



## THE IMPACT OF POST-COLONIAL CULTURE AND SELECTED TRADITIONAL PRACTICES ON LIFELONG LEARNING IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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### **Abstract:**

A post-colonial situation like Nigeria cannot entirely be disentangled from its past. Lifelong Learning in Nigeria had been significantly influenced by post-colonialism and selected traditional practices peculiar to indigenous African communities. This is a modest effort at examining the impact of post-colonial culture on policies and practices related to lifelong learning in Nigeria. Attempts are also made to examine the influences of selected traditional practices like: Osu outcast system in eastern Nigeria, the nomadic education in northern Nigeria and the extended family system in western Nigeria. A generic traditional practice among all Nigerians is the celebration of Age and Life characteristic of all cultures in Nigeria. Lifelong learning is in agreement with all cultures in Nigeria as no culture terminates learning that is why life and death are causes of extensive celebration in any culture in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, post-colonial culture, selected traditional practices, contemporary Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

Post-colonialism has a lot of impacts on all facets of life in post-colonial societies. A post-colonial situation like that of Nigeria involved the forceful integration of the culture of the colonialist and the culture of the colonized. It also involved the forceful political integration of communities under one political umbrella. Such a situation often involves tension in all aspects of society. The introduction of western Education into Nigeria involved such a post-colonial environment. There were thus varying levels of acceptance and very high level of diversity on the development of western education in

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post-colonial Nigeria. Western Education was fairly accepted in western and eastern Nigeria with western Nigeria having a little edge over other parts of Nigeria due to earlier presence of missionaries in that part of the country.

Western Education was however accepted with considerable skepticism in northern Nigeria largely because Christian missionaries were the first to introduce and develop western education in Nigeria.

## **2. The Impact of Post-Colonial Culture on Lifelong Learning in Nigeria**

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Nigeria has been greatly influenced by the country's post-colonial past. The acceptance of Lifelong Learning in Nigeria perhaps corresponds with the acceptance of western education. Lifelong Learning is most developed both in concept and practice in western and eastern parts of Nigeria and least developed in northern part of Nigeria. This also corresponds with the development of western education in Nigeria. Recent incidences of Islamic radicalization in north-eastern Nigeria symbolized by the Boko-Haram movement even put a total stigmatization on any form of western education. Lifelong Learning in a post-colonial situation like Nigeria also suffered a very major limitation in acceptability. Lifelong Learning in Nigeria has not allowed any infusion from indigenous Education. Indigenous Education has been the age long traditional system of learning that existed for centuries long before the advent of western civilization. The set back that western education suffered in most post-colonial societies was due to its inability to integrate the very many positive aspects of indigenous education systems extensively documented by (Fafunwa 1974, Sarumi 1999, Osokoya 2003).

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning therefore did not integrate the elaborate systems of passing knowledge and vocational competencies heavily integrated in indigenous educational practices of Africa societies. For illustration among the Yoruba, indigenous education was so established that every member of the society had access to education. Everywhere was classroom in a typical Yoruba society and concept of Learning in Yoruba traditional educational thoughts is indeed from cradle to grave.

The inability of western education to integrate indigenous education with western education created a number of challenges for both the acceptance and development of that form of education. Early emphasis in the introduction of western education was on the acquisition of numeracy and literacy. Lifelong Learning in Nigeria also had this kind of early emphasis. Functional literacy was therefore a bit too late to be introduced as a major part of lifelong learning in Nigeria. An adult who wants to acquire education must have something to show for it. Therefore, the concept of Lifelong Learning without a functional literacy theme may be too hard to sell; this is because an adult has economic and financially related responsibilities.

Post-colonial situation places a lot of burden on Lifelong education in Nigeria. Lack of resources characteristic of most post-colonial societies made all forms of education poorly-funded. When schools are poorly funded, what then is the fate of Adult Education and Lifelong learning?

Post-colonialism involves societies trying to find their feet after many years of economic exploitation and deprivation.

There are clear features of under development in all facets of life in most post-colonial societies. Lifelong Learning has therefore been influenced by this wind of underdevelopment traceable to post-colonial situations.

Political unrest and tension that are common features in Nigeria is a post-colonial development resulting from a situation of forcing many societies that are normally strange bed fellows to come under the same political umbrella. It can be argued that the forceful tension if sustainable attempts are not taken for meaningful integration through consensus networking may have an adverse effect on the country. This is not an attempt to ascribe all the challenges and issues in Nigeria at the doorstep of post-colonialism but an honest submission that Nigeria cannot escape from her past. Some of the very critical issues confronting education and lifelong learning are hang-overs from Nigeria's colonial past and the inability to integrate the very many positive aspects of indigenous education in our policy making and practices in contemporary Adult Education and Lifelong Learning policy making.

### **3. Impact of Selected Traditional Practices on Lifelong Learning in Nigeria**

Some time-tested traditional practices that have existed from time immemorial in pre-colonial Nigeria have tremendous impact on Lifelong learning in Nigeria. These traditional practices such as the extended family system in western Nigeria which is also present in large degrees in other parts of Nigeria has impact on Lifelong Learning. Similarly, the OSU outcast system in eastern Nigeria and nomadism among Fulani/Hausa herdsmen has implications for adult education and Lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the Lifelong Learning implication of extended family system should be explored. The extended family is a system which makes almost everybody to be related to one another. The extended family system created a situation where every member of the society feels secured and catered for. This social support system created a form of universal brotherhood of men and women in most pre-colonial society especially in western Nigeria. A child in a village feels at home anywhere he goes because the extended family system has made all adults his parents and can be corrected with love and passion. Everywhere was classroom in indigenous education among the Yoruba. Therefore, an adult who wants to be involved in Lifelong Learning could leverage on the social support system richly available in the already established extended family set-up. However, the advent of western education has done some damages to extended family tradition because early western educated Africans attempted to play down extended family tradition because of attendant economic implications.

Extended family traditions also put enormous resources at the doorstep of the adult learner. Being ones brother's keeper mentality will encourage any adult learner to keep on learning, information and exchange of ideas are part and parcel of extended family tradition. Nothing makes Adult Education and Lifelong Learning easy to acquire

and develop more than a society where everybody is interested in one's progress and economic advancement. Extended family system has been extensively studied by Sarumi (1999). It was established by him among other things that indigenous education which is part of adult education and lifelong learning is of much utility as it aids relevant instructional skills that are very crucial to national development.

Nomadism among the Fulani herdsmen presents a peculiar situation for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Nigeria. How do you prepare for the education of people who are constantly on the move from one community to the other rearing animals? Until recently, Nigeria could not provide answer to this question. The setting up of a body to take care of the education of nomads in Nigeria (1989) was an attempt to solve this problem. Nomads are in all parts of the world. However, other parts of the world may want to borrow from Nigeria the lessons and challenges of providing education for people almost moving from community to community. It may even be a challenge to convince somebody in such condition to accept the concept of education. It is even complex to realize that not only adults rear animals, children also do. Lifelong Learning could not but have a major challenge to confront when the major beneficiaries are people who are eager to provide grass for their animals than seeking education under the guise of conventional schooling or harder still Lifelong Learning.

Another cultural practice in pre-colonial society in eastern Nigeria is the OSU outcast system which involves the segregation of a group of people or family as belonging to the gods. Such group of people and families are not to have access to anything good in the society. They should not interact with free-borns, they must not intermarry. In short, they are not full members of the society because OSU was a sacrilege to be avoided by everyone. When western education was regarded as bad, OSU people were the ones sent to be educated, when society then accepted western education, OSU were segregated against. In short, any traditional practice that has potential to limit access to education should be discouraged. Access and opportunity are critical issues in policy making in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

The egalitarian culture of eastern Nigeria where everybody has a right to prove himself by what he does has positive influence for the promotion of enterprise and economic progress especially in retail and manufacturing business among eastern Nigerians. Egalitarianism as a major aspect of eastern Nigerian society has intrinsic value for promoting lifelong pursuit of learning and economic challenges. Through hard work, any easterner could become the leader or Igwe of his community. Leadership is not by heredity in most eastern Nigerian societies.

Pursuit of Lifelong Learning and challenges will receive a major boost in such communities. The progress that eastern Nigerians have made in manufacturing and retail business may not be unconnected to the egalitarian structure of their society. The major message is that Adult education and Lifelong Learning could not but be influenced by egalitarianism that draws out the best from men and women by always allowing them to be on the move for progress as long as they could reach the peak exclusively due to their hard work.

### 3. Recommendation

From the foregoing, this paper recommends the total integration of time tested positive practices of indigenous education with the concept and practice of lifelong learning in contemporary Nigerian society. Lifelong Learning should integrate the best in African past in order to map out a sustainable part of progress in contemporary practices.

Another major recommendation is that the negative impact of post-colonialism should be addressed frontally by contemporary Nigerian politicians. It is becoming belated to lay all the problems and challenges of our society at the doorstep of our colonial past. While we accept the limitations of post-colonialism, it is not acceptable to permanently stay where colonialism left Nigeria. Adult Education and Lifelong Learning must outlive post-colonial limitations.

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