

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOLKLORE IN
TRADITIONAL IGBO SOCIETY: PROSPECTS CHALLENGES AND
SOLUTIONS.**

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Abstract

Sustainable development is an approach to economic planning that attempts to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the environment for future generations. Despite its enormous popularity in the last two decades of the 20th century, the concept of sustainable development proved difficult to apply in many cases, primarily because the results of long-term sustainability analyses depend on the particular resources focused upon. Since the Earth Summit of 1992 sustainable development has been central to a multitude of environmental studies. Folklore comprises the sum total of traditionally derived and orally or imitatively transmitted literature, material culture, and custom of subcultures. In popular usage, the term folklore is sometimes restricted to the oral literature tradition. Folklore culture was affected greatly by the rise of industrial society and of cities, as well as by nationalist movements beginning in the 19th century. Both the threat to folklore culture and the rise of nationalism spurred revival and preservation movements in which learned musicians, poets, and scholars provided leadership. This paper investigates the uses of oral literature in advancing sustainable development among the Igbo's of South Eastern Nigeria. The challenges and solutions were also analyzed and solutions proffered.

Definition of Concepts

The concept of development still remains the most controversial and easily manipulated term both in the academia and political arena. People take the idea of development for granted and as something that can be realized so long as there is a goodwill and capacity to do so. It is also a politically and ideologically driven concept and practise since its inception as a catchy concept in the discourse of practitioners and intellectuals in the continuum where underdeveloped, less-developed, developing and developed are the scales of measurement. In addition to the inherent complexities that we have with the concept of 'development', making a better sense out of it in terms of its 'sustainability' will certainly need another serious examination. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition has been used as benchmark in efforts to make it more comprehensive and accommodative from the socio-economic, political and environmental perspectives. If sustainable development aims at the sustainable use of natural resources of the earth and the protection of the environment on which natural resources on which nature and human life as well as social and economic development depend and which seeks to realize the right of all human beings to an adequate living standard on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from, with due regard to the needs and interest of future generations', folklore must be seriously considered in a discuss as this because the concept of development has serious impacts on the environment with serious consequences for the depletion of the resources that provide for and threatening the very essence of human survival and continuity (Mohammed, 2011).

Folklore comprises of story songs (akuko ifo) proverbs (ilu) music (egwu) etc. Folklore can be used for entertainment and to educate a

community. It structures people morals, values and beliefs. Most folktales make use of animals and birds for their major character. There is folklore on the tortoise and dog over the argument "shall man die or live forever"? God the creator decided that Tortoise and Dog had to run a race. God who loves and favoured man decided to give man the fleet footed dog for human life and tortoise for death. During the race the dog saw a delicacy in the bush and went for it believing that he can always beat the tortoise because of his slow pace. At the end, the tortoise won the race. God then ruled that man should not live forever. The above tale illustrates why human begin should not live forever. According to Okafor,

The Igbos' have a great fondness for fairy tale. They have a big stock of legends and folklore... the Igbo is a good story teller with a faculty of putting reality into fables. He uses as illustrations animal and birds in such a way they seem to be endowed with human powers.

Folklore served the society in the attainment of its objectives. Epics can be used as illustrations for lessons and lectures in schools and universities. The present generation can learn a lot about past life and values of his community by listening to and taking part in folklore. Through folklore proverbs could be taught and better appreciated in schools because examples are drawn from the Child's immediate environment.

Okafor (1991) collaborated with the above mentioned view:

Through song texts, a person learned moral codes of his land. He also learned about his own language, the things his people lived by, and how the society worked. All these were learned through music that ranged from simple folk tunes to highly specialized ritual music, including chants, incantations and minstrelsy.

Environmental Degradation and Cultural Education

We had earlier defined sustainable development as an approach to economic planning that attempts to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the environment for future generations. We had also pointed out that development in our society has serious environmental effect due to deforestation, industrialization, the implosion of time and space- globalization. The rural setting in our society that encouraged traditional education is gradually being eroded. Television, telephone and information communication technology (ICT) has taken over. In music for instance, the instrumental resources of a community were drawn from its environment but today, the social setting is quite different. Educational purposes are summed up in three dimensions; preparing students for jobs, preparing them to be citizens, and teaching them to be human beings who can enjoy the deeper forms of beauty. The three complement each other. The concept of "development" needs a thorough reflection and review before the concept of 'sustainability' is attached to it. In educating a child, we make use of things close to the nature of the subject. In music, for instance, in teaching of the letters, alphabets can easily be committed to memory through rhymes. This makes the learning of alphabets fun for young children. The informal system of education starts from home. The home is the child's world; it either mars the child's life or leads to success; it provides him with the necessary equipment to fit him for his proper place in the society and if guided properly, for its future career, the child is sure to be successful, but if the home fails in its duty, then the future of the child is damaged.

Challenges and Solutions

Sustainable development in the creative arts varies greatly based on the child's experiences with art, music, dance, and theater. The public view the creative art as lovely but not essential. Yet against this

backdrop, a new picture is emerging. Comprehensive, innovative arts initiatives are taking root in a growing number of schools. Many of these models are based on new findings in brain research and cognitive development, and they embrace a variety of approaches: using the folklore as a learning tool. Although most of these initiatives are in the early stages, some are beginning to rack up impressive results. There's lots of evidence that children immersed in the creative arts do better on their academic tests. Education policies almost universally recognize the value of arts. Education in Nigeria is fraught with tendencies of the Western style of education in scope and content. Writing on the colonial system of education, (Okafor) observed that:

It was an education system that alienated the people from their culture and value system. The colonial system of education had limited social objectives. The aim here was to produce at best, middle- level manpower for the colonial civil service. The society had no part in designing it nor, indeed, in implementing it but had to co-operate in it. It was not designed to have impact on the masses. It was a rule or system laid down by the colonial master for his own good. The Christian missionary and colonial educational systems had similar short comings as well as it was designed to serve the interest of its propagators and not the people it was designed for.

Societies, traditional or modern usually design their educational systems to meet their needs and satisfy their aspirations. Functionalism, self-reliance, social and political participation and stability were the ultimate outcomes and were predicated on industry, resourcefulness, creativity and obedience to God and society. Education has been portrayed by many sociologists and educationists to be an experience which borders on the peoples' culture and which through learning processes prepares an individual for adult life in his

particular society. Indigenous education could therefore be interpreted to mean that type of education that is natural or native to a place or that could be found within a group (Agu). Okon and Anderson, described traditional education as: *Tribal or community based education*. Knowledge embedded in folklore could be used as a tool of social control through ridicule, sympathy and in energizing people into greater performances. There are chants, dirges and poetry to challenge the retentive ability of a child and to impart. Other methods of learning include recitation, games, memorization, role-playing and story-telling especially in literary matters. The intellectual ability and competence of the child is challenged through solving riddles, proverbs and storytelling. He learns language manipulation, explores the mysteries embedded in words and statements and learns the rationale behind certain social practises and natural occurrences. The Igbo believes that whoever expects a proverb to be interpreted to him acknowledges that he is daft and empty (the bride-price paid on the mother is wasted). The child is expected to draw the meaning of the proverb from the context of the discussion. Highly intelligent and attentive children easily do this and even employ a few. It is mark of successful interaction with elders. The child learnt the use of proverbs as an art in diplomacy. Children imitate adults a great deal in role playing. In the words of Odimegwu, "Education in the traditional Igbo society was designed in accordance with the people's world view, their surroundings and immediate circumstances and facilities that were needed for effective co-existence and maintenance of society".

Upholding the view above, Agu wrote:

Participation in children's games and stories enable him to learn to sing in the style of his culture just as he learns to speak its languages. Sometimes, the mothers even dance with their children on their backs until the children are old enough to take part in the dancing themselves. By the time

the child reaches adolescent age, he may have learnt to play on toy instruments in adult ensemble.

In Igboland, cultural transmission starts from the cradle, Emeka in (Agu, 2006) concurred:

Children grow up and play together; improving their language and number skills by running errands, playing musical and rhythmic games, listening to and participating in the telling of folk tales and in their recitation of rhymes.

Fafunwa, observed that education in the traditional African society: Was an integral experience whose aim, content, methods and organization were intricately interwoven; they were not divided into separate compartment as in Western system of education. In essence, traditional education was characteristically integral in experience, and very functional in purpose. The individual became fully integrated into his society, observing the societal laws and respecting the demands of his society. Through folklore, the child was taught to respect his elders and those in authority.

Conclusion

The establishment of skill acquisition centres in Igboland should be encouraged. Skill acquisition centres should also be established in educational institutions, and notable minstrels should be encouraged to be part of the teaching process. The curriculum, right from the primary school, should make folk or traditional music the foundation of music education. Numerical increases in school enrollments, though occasionally spectacular, fail to correspond to the legitimate aspirations of the people or even, more modestly, to the initial objectives fixed by the governments themselves. There has also been concern about the financial difficulties in the management of

educational institutions. Folklore thrives in oral tradition and urbanization and industrialization has greatly affected the traditional setting that supported the implementation of folklore in the traditional Igbo society. Egwu-Onwa-moonlight play has almost gone into extinction. The educational curriculum left by the colonial masters was unsuitable for sustainable development. There should be a liaison between educational policy makers and the planners of economic and social development. Education in cultural perspective must be revisited and the study of oral literature is imperative. The creation of an enabling cultural environment must be pursued for folklore to be sustained. The television should be used as an agent to spread folklore and to export it universally using the internet. A great many of the special forms of literature now in manuscripts and books are paralleled in traditional oral literature, where history, drama, law, sermons, and exhortations of all kinds are found, as well as analogues of novels, stories, and lyric poems. Folk literature is but a part of what is generally known as folklore: customs and beliefs, ritualistic behaviour, dances, folk music, and other nonliterary manifestations. These are often considered a part of the larger study of ethnology, but they are also the business of the folklorist. Education must pace development not follow it.

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