

Assessing Indigenous Knowledge System through Oral Literature for Educational Transformation: A case of Yorùbá

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous knowledge system is a communal knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and cultural-bound practices gained from one's native community and transmitted over generations. As a land rooted knowledge, every community (including Yorùbá) has specific range of them. Scholars have worked on the role of indigenous knowledge generally on the generality of human existence with little attention paid to the invaluable importance of the indigenous knowledge system on the cognitive and cerebral development of the African youth. This study therefore, assessed the indigenous knowledge system through Yorùbá oral literature for educational transformation. The study examined different oral resources especially, the ones gained through intangible component of the cultural heritage (language) that can be incorporated in the national educational curriculum with a view to harnessing the wisdom in them for the promotion of youthful minds and enhancing mental power. Function approach to communication served as theoretical framework. An interpretive design was used. The data for the study were collected from the existing documents and electronic database through a purposive sampling technique. As oral collecting-driven study, the selected oral literature include philosophical statements, songs, children poem, and counting system. The selected data were translated from the source language (Yorùbá) to the operational language (English). The data were subjected to content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that the children poems on thought and beliefs entrenched critical thinking in people's mind whereas indigenous counting system enhance the children's problem-solving skills. It is also established that intellectualism displayed by individuals in their fields of work is relative to the degree at which they maximized the acquired knowledge from the indigenous system. From this discovery, the study concluded that the most prominent medium capable of empowering people with philosophical and cognitive leaning is indigenous languages because they are divinely empowered for massive potential in economy, investment, science and technology. Hence, there should be concerted efforts by individual, government, and educational stakeholders in the documentation of oral materials to promote their acceptance. Doing that, would promote community-rooted knowledge in all the ethnic groups and enhance indigenous capacity for educational transformation and sustainability in Africa at large.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge system, Oral literature, Educational transformation, Yorùbá language

INTRODUCTION

One of the topical issues that has received greater attention from all and sundry is the unprecedented level of moral and educational inefficiency in our society. This is a result of negligence in giving priority to the educational process, which is believed to have often availed the children of the opportunity to imitate and practice good manners. Many educationists and researchers associated with the formulation of educational developmental policies are now beginning to recognize the positive role of indigenous cultures and languages in capacity building and the production of efficient manpower for the production sustainability of

African society. The indigenous knowledge otherwise referred to as indigenous tradition is now one of the themes on the quest in formulating viable policy that would enhance educational transformation. For the purpose of this work, we see indigenous knowledge as ‘form of knowledge that are construed and grounded in philosophical skills and intricately acquired from generation to generation most especially during community interaction’. They are simply a communal knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and cultural-bound practices gained from one’s native community and transmitted over generations. In essence, the indigenous knowledge could be described as intellectual or philosophical learning resource management, potentially entrenching cognitive thinking. However, such potentiality enhances cost-effective educational curriculum and strategies that help in decision-making systems. Indigenous knowledge encompasses technological, economical, philosophical learning and governance system. They are not systematically written, very oral and rural in nature (Chikaire, and Osuagwu, 2012).

Education is a very powerful tool in national development. Presumably, it is the majority consensus that factors contributing to both individual and national progress depend largely on the educational experiences of individual citizen. The intellectuality of today youth has been challenged due to their inability to offer the society its potential needy in transforming and advancing both economy and technology sector of the state, in order to be able to compete at the global market. In most of the African countries, education is planned with a view of producing all –round growth individual in terms of cognitive, psychomotor and effective domains. This, of course, involves acquisition of knowledge, development of skills and attitudes that is necessary in controlling world in which the child lives. One of the significant goals of education is enculturation, helping the product of the educational system to understand and practice the culture of his immediate environment so that he could become fully integrated into his environment (Fafunwa, 1983). Meaning that, the goal of education is to produce all-round growth child that would develop his talent and contribute effectively to the growth of his society.

Meanwhile, the incorporation of indigenous language into African education system reflects that, indigenous people hold an extensive wealth of knowledge. In this line of reasoning, it is believed that indigenous languages contribute to the non- indigenous understanding in Africa. In Africa today, educators now give priority to first peoples principle of learning because it represents highly effective approach to education and among other things preserves deep learning and responding to learner’s need. This concept is entrenched in the policy of inclusiveness where, students vernacular are sandwich with the mode of lessons’ presentation in the class. This pragmatic engagement of pupils has been found lucrative in enhancing class engagement and participation. Apparently, African cultural heritage is predominantly composed of in both tangible and intangible components. Some of those tangible resources are foods, music, agriculture, clothing, tie and dye, while the intangible component consists of non – physical resources such as value, ideas, language, spirituality to mention but a few. According to what we referred to as indigenous knowledge earlier in this work, the two aspects of our cultural heritage constitute indigenous knowledge systems. Also, it must be added here that most of the philosophical accumulated knowledge that are imparted indigenously are construed upon well practical and serviceable language use. This posits that the sustainability of tangible resources is shadowed by the functionality of intangible cultural materials. There are numerous research works on the African indigenous knowledge system but as existing literatures revealed, aspects of indigenous knowledge that can be assessed towards presentation of a philosophical learning has not been given adequate attention deserves. That is to say, the application of indigenous language through oral literature for imparting first-hand knowledge, which is widely open to all and sundry in the society, has not been explored to its fullest. It is on this note that the paper examined and analyzed the indigenous knowledge that are impacted through oral literatures for establishing cognitive thinking and as well booting people’s educational understanding.

Indigenous knowledge is rooted in language use and so defined by its oral and written forms. Each of them has a peculiar way of expressing its content while in-use. The oral literature according to Usman (2020)

entails all knowledge, craft, and activities which are transmitted by word of mouth and acquire by imitation. They create psychological thoughts ranging from proverbial saying, songs, poem, folktales, and figurative expressions. In other words, every literary statement has its existence in the cosmology of speech of its speaker. However, most of the cognate experiences upon which peoples' minds set are activated in the oral aspect of indigenous language. To bring to limelight the function of the indigenous oral aspect of language in structuring curriculum of African educational institutions, only oral resources that could be incorporated in the educational curriculum (teaching-learning process), and as well assumed in their capabilities at imparting unconscious knowledge are presented, analyzed, and discussed in this work. The data for this study were mainly oral collections from Yoruba speaking states of Western Nigeria of African continent. They were purposively selected from relevant documents and electronic database. The data were translated from the source language (Yorùbá) to operational language (English) contextually.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, educators and language scholars have paid much attention on the role of language especially the indigenous language in education based on its impact on the cognitive and intellectual development of people's minds. Mmola (2010) conducted an empirical research on the Perceptions of *IKS* Lecturers on *IKS* Programme at North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. In this university, indigenous Knowledge system is being integrated into the school curricula and indigenous Holders and Practitioners from the institution's surrounding are being invited as resource persons to teach specific areas of African medicine and healing systems. The researcher through the use of questionnaire and structural interviews evaluated the views and opinion of the students, teachers, and the parents especially, the community elders on the importance of indigenous knowledge system on the teaching-learning activities. The findings of the study shown that 80% of the responded students appreciate teachers that use and incorporate local contents specifically the language of the community in teaching and interacting with them in classroom. All the respondents' students agrees that the method of integrating the use of indigenous language with English in teaching boosts their experience, offers independent learning, and also builds more cordial relationship among them, their tutors, and the members of the local communities. Based on the benefits of this programme to the learning and living of the students, the study concluded by calling for concerted efforts by stakeholders into the effective incorporation of indigenous knowledge system in higher education to increase the students' self-esteem and challenge their sensitivities to their community livelihood and development.

Raymond (2011) studied the use of Multi-media Technology in teaching indigenous knowledge system in schools (*IKS*). Through a structural interview, the study discovered that students have been used various multi-media resources and technology in accessing local materials from the community elders and practitioners. Reference was made specifically to a project in which, students of North-West University and North-West Provincial Department of Health in Tswana employed digital video in documenting a specific area of indigenous knowledge which, was eventually lead to the development of Indigenous Pathway to Health. From this finding, the study concluded that the use of multi-media technology such as cameras for interviewing community knowledge holders enhance students' cognitive understanding on the science-based learning from the community stance.

Olakolu, (2012) examined the application of Yorùbá oral traditions such as music, poem, song, riddles, folklore in transforming and re-orientating people for the holistic national growth and development. The study condemned the higher preference placed on the foreign language as sole medium of teaching-learning in most of the African countries and concluded that all hands must be on deck to see to the effective incorporation of teaching of African oral tradition into school curriculum with a view to instill in the students virtues of honesty, modesty, hardworking, and logical reasoning for future purposes. Also, Kaya and Seleti (2013) while examining African indigenous knowledge system and relevance of higher education observed that policy implementation, shortage of qualified staff to teach and supervise indigenous

knowledge system (IKS) researches, and lack of relevant teaching and learning materials as challenges mitigating the effective integration of IKS in most of the higher schools in Africa. Parts of the recommendations offered by the researchers, believing would minimize the identified bottleneck of indigenous knowledge system in providing effective inclusive higher education, are application of aggressive marketing, awareness campaigns on the need for teaching, learning and community engagement of IKS in African, and extension of the study on IKS to cover both humanities and social sciences. However, the study concluded that only the incorporation of the holistic and community-based nature of IKS that ensure efficient connectivity between the graduate learning and living can bring higher education more nearer to the developmental challenges facing students' immediate communities. Doing this will not only reduce the learning from being too academic/theory but improve it, by placing more emphasis on practice which will actually make the core courses of higher education participatory and guarantee the students an African indigenous theory-based knowledge.

In her study, Fasehun (2014) examined how the principles of African traditional education could be integrated into teacher educations. Following the principle of functionalism, communalism, perennialism, and holism, the study admonished for a fully integration and harmonization of formal education with tradition education so that both teachers and learners could be well grounded in all that entails teaching-learning. The study concluded that application of African folklore in teacher education will have a great influence on the teacher's thinking and behaviour as they perform diverse functions which in turn, be transmitted to students to refine and sharpen their inborn traits.

Mawere (2015) discussed the role of IKS in Education with a specific focus on how indigenous knowledge as an element of intangible heritage can and should act as valuable asset for promoting teaching-learning in African public education. The study spelt out some of the divergent areas between the conventional science/modern knowledge and the indigenous knowledge. Mawere opined that the IKS as form of learning drawn from the existing societal wisdom and other resources with the African people's sense of creativity, should be able to act as tool for de-racialise African educational system, promote innovative thinking as it provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities, and help the students to evaluate the effectiveness of conventional science and indigenous knowledge. And much more, motivate and generate interest in learners. The study opined that so far the indigenous knowledge has a great privilege to contribute meaningfully to the learning process of African children, the African intellectuals need to re-examine the objective and method of traditional education on how its incorporation into school curricular would help students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Meanwhile, if the indigenous knowledge is not fully integrate into the mainstream discourse, the patriotic pan African ideals of collectivism, self-sustaining, and economy growth may be a mirage in most of the African countries.

It is evident from the findings and the conclusion of the studies reviewed above that, exploration of indigenous knowledge system specifically through oral traditions, folklore, health and healing systems, and agricultural system would in no measure have a significant invaluable impacts on the cognitive and the intellectual build-ups of the school children, which in turn offers them an holistic learning needed for personal and career efficiency. This present study is similar to the most of the reviewed literature above on the role of indigenous knowledge in education. However, this study increases its scope by specifically examining the use and impact of indigenous knowledge system through oral literature in promoting critical thinking and problem-solve skills in the classroom with a view to achieving education transformation.

Theoretical Framework: Functional Approach to Communication

The functional approach to communication is adopted theoretical framework for this study. Hence, the analysis and discussion presented in this study follow the tenets of this theory, which opines that communication serves pragmatic function and should be employed based on its intent in achieving designed purposes. This approach relies and believes on the functionality of language as a means of communication

focusing on its role in achieving desired results in various discourse settings. Michael Halliday (1978, 1986, 2014), Roman Jakobson (1960), and Charles Berger (2014) are few of the functionalists that have explored the rationale of the functionalism in the various studies. The theory pay attention to the role plays by oral literature in any given culture in the preservation of social and educational institution. This theory is therefore, chosen in this study in view to expressively accounting for effectiveness of verbal art / oral literature as a form of communicating information which, could in turn instill and inculcate critical thinking and problem-solving skillfulness in young children even before their school age, using Yorùbá oral literature as case study.

In his view, William Bascom (1965) considers oral literature as creative composition of dynamic, integrated, and central components of the culture. However, one needs to bear in mind that some of the discourse roles of the verbal arts are discovered when they are put into use. For example, proverbs help settle legal decisions, riddles sharpen wits, myths validate conduct, and satirical songs release pent-up hostilities while poems entrench various philosophical ideas (Akinmade, 2005). With this background, it is researcher's belief that when both text and content meaning of some of the oral literatures (as source of indigenous knowledge system) are examined, we would have opportunity in appreciating their immense contributions in transforming the way and medium of imparting learning unto young children in Africa society. In view of the importance of oral arts in Africa- society, the next section presents a brief clarification among culture, language, and literature in inculcating logical reasoning and problem-solving dexterity for educational transformation in the contemporary society.

Conceptual clarifications

Arguments have been advanced by scholars on the relationship between language and culture. While some believe that language is part of culture, others are of the opinion that it is a distinct entity (Olaoye 2007). Meaning that, language is a standalone entity. Meanwhile, it is unanimous believed that language is very essential as vital instrument with which culture is expressed. The language is not only seen as the transmitter of culture but also as a means through which the culture is reflected during interaction. In other words, language is indispensable and inseparable to all human knowledge especially education. The essentiality of language, is however, achieve in its ability to register one's thought in any interactive discourse. Literature is a work of art and language is its medium. The language of literature is imaginatively described both human and other phenomena characteristics. Predominately, language of literature is specially employed for aesthetic, entertainment and educational purposes. Language and literature could be seen as vehicle with which the cultural nuances of a particular society are imbibed unto the people. Indigenous literature concretes crops of literary works originally conceived and produced locally. However, majority of these indigenous literatures are drawn and built from observable relationship and existing experiences in transforming society. Transformation is a process or act of changing an existing system from one focusing in inputs to one focused on outputs. With this background, education reform refers to restructuring of some of the existing education policies and programs for education to perform its expected role in national development. One of the factors contributing to the knowledge decadency among African youth is the speaker's intuition in placing foreign resources at higher preference above the indigenous ones. The work presses forward the view of many patriotic Africans whose views have been vehemently proclaimed a view for the continents to be transformed and experience development; stressing the idea that both natural and cultural embedded knowledge must be empowered and maximally used in all communication levels. Thus, it is believed that African country cannot be transformed either educationally or technologically without proper and efficient utilization and application of her native resources in educating its youth.

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative content analysis. It was carried out through an interpretive design. The data for the

study were collected from the existing documents and electronic database through a purposive sampling technique. Yorùbá oral traditions, songs, children poem, riddles, philosophical expressions, and counting system formed the study population. In all, 7 samples of Yorùbá oral contents representing the study population were analyzed. Instead of word –to-word translation, a content interpretation of the data was done from the source language (Yorùbá) to the operational language (English). This is done to safeguard and preserve both the semantic and the functionally role of the selected data. The data were subjected to content analysis following the Functional approach to Communication.

Indigenous Knowledge System as a Universal Remedy for Educational Transformation

The ambition of every nation is to achieve development and transformation educational goals. Development relates to the changes that occur in the education system over the period of time while transformation establishes complete change in the country's educational system, usually with an improved appearance or usefulness. As earlier pointed out in this work, transformation means to reform, refocus, redesign, regenerate, reorganize and reposition institutions, attitudes structures, processes policies and programmes in the larger and longer- term interest of the majority in the society. Transformation requires courage, strength focus and commitment (Olakolu, 2012). Considering the imparts of knowledge gained from indigenous educational on the actualization of the development desired in African continent, educational transformation is necessary required and need be projected using efficient resources that would bring developmental ideas and perspective in shaping people's mind right from tender age and consequently, building virile nation in each of the continents.

Evidently on the universal orientation of languages in the world, it is believed that every society has artistic statements that are used in representing their daily life experiences. Nigeria is a country of many indigenous languages (Igboanusi 2005, Owolabi 2006, Bamgbose 2007, & Adiele 2021). Being one of the major speaking indigenous languages in Nigeria, Yorùbá language is not an exception because there are various artistic expressions in passing words of wisdom, knowledge and life experiences, as it occurs from one generation to another. Among of these literatures are proverbial sayings, figurative expressions, idioms, songs, poems, riddles and folktales. The most efficient one that is used as 'catch them young' is the children literature. These are poems for children. Consider the following lines of moonlight song:

Text 1

<i>Eni bí ení lòmọdé n kawọ</i>	<i>'One by one, a child counts</i>
<i>money Èjì bí, èjì làgbà n tayò</i>	<i>Two by two, elders play game</i>
<i>Èta bí èta ẹ jẹ ká tara wa lórẹ</i>	<i>Three by three, let us exchange gifts</i>
<i>Èrin bí èrin ẹni tó rinni làá rín</i>	<i>Four by four, we laugh according to persona choice</i>
<i>Àrún bí àrún ọba máa ẹ wa lárungún</i>	<i>Five by five, may God not turn us to a destroyer</i>
<i>Èfà bí èfà, ẹ jẹ ka fara wa mọra</i>	<i>Six by six, let us embrace one another</i>
<i>Èje bí èje, olúgbọn ẹsorò ó kije</i>	<i>Seven by seven Olúgbọn performed sacrifice and he lives</i>
<i>Èjọ bí èjọ ẹni bíni là á jọ</i>	<i>Eight by eight, we usually resemble our parents</i>
<i>Èsán bí èsán ọba jáyé ó san</i>	<i>Nine by nine, may God bless us</i>

Èwá bí èwá ọba má wàhàlà wa.

Ten by ten, may we not experience God's wrath'

(Adapted from Raji, 2013- 301)

The poem above tactically teaches indigenous counting system alongside some indispensable moral etiquette. Each of the lines in the poem intimates people with Yorùbá philosophical view that is pivotal and useful in enhancing people's cognitive reasoning daily. Line (1) preaches patience and orderliness in dealing with people in both private and public gatherings. Line (2) expresses truthfulness. To be truthful means to be reliable and at same time disapprove any form or shape of dubiousness. The popular maxim of '*a truth person enjoys good end*' supports that indigenous teaching. Line (3) emphasizes giving alms and gifts to the needy no matter how little one can avoid. Virtue of law of retribution is incorporated in line (4). The poem line contextually suggests that, whatever a man shows shall be reaped accordingly. Vandalism, hooliganism, thuggery and radicalism are condemned in line (5). All these are perpetual agents of peace disturbance, national resources destroyers as well as policy mutilators. Many people get involved in these acts for personal interests which eventually deter national development and thus, devalue country recognition among allied countries of the world.

With the same spirit, the philosophical content of line (6) praises cooperation among people in the country. Imbibing such acts would promote unity and transparency in the society. Line (7) informs people on the completeness of action, career or job one is engaged with. There is no positive benefit or gain for one who started school or a profession and stop halfway as a result of indolence or other unscrupulous acts. Such behaviour mutates rapid growth of that person and, would definitely affect national average development. This last assertion happens because the country economic growth is measured in terms of average growth of its working citizen. Line (8) charges children to be attentive, watchful, learn and emulate good aspects of their parents' characters. Virtually, all religions opine that one thing that is inevitable in this life is death. The temporarily nature of this life is admonished in line (9). Definitely after all events, the life will come to an end and everybody would be accountable for his or her deeds. The last line urges everybody to always pray for peaceful co-existence among other co-habitants of the world. Urging to always pray against state of unrest such as insecurity, kidnapping, inflation, emergency blood-millionaires, and host of other social-political crisis that are currently experiencing is some African countries today. All these importance and characteristics of indigenous knowledge rooted- oral literature is corroborated with Usman's (2020) belief that oral literature as well as cultures is valuable instruments that need to be revitalized in boosting cohesive society that entrenched common vision and sense of belonging.

From the foregoing, the philosophical thoughts relying on educational reformations are discovered in their ability to determined citizens' behavioral acts towards personal and societal development. Consequently, human manners are measured in relation to mental or unconscious thought; that pre-eroding the mind before the action is eventually presented in the real conscious being. This last assertion stresses that people actions are construed upon their inner thinking that permeates their views on a particular idea. Probably, our mental knowledge assists in the functionality of our conscious being. Going by the philosophical views expressed in the above children's poem, we could see that indigenous poems are very vital resources for restructuring and inculcating good character in young people. A viable minded person is the one that imbibes the good attitude which society accorded and embraced as being worthy of emulation. The above poem and many of its likes are not only for entertainment or aesthetics but also for educational purposes; however effects of knowledge acquired through them are everlasting. Based on that fact, we could say that the educational roles of children's poems outweigh their entertainment functions. This point is supported by Robert (1971) when he says 'Literature is a social phenomenon and the perception of reality through creative imagery. Literature is also concerned with man and his society... as a virile vehicle of human expression.

Apart from children poems, metaphor is another indigenous resource through which children cognitive

knowledge is established. Metaphorical statements are cognitively important in providing hidden similarities between two ideas. Meaning that, they are useful in understanding and experiencing one kind of entity in terms of another. By relating ideas through experiences, general aspects of human cognitive skills are presumably described. Consider sample of Yoruba metaphor below:

Text 2

Ìyá ni Wúrà 'mother is gold'

Baba ni dígi 'father is mirror'

The statements above establish the importance of 'mother' and 'father' in relational term to precious value of *wúrà* 'gold' and *dígi* 'mirror'. The fragility nature of gold and mirror is transferred and equated with the personality of being a mother or father in the society. The used of *wúrà* 'Gold' in the sample (2) above contextual depicts mother while *dígi* 'mirror' connotes father. The content meaning of *wúrà* is transferred to stand in relation with content definition that could be given to mother. Culturally speaking *wúrà* is semantically equated with a very expensive valuable entity that is worthy of possession. It is a treasure that is cherished by everybody. As described by Richard cited in Opefeyitimi (2011), 'metaphorical sayings are used as borrowing between intercourses of thought'. Meanwhile, if the metaphorical expression above is interpreted from that angle of fact, we could say that it enabling description of 'idea of being valuable' in more than one direction. That is, the word 'valuable' is borrowed to established relationship between the two related elements in each of the statements above.

Metaphor usually creates inner imagery that engulf from existing relationship between two concepts. A situation when a language is used in passing information metaphorically, an object or action is described in a terminology proper to another. Olatunji (1984) also observed that metaphor constitutes substitution of one entity for another in some contexts. Consider the sample below:

Text 3:

Iṣé ẹni ni akórọ

Ìwà sù ni agbòn.

(Adapted in Àjànàkú, 1998)

The two elements *akórọ* 'go-to hell' and *agbòn* 'basket' in the sample (3) above denote vehicles that carry the semantic intent of the messages. Both *akórọ* and *agbòn* are farm tools. They are employed metaphorically to depict work and character. As they are used on the farm, bringing wealth and pleasure for farmers, so the hard work and good deeds of people prepare better ground and position for them in future. The logic here is that, our imbibed good deeds would keep and prepare us for better tomorrow.

Furthermore, another veritable resource which can be harnessed in embellishing and supporting argument during oratory interaction, and of which needed in training our youth is proverbs. As asserted by Olujinmi (2012) African proverbs are the wisdom lore of the race. It occurs in verbal communication to serve as social charters, to praise societal virtues and upbraid bad practices. These virtues includes respect for elders, consideration for others, cooperation for others, hard work, reliability, faithfulness and human interdependence. Meanwhile, laziness, tactlessness and uninformed participation in other's people affairs are condemned in proverbs. Consider the following expressions:

Text 4

a. *Iṣé là á ṣe ti a fi le jàrè òsì*

'we work in order to win poverty'

- b. *Iṣé tó lágbára lólẹ̀ n ẹ* ‘The supine does the hardest work’
c. *Iṣé lòògùn iṣé* ‘Work is the antidote to being impoverished’

In the statements 4 (a-c) above, the concept of hardworking is encouraged. They strictly warn and bring to the fore philosophical facts of being entrepreneurial minded. An entrepreneurial person is hoped to be a successful individual while whoever embraces indolence is bound to suffer in the society. Working hard at tender age pays and also helps in becoming a nation- builder. In another saying, Yorùbá proverbs assert that:

Text 5

- a. *Àgbájọwọ̀ là á fí sọyà, ẹ̀nikan kì í jẹ̀ àwa dé.* ‘In unity we stand, divided will fall’
b. *Ọmọ tó mowó wálé nìyá rẹ̀ ó yìn.* ‘A child who brings money is praised by his mother’
c. *Ọwọ̀ ọmọdẹ̀ ò tó pẹpẹ, tàgbàlagbà ò wọ̀ kẹ̀rẹ̀gbẹ̀* ‘The child’s hand does not reach shelf while that of elder does not enter gourd’

The ideology of pursuing productive goals in all sectors is enunciated in the statements above. The proverbial expressions affirm the indispensability of young and old in the community development. They proclaim the need for why the interest of individual should not be conflicting with that of nation but rather be in harmony. Founded on love of one’s country, peoples’ manpower would be useful in social reforms, economy management and political participation. Semantic content of some of the philosophical views grounded in some of African proverbs are essential tools for many professionals such as historians, lawyers, counsels, as well as ambassadors. We now see why the study advance on the functional use of oral resources as tangible resources in reforming education system practically directed towards young peoples’ knowledge.

In addition to the use of proverbial language, another oral tradition through which indigenous knowledge is transferred to the younger generation is local numerical and counting system. As rightly observed by Oyebade (2014) one of the biggest bodies of knowledge that codifies is human cognition and problem solving capabilities. However, the cognitive and intellectual reasoning are largely found in the numbers and counting system of our languages. In order to emphasize the great importance of numbers and counting system in human life, Harrison ((2008) added that ‘an important window to human cognition, problem-solving and adaptation is lost when counting system disappear’. In the world today, the versatility of the computational capabilities of human cognition attests to the fact that there is exciting variety of counting system in Africa. In some of the Africa countries today, most of the young people of university undergraduate age could not successfully count in their language beyond number twenty (20). For instance some of children born of Yoruba parents could hardly read from number one – twenty (1-20):

Text 6

- Ení* ‘one’, *Èjì* ‘two’ *Èta* ‘three’ *Èrin* ‘four’ *Àrín* ‘five’ *Èfà* ‘six’
Èje ‘seven’ *Èjọ* ‘eight’ *Èsán* ‘nine’ *Èwá* ‘ten’;

While attempting to prove being knowledgeable in counting exercise, most children apply pause or stammer intermittently on the course of searching for next number on the line. This is worrisome because it is like parents of such children that would be mandating and compelling their children to choose science – oriented career. A science student without adequate knowledge in numerical system is a failure. Apart from

numerical use of numbers, they are essential tools for quantification. How can a child who barely counts will demonstrate knowledge in differentiating the number meant for identification from ones contextually employed for quantification. Oyebade draws attention to the useful information about the cosmological understanding of the Africa that can be inferred in our counting system relatively to week, months and years. He submits that counting and numeral system of Africa should be explored more thoroughly for human cognition and problem solving capabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The indigenous literature or otherwise being referred to as oratory statements serves as a catalyst of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals. In order to effectively acquire the aforementioned cognitive empowerment, the teaching-learning activities in the society must be properly guided, using practical –oriented resources in imparting desired information that build –up volume of a good person for betterment of the society. For African countries to be at same developmental level with the advanced countries of the world there must be concerted efforts to utilize the knowledge that abound in both indigenous tangible and intangible resources. Hence, the following recommendations are submitted towards transforming African educational system through Indigenous knowledge system.

In pursuing the motive of putting African oral literature into use, the concept of being a person of good character ‘*omólúàbí*’ should be taught directly in schools with applications of indigenous poems, songs and riddles. The reason for this is not farfetched, because many of the literary work of arts provide guides for acceptable behaviour and not only young people but also the old people learn at easy in their various local languages than foreign languages. In consonance with the last recommendation, the inferiority prejudice against African language to English in some African countries must be stopped. African leaders must be eager and stand on their feet to see that their children are exposed to African history, value and tradition. As Isola (2009) pointed out “fear and aspiration as well as the socio- political activities of a particular society is reflected through folktales”. This last submission stresses that, education which is acquired through indigenous knowledge system teaching pedagogy is easily internalized and put use by the people.

It is noteworthy to remind ourselves that the oral literature exemplified in this study represented intangible component facet of African culture that has no physical stand. However, their responsibilities and roles in the sustainability of the tangible cultural resources are concise and decipherable. It is only the intangible aspects of cultural heritage that specifically teach and guide people in determining interest in career and how to attain it. We should stop to tolerate the aggressive literacy colonialism of our education system through English as a medium of instruction instead of language of community. Countries like China and India achieve impressive technology advancement through their language. Their community languages are put first in imparting and educating their children. In essence, we should stop toying with the fact that it is only through indigenous language that knowledge on science and technology can be effectively transmitted. Local materials teach citizens how to understand the world. It informs farmers on suitable methods of farming to adopt at a particular season, gives information about animals and plants, opens the nature of language mnemonics of counting as well as instills moral instruction in people’ minds. Apart from folktales, metaphorical statements empower people with imaginative thinking. It gives people opportunity to examine various qualities of ideas, views, people or things from several angles. In other words, it builds up in people, ability to explore the world to its fullness.

There is need for documentation of African number system gearing towards efficient and adequate learning of linguistic computational skills for the technological advancement of the continent in general. Culture as a way of life includes indigenous unit of measurement. Meanwhile, the unit of measurement has been ascribed as the bedrock of Mathematics. Mathematics as the language of science, describes the relationship between

numbers and other measurable quantities. Sale (2001) submitted that mathematics is used to express simple equation as well as interactions among the smallest particles and the farthest object in the unknown universe. Therefore, a cognate experience and knowledge on the indigenous numerical counting would be of immense benefit and, also contribute to the understanding of cultural nuances and professionalism in Mathematics as a career. This submission corroborates Armstrong (1962) view that ‘inability of present young peoples in African numeral and counting system efficiently may potential erase chapter in the history of Mathematics and the development of human thought’.

Also, finding from previous researcher had even shown that in order to transform education effectively, concerted efforts must gear towards preservation of the tradition and cultural value of the African people in the wave of elision and assimilation across the globe (Akinola, 2014). One major step towards this structuring project is to revive some of intangible aspects of cultural components that are threatened with extinction. Today, the two components of the cultural heritage discussed earlier in this work have not been given adequate attention they require in the curriculum. Taking most of oral literature as resources to managing and transforming education in Nigeria and African at large would preserve cultural rebirth and development of our society.

CONCLUSION

Considering the potentiality of imparting cultural- based knowledge on philosophical learning, the study has achieved in presenting few of the Yoruba oral literatures which could be incorporated in the educational teaching system. Indigenous literature helps to access and intimates emotional aspects of both unconscious and conscious people’s behaviour. It builds –up psychological development and understanding of a child. Through oral resources, young people are exposed to cultural aspects and as a result acquiring new emotional experiences. Going by one of the popular maxims ‘experience is the best teacher’, African oral literatures are psychological research tools for the fact that, they allow psychological thinking and discovery of new ideas that promote constructive views and personal perceptions. Furthermore, the role of education in chosen professional careers could not be underrated. This particular function of education is one of the themes that a renowned educator and African poet elaborate in one of his works. The poem says:

Text 7

‘Dákun múra kí ó tún ara re, bí, òrẹ́ mi

Èkó ni a fí n tún ara ẹni bí lójọ òní

Işé ní í sọ ni dolówó ribiribi

Omọ tí a kọ lẹkòdò tó sì jáfáfá

Tó tẹpá mọşé tó sì níwà rere

Irú wọn ní í di olókíkí nígbèhìn wọn....

‘Please, strive to in-still self-discipline in your self

Today, it is through education that one can stand alone

It is through work one can be rich

A child that is trained and smart

That always works hard and has good characters

It is the one that become popular at the end.’

(Adapted from Oḍunḵo 1961- 49)

Only people that acquire education that is desirable of imparting cognitive knowledge and worth of inculcating ideas, values and integrity could be valued in the society. Apparently, most prominent medium capable of empowering people with philosophical and cognitive leaning is indigenous languages; they are divinely empowered for massive potential in economy, investment, science and technology. To sum this up, effective and proper usage of African languages need be recognized and given more decisive roles in inculcating desired cognitive intents needed by individuals for the betterment of the society at large. It is the duty of our elders and leaders to counsel and train the young people ways to take cognizance and be mindful of the semantic contents of some of the oral poems and put them into use within their immediate community.

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