cultural Values to Serve as Panacea to the Present Hydra-headed Social, Moral and Ethical Challenges in Africa.**

Table 5 reveals the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents on each of the variables, as were organised using the Likert scale of measurements, such as: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Over 70% of the respondents maintained that Africans’ commitment to change could be achieved with a revival of its cultural values. This indicates that issues on African cultural values are redeemable, even as just a negligible few respondents of 2, representing 0.7% strongly disagreed with the idea.

**TABLE 5: Revival Of African Cultural Values To Serve As Panacea To The Present Hydra-Headed Social, Moral And Ethical Challenges In Africa.**

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY</b>	<b>NO RESPO</b>
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VARIABLES							DISAGREE		NSE	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
Africans commitment to change could be achieve with a revival of its cultural vales	197	70.1	66	23.5	-	-	2	0.7	16	5.7
The relevance of education to civilization and thus national development cannot be overemphasized.	89	31.7	17 6	62.6	1	0.4	1	0.4	14	5.0
Corrosive corruption among other social maladies are the result of erosion of African cultural values.	169	60.1	84	29.9	13	4.6	3	1.1	12	4.3
Education policy should be reviewed to factor in these useful values.	17	6.0	37	13.2	16 2	57.7	45	16.0	20	7.1
With or without the influence of western education, the cultural values are sacrosanct	65	23.1	16 9	60.1	12	4.3	17	6.0	18	6.4

NB: f = Frequency, % = Percentage

### 5. Conclusion

The article concluded that, whereas education is essentially a major agent of socialisation and development, it however cannot achieve this outside of due consideration of the way of life of the people and values which, *inter-alia*, promotes morality, integrity, ethical balance and even development. Meanwhile, the growth of human culture, its capacity to avoid decadence and dysfunctionality and to adapt itself to new situations and demands, its capacity to constitute itself into a credible and visible framework for human fulfillment is due to the re-interpretation and critical re-evaluation of a cultural tradition as it moves through history. This critical re-evaluation of a received cultural tradition will not only suggest refinement or appropriate amendment that ought to be

made to it, but also direct the attention to the aspects of it that ought to be engaged from the cultural life and thought of a people.

### **6. Recommendations**

- ❖ Education policy should be reviewed to factor in these useful values.
- ❖ Though the revival of essential African cultural values should be encouraged, there are nevertheless certain aspects of African tradition and culture that need refinement and thorough evaluation to fall in line with modern tradition.
- ❖ Africans commitment to change could be achieve with a revival of its cultural values.
- ❖ Parents have major roles to play to inculcate these values in their children
- ❖ Inadequate teaching of cultural values is because of the make belief that African ways of life are inferior. Therefore, a sense of national pride should be factored in into our value system.
- ❖ The traditional institutions should desist from honouring people of shady character with traditional titles. In like manner, tertial institutions should release honorary degrees only to those who truly deserve it as people of honour in the true sense of the word.
- ❖ Education is not complete without culture and tradition of the people. Therefore, students should be made to major in courses that teaches these cultural values at all levels.
- ❖ These cultural values of the Yorubas in Nigeria are meant to regulate conducts. Our schools within the southwestern Nigeria no longer teach morals and culture. Therefore, character development should be emphasised among youths.

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