



# Transforming African Children Through Inclusive Pre-Colonial Education And Traditional Socialization Process: A Case Study Of Igbo And Yoruba Cultures.

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## Abstract

Much attention has been given to inclusive education with diverse focus on the study as a human right issue channelled towards achieving equal right for all. However, few studies, aimed decolonization, Africanization and re-contextualization of western education for greater relevance and fruitfulness in empowering African children while retaining their culture, philosophies, morals and values. This paper therefore argues that African indigenous knowledge, culture and socialization processes amalgamated in inclusive education should be the pivot of educational focus in Africa as developing countries. The paper is of the stand that for African countries to be well equipped for sustainable development, there is need for a revision of the school curriculum to include African traditional education and socialization processes which will consider the African child's educational needs and diverse environment for sustainable self-actualisation and development. Such Curriculum should be learner centred and community oriented utilizing various methodologies to equip the African Child for a sustainable self-empowerment, retaining African cultures and values for a better African society. The paper adopts the theory of structuralism premised on sociology of literature with reference to both Igbo and Yoruba Cultures of Nigeria to confirm its stand. The methodologies adopted in the study are participatory observational methods and oral interviews as the scholars are indigenous Africans. References are made to online sources, electronic and print media. The findings affirms that for a transformational sustainable development and a conducive environment in Africa, there is need for

an inclusive precolonial education and socialization process in the curriculum for the African child to be well equipped for the future. The paper is therefore suggesting a complete Africanization of education to include African philosophy, culture and norms which will pave way for a more meaningful and productive educational system for future developmental transformation for sustainability and a reduction of social crimes in the society.

## I. Introduction

Pre-colonial Education otherwise known as Indigenous or Traditional Education is the process of informal impartation or handing down of experience from generation to generation while Traditional Socialization Processes are the ways in which children internalise the values and beliefs of their society to become good social beings. It is a process of transmission of a collective culture from generation to generation on the growing children of the society to affect a proper societal belonging. Traditional education and socialization process are both interwoven, sacred, and have strong boundaries in the development of the African child. The parents, siblings, guardian, relatives, or kinsmen, peer-groups and members of the community contribute towards the education and socialization processes of the child, the family, playing the greatest role. Pre-colonial education and socialization processes of grooming the Igbo and Yoruba child had been in practice before the coming of Western education.

During the Pre-colonial days, there was nothing like hunger, diseases were minimised, and death was not common. In a year, there might just be only one death recorded in a ward. Families had



enough from their subsistence farming and were contented with that. However, these days, the African continent is full of enormous crimes. Human beings are killed like chickens for rituals on daily bases; many young children instead of working hard to achieve success, resort to '419', cyber-crimes, terrorism, drug abuse and drug trafficking, prostitution, child sex labour, child and female trafficking, pick pocket, cultism, robbery, kidnapping etc. Those that are not into crime, idle their lives away playing games, listening to music or watching films on either computers, phones and so on at periods when they should be assisting their families in one way or the other. In both rural and urban areas, some under-aged boys and Children smoke hemp and engage in all manners of crimes like rape, and cultism. These days too, people die almost every other day and obituary announcements decorate the walls, houses and trees in both urban and rural areas. Some of the deaths are man-made through crime: people shot by robbers, or killed by cultists, ritual killers, drug dealers, 'one chance' robbers, kidney merchants, kidnappers, and sexually-transmitted diseases (through prostitution). Presently, life is no longer secure in Africa; African communities are no longer safe because of proliferation of crimes. African girls and children are trafficked abroad for sex labour and later become professional prostitutes. Cultists kill their opponents or fellow cultists en-masse, terrorists commit mayhem every now and then (Boko Haram, Shiite, Alshabab) while the Niger Delta militants kidnap, and destroy oil pipelines in Nigeria. It is observed that the victims of most of the crimes committed as mentioned above are African children and youths while the perpetrators are mainly jobless youths and adults because they lacked the proper education that will equip them for future life.

This paper therefore seeks to provide a lasting solutions to curb the numerous crimes in the contemporary African society which the African young Children form the major victims. It examines the mode of traditional or pre-colonial education in Igbo and Yoruba land which include the use of oral literature and other forms of traditional training and socialization processes, their advantages and the causative effects of their neglect on the children of today, the Nigerian society and Africa at large. This paper uses the theory of structuralism premised on the sociology of literature to explicate its stand. The methodologies adopted in this study include the participatory observational method and the use of primary and secondary source books with reference to Igbo and Yoruba oral literatures and traditions.

References were also made to online sources, electronic and print media. The findings show that inclusive pre-colonial education will go a long way to transforming Africa to a crimeless continent and better the lives of the African children. Suggestions were made on how the lives of the contemporary children of Africa can be made to toe the emulative path of their ancestors and live a better life free of crime and be useful to themselves even in the presence of economic downturn for the transformation of Africa.

### **Conceptualization of Pre-colonial Education and Socialization Process**

**Pre-colonial education** is the education given to children before the coming of Western Education and it is the transmission of indigenous knowledge from adult to child. It is given outside the school setting so it is better described as education in the absence of schools, classrooms, syllabus or scheme of work<sup>1</sup>. Its curriculum, methodology, organization and administration are patterned to reflect the beliefs, customs and experiences of the society in which the child lives. This process was integrated intimately with the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life of the Igbo and Yoruba people of Nigeria. The methods of education and socialization pattern in the traditional or oral form were by instruction, emulation, and practice. Such processes take the form of informal education and are aimed at imparting skills, the traditional etiquette, norms, values, culture and the traditional practices on the growing children from generation to generation. The venue of such educational process could be at home, under the tree, by the fireside or bedroom for folk tales, in the playing ground, the market or other places where learning is obvious. There is no formal examination, tests or certificates attached to this form of education but the knowledge is very practical and lifelong. Children trained in this way were rated according to the wisdom, knowledge, achievement or the prowess they exhibited.

**Socialization** however is the process through which a person, from birth through death, is taught the norms, customs, values, and roles of the society in which they live.<sup>2</sup> When a child is born, the child knows nothing about how to talk, eat, cook, dance, farm and work etc as they are done in the society. It is in this troublesome period of childhood that socialization process begins.<sup>3</sup> The Yoruba describe children as the heritage of the society, the harbinger of the future and the sustainer of the society, who must be cared for and adequately socialised to



ensure societal continuity (Akinyemi, 2003; Ogunnaiké and Houser, 2002)

Socialization process serves to incorporate new members into the society so that they can function smoothly. Socialization is in two stages: **Primary Socialization** which takes place from birth through adolescence and is guided by primary care givers, educators, and peers. **Secondary Socialization** continues through one's life especially when one encounters new situations, places, or groups of people whose norms, customs, assumptions, and values may differ from one's own<sup>4</sup>.

The Igbo and Yoruba child is trained to become a social being by his/her observation of the activities of the members of his/her immediate society, which begins, from his/her core family as a child. As soon as a child begins to walk, he/she learns to play with the other children of the family. The child is carried or backed by elder siblings to distant places where they go to play with friends outside their own immediate family. In the evenings, children within a ward gather at their playing ground for moonlight plays. As they play together, they get to know each other better etc. As from the age of eighteen years, they are organised into the age-grade system. Children of particular age group have their own association and socialization activities, which they value highly seriously, and strictly. As an adult, he/she joins some autochthonous associations like the *umunna* (kindred meeting), *umuada* (daughters) association and the *Inyom di* or the *Ndiinyom* (married women) association or the association of friends *which*, they normally take up a name for identification purpose like *OtuOfu Obi* (Unity club), *Otu Obi Nwanne* (Sisterly Heart Association), *Igwebu Ike* (Unity is strength), *Igbo di ero* (an Association of Wise Igbo People) and so on. At the above various levels of association and integration, the Igbo child is perfectly socialized into the Igbo society with a healthy competitive spirit to always measure up with his age mates in terms of achievements, knowledge, prowess and accumulation of wealth. In Yoruba culture, the general name for both males and females are called *Omoile* (All the men and women in the same family settings). The males are called *Okunrin Ile*, while the females are called *Obirin Ile*. Their age grade are identified as *Egbe*.

Pre-colonial education and socialization process are interwoven because they have strong boundaries in the development of the children of a society from childhood to death from generation to generation. In the Igbo and Yoruba societies of Nigeria which are societies in Africa, the parents, siblings, guardian, relations or kinsmen, peer

groups and members of a community contribute in one way or the other towards the education and socialization process of a child. Within the family setting, the mother is more responsible for the training of her female children while the father is more responsible for the training of the male children but the mother of a child whether male or female is blamed mostly when a child misbehaves or becomes a social misfit. Such a child is asked the question in Igbo "*Nnegi o zukwaragiazu?* (Did your mother train you at all?), in Yoruba, the child will be referred to as *Abiiko* or *Akoigba*, that is, the child is not trained or he/she does not accept the training.

Both Igbo and Yoruba believe that ("*nwabunwaoha*") ("*enikan lo nbimo, gbogboeeyan lolonto*") "a child belongs to the public" meaning that children are not created for their parents only but could be of use to anybody. As result of this belief, both Igbo and Yoruba believe that everybody should be involved in the training of a child to make him useful. In this way, a child who misbehaved could be flogged' or punished by any elder around with or without the permission of the child's biological parents and this will be accepted in the community and members of the child's family. Then, growing children were always afraid of not only their parents but the elderly ones around them as punishment could come from anybody for any offence committed. Punishments for serious offence were done by mob action against the offender and the biological parents were not allowed to interfere or try to save a criminal or an offender. Those days, parents quickly disgraced their children who are into crime publicly. However, in those days, crimes or evil no matter how small, were never tolerated either by parents or by the community; laziness was not acceptable and acts of moral laxity was treated publicly with disdain. Children then were forced by the culture to live righteous life and abhor criminal activities.

### Forms of Igbo and Yoruba Pre-Colonial/Traditional Education and Socialization of the Child as Exemplified in Igbo and Yoruba Literatures

Here, the various types of education and socialization offered to the child are discussed under the following headings and are exemplified from experiences of children in Igbo and Yoruba literatures.

#### Education by Parents

Both parents of an Igbo and Yoruba child jointly combine efforts to impart the following on the child; how to live together with others in love and



peace, how to tell the truth, work hard and earn a honest and legit living and be respectful, how to help and support others, the abominations of the society, and other aspects of the Igbo and Yoruba culture respectively. They also make decisions on the welfare of the child: what vocational education to receive, and who to marry at adulthood. The mother of a family is responsible for the training of her children more especially their daughters because it is believed that the father is always out in search of work with which to fend for his family.<sup>5</sup> She teaches them how to greet respectfully, how to weed the farm, respect elders, cook, eat with good manners, be clean both internally and outwardly, shop for the family, sit properly without exposing their private parts ( for the females), dress and talk properly, nurse and take care of babies (females), and how to sweep and take care of the home.

The Igbo traditional method of parents educating a child is exemplified in *Ugomma*<sup>6</sup>, MaaziObinna and Enyidiya his wife joined hands in the training of their daughter Ugomma. Enyidiya checks her movements, leaves orders for her while the husband also helps her to monitor the child. In Yoruba culture, *baba* and *mama* with all the family members and the community join together to train the child. They scold her when the time arises and advise the mother to pay more attention to her daughter and her activities. The above method of education of the child is exemplified in *Ezinne*<sup>7</sup> in Igbo culture where Ezinne the first wife of the family teaches both her own children and Oreonu second wife's children how to do house chores, farm, and how to live in peace with others. In Yoruba culture, it is usually the *Iyaale* the first wife in a polygamous family that teaches the children and the other co-wives listen to her instructions. The children follow their parents to the farm to weed and harvest their crops.

### Education by Siblings

From the siblings, the child learns how to serve the parents food, respect the parents, attend errands, sweep and clean the house, wash clothes, fetch water from the stream, fetch firewood, wash dishes, carry away the family refuse bins, and care of the younger ones. These the child learns by watching the elder siblings do. They also teach them how to play safely during the moonlight plays or during their recreational periods.

In the same way, in *OtuMkpisjaka*<sup>8</sup>, Obiageli is the younger sister of Nwaamaka and the daughter of Mr. Ukooha. Her parents send her on errands. She attends but being a notorious and

morally-loose girl; she has many boyfriends even at the early secondary school years. Her sister Nwaamaka and Chikwe her elder brother keep a very watchful eye over her weird life and immoral relationship with boys. They report her cases to their parents who also react towards such reports by punishing Obiageli. As a result of the state of the parent's poverty level, Nwaamaka takes to trading. She pays Obiageli's school fees and advises her wisely as her elder sister because she believes that if Obiageli becomes successful in life, it will be for the good of the entire family. Both Nwaamaka and Chikwe protected her and guided her to live a descent life as they are her elder siblings. In Yoruba culture, *Akobi* (*first child*) is very important and can act in place of the parents. There is a saying that "*Esiniwajuniteyinnwosare*", that means the horse at the back is always looking at the good example in the front to run well. The parents in Yoruba culture always make sure that the first child either male or female shows good example to others following him or her. The first child can punish the younger siblings for any bad conduct in the absence of their parents.

### Education by Communal Efforts

The Igbo and Yoruba worldview and belief is that everybody should take part in the raising of a child because nobody knows who the child would be useful to in future. The above world view is depicted in the names their children bear: *Nwaoha* (a community child), *Adaoha* (a community's daughter), *Onyoha* (a community's spokes man), *Nwaanamuruoha* (a child that is born for the public), *Onyemaechi* (who knows Tomorrow) and so on. The Igbo also have some sayings and proverbs, which support the need for members of a community to help in the training of a child: it is said that "*O bughiotuonyenwenwa*" (a child does not belong to only one person), "*Nwabunwaoha*" (a child belongs to the community), "*Nwadijima, o dirjohanaeze*". If a child is good, it is for the good of the entire community) "*Okenwabunwa a naamuruoha*" (A very important personality or child is born for the good of the community). The community members, with the Igbo and Yoruba worldview that a child is a public possession also have the following obligations to carry out in the grooming of a child within their community. With the above notion, neighbours who observe that a child is disrespectful to the parents join hands with the parents of the child to discipline him/her. People could gather around the child, hold him/her as others give him/her strokes of the cane. Children in the neighbourhood would compose a song in the





child's name to ridicule him/her publicly. At any time the child passed by the children of the street,

they sang the song and follow him to disgrace him/her. One of such songs goes this way:

*Obinna*..... *O tibunneya* (Obinna .....beats the mother)  
*Obinna*..... *O tibunneya* (Obinna .....beats the mother)  
*Obinna*..... *O tibunneya* (Obinna .....beats the mother)  
*Obinna*..... *O tibunneya* (Obinna .....beats the mother)

*Nwajoo*.....*O tibunneya* (Obinna .....beats the mother)  
Repeat severally.

### Apprenticeship

The Igboand Yoruba parents can also educate their children by apprenticeship or by allowing the child to be brought up in another family which they feel is better financially. This is called *igbaodibo* or *igbaboiboi*. *Boiboi* is a borrowed word from 'my boy' that is the name some masters call their boys or apprentices or *omoodo* or *omoekose* in Yoruba culture. From such training, the child learns the way of life of the higher class or their business in order to bring a change for better in his or her own home.

In *Ajo Obi*<sup>9</sup>, the housemaid and maiden (*omoodo* in Yoruba), Oti and Orié carry out the house chores with Orié taking care of their daughter Adamma. They live with the rich and learn from them while helping the rich with house chores. Ezinwanne and her brother live with Makuachukwu in *Makuachukwu*.<sup>10</sup> They help Makuachukwu and her husband in keeping their homes and as well in taking care of their children. As medical doctors, they compensated the children by training them in both secondary and tertiary education. In *AkwaNwa*<sup>11</sup>, Ugaá poor boy serves king Akujobi, runs errands for him, lives in the palace with the king and is expected to grow to maturity and have his own family.

**Physical Training:** The Igboand Yoruba child at early age joins his/her peer group in some physical activities as they play together. Such activities could be: wrestling (which is competitive and through which a community's warrior is chosen), dancing, acting drama, somersaulting, jumping, swinging or running. They are not taught the techniques of carrying out these activities but acquire such experiences by observing the elderly ones do so. Every Igbo child discovers his limbs and in no time he also discovers how to use them.<sup>12</sup> It is a natural way of development in which the physical environment, no matter how limiting, challenges the child to try out new things. Some of the activities they carry out which are really exercising are as follows: *Ikpooga* (clapping as they count numbers and throw out their legs inter

changeably in order to win the game), *igwummiri* (running around in the rain), *Kpukpunkpogele* (a type of singing, dancing and clapping of hands in a peculiar pattern for that purpose alone), *Onyeelelaanyana-azu* (A type of playful activity which involves instructions that nobody should look back and a punishment always accompanies any default. The punishment being that the first person running around others who are sited in a circle like pattern drops the fresh leaves in his hands on the defaulters side and sits down amongst the others while the defaulter picks the leaves and starts to run round the others singing: *Onyeeleanyanazu* (let no body look behind), while others respond by singing: *Mmonwuanyina-agan'azu o* (our masquerade is walking behind us). Another traditional activity is that of competitive picking of leaves and the one who picks the leaf is chased around by the one who lost and as soon as the winner is caught, they return to the venue for other groups to pick their own leaves. In Yoruba culture, Children both males and females play together in the afternoon by playing *Ayo olopon*, *arintita*, in the evening, they do *amudesiin* in which they hide something in somebody's hand which he or she must not disclose to anybody, they *twerk* (dance to popular music involving thrusting hip movements and a low squatting stance). They also do "*Eke or Idi*" (a competitive wrestling through which a community's warrior is chosen).

Playful activities as mentioned above teach them to obey instructions given, learn the counting system and develop their mental capability.

### Moral Education

The Igboand Yoruba child acquires moral education from the observation of events happening in the society. Act of immorality amongst them, is reported immediately to the elders who then caution the child concerned. Any stealing act, rape, murder, prostitution, etc are treated with much seriousness and punishment could be banishment, killing, public flogging, burning of family house or public ridicule with chants formed in the offenders



name etc. In Yoruba culture for example, somebody can be banished from a community for committing an offense with his whole family, his house can be burnt, his head can even be cut for making sacrifice under the Ogun tree to serve as deterrent to others. Chants are also used to teach the children what constitutes the abomination of the community. For instance, in Anambra state, a song goes this way:

*NnyaNwogbeNnyaNwogbeNnyaNwogbeNnya*

*Nnya*

*Res: Ee – NnyaNwogbe*

*Ifunugoananwaanyina – egbuakwuna – aburonso*

*Res: Ee – NnyaNwogbe*

*Ifunugoanaonyeozona – ezuohina – aburonso*

*Res: Ee – NnyaNwogbe.*

*Ifunugoananwannelurunwannena – aburonso*

*Ee – NnyaNwogbe*

*Ifunugoananwatanaetinneyaaburonso?*

*Ee – NnyaNwogbe.*

*NnyaNwogbeNnyaNwaogbeNnyaNwaogbeNnyaNn*  
*ya*

*EeNnyaNwogbe*

Have you ever seen a land where women cut palm trees that it is not an abomination?

*EeNnyaNwogbe*

Have you ever seen a land where titled men steal that it is not an abomination?

*EeNnyaNwogbe*

Have you ever seen a land where a relative marries a relative and it is not an abomination?

*EeNnyaNwogbe*

Have you ever seen a land where a child beats up his/her mother and it is not an abomination?

*Ee – nnyaNwogbe*

As they sing such songs they are reminded of the taboos and the abominations of the land and such songs warn the children not to partake in such acts.

In Igbo and Yoruba cultures, certain offences or acts of immorality are punished publicly to create fear in others so that they would avoid such acts. A person, who steals and is caught, is made to carry the item stolen on the head or the item is hung on his neck as people drag him /her around town raining stones on him until he dies or he is banished from the town. Such public ridicule serves as a deterrent to others. A child who wants to steal remembers that it may earn him death, public ridicule or banishment. He also remembers the love, warmth and affection, which he receives from his parents, siblings and relatives, which he may lose if he steals; he then decides not to lose them by keeping away from stealing.

### Character Training

Everyone in the home, in the village and in the entire community helps the Igboand Yoruba child in building up a good character. They help to make the child learn how to be truthful, helpful to the parents and others, socially brave, humble, have stamina and be of irreproachable conduct. A child, who farts in the midst of other children and fails to own up, is fished out traditionally either by the children smelling the buttocks of every one of them. With this, the culprit is found and is carried away with humiliating song e.g *Tufuenunwaarurualaooo, echiechiamutaozo* - throw away the evil child, tomorrow, tomorrow another will be born (*Sing repeatedly*). With the song the child is playfully thrown out of their midst and dropped by the bush side, though he/she runs back to join them, the humiliation is noted with the lesson that he/her should not fart in the public. In Yoruba culture, such child is referred to as “*Oloorun*” and will be sent out from the group to return when the smell has vanished.

Secondly, in Igbo culture, the children may appoint a play diviner amongst them. The diviner pins up a broom stick under his lower jaw and goes round all the children present singing ‘*Mkpisidaan’azuonyenyuruahu a, nkpisi a, choputara m onyenyuruahu a*’ (This broom stick fall behind whomever polluted this air, this broom stick fish out on the person that polluted this air). Whoever the broomstick falls at his or her back is usually the culprit and he is usually punished by either chasing him out of their midst or by carrying him playfully to a nearby bush. Such group punishment or sanctions against certain unwanted behaviour though playfully acted, teach the children not to repeat or partake in such actions, as they are list desired.

In Igbo and Yoruba culture, parents and relative attach much importance to the way a child behaves, as they believe that a good character plays a very great role towards the success of a child in life. Both culture can endure the absence of any other aspect of education in a child as long as the child possesses a good character but the absence of good character on the part of an individual is the most shameful thing that he can inflict such on his own immediate and extended families.

Lessons gathered from folktales also contribute effectively in the development of a good character in a child. The punishments, evil that befall bad characters in some folktales, teach the children to refrain from the acts that lead the



characters into such a situation. Some of such folktales are:

*Mama m ga – eri---* Mother, I will eat (A story of a greedy child who makes so much demand of any food he/she sees and how the child dies of diarrhoea) another is the story of *Opi echefurun'ugbo* (The forgotten flute in the farm). This is a story about a good and a well behaved boy who forgot his flute in the farm, goes to fetch it, meets some spirits playing with it, welcomes them and teaches them how to play it and he is rewarded with the gift of an egg which he broke and found different kinds of riches, many wives, cars, money etc. His half-brother that is badly behaved and brought up by a wicked co-wife drops his flute in the farm like his half-brother did. When he goes to fetch the flute, he meets some spirits, approaches them with bad manners and abuses them. The spirits unhappy with him, give him a bad egg which when broken, displays snakes, scorpions, lions and other wild animals instead of riches and the animals devoured the wicked boy and his wicked mother. There are so many of such stories, which the Igbo children learn from. *Joke je Dundugbagbeadais* the story of a girl that ate fried yam to the extent that she forgot the cutlass she took to the farm. She had to go back to the farm to pick the cutlass after reaching the house. That was a punishment for her not to be a glutton next time.

### Intellectual Training

The Igbo and Yoruba proverbs, riddles and jokes are used to create in the Igbo and Yoruba growing girl child the ability to think or meditate deeply and be able to conceptualise. They are used to hide a saying from the ordinary meaning thereby giving the child the opportunity to think, analyse the saying and reach the real meaning. Such mental exercises develop the thinking capability of the Igbo and Yoruba children. Furthermore, the Igbo and Yoruba also have some folktales, which leave the children in a dilemma of actions. Such stories end up with many options, which need a serious thought before the best option is found.

### Proverbs Used to Groom Children Intellectually

Here are some examples of the proverbs used to increase the intellectual development of an Igbo and Yoruba growing child.

#### Proverbs on Child(Nwata) Education

There are uncountable numbers of proverbs used to train the Igbo children. The following are some of the proverbs:

1. *'Aka alaikperealakanwaehijianunneyaara'*.

**Lit:** The hand on the ground the knees on the ground that is how the calf sucks its mother's breast.

**Phil:** It is with obedience and humility that a child gets something from the parents, superior or the elders meaning that a child must be obedient to succeed.

2. *'Nwatana-elughielu, gbaaele, eleawuoya, wuogebeya'* (Anambra dialect).

**Lit:** If an inexperienced lad tries to shoot a hare, the hare will jump over both the lad and his gun.

**Phil:** One should wait for a right time for an action, if not he will not succeed in the activity or knowledge is necessary before practice can be successful.

3. *Nwatakwochapu aka ya, o sorondjezeriehe'. (ii) 'Nwatakwo aka o soroogaranyarienri'. (iii) 'Nwatakwo pu aka, yanaezeerikoṣṣri'.*

**Lit:** When a child washes his /her hands clean, he dines with the rich (*Ogaranya*) or the king (*eze*).

**Phil:** No matter how young one is, if he/she works hard and excels in life, he/she will be honoured as an elder or the rich or kings.

**Note:** Lit = literal meaning. Phil= philosophical meaning

### Examples of Yoruba Proverbs on Education (Literary and Philosophical meaning:

1. *Ile la tinkoeso rode*

**Lit:** Whatever one is doing at home will follow him or her to anywhere in the future

**Phil:** The type of training a child acquires from his/her parents from childhood will eventually pave way for him/her in the future

2. *A peko to jeun, koni je ibaje*

**Lit:** When a child waits patiently for the mother to finish cooking, the child will definitely eat the best food

**Phil:** This proverb is teaching patience in children, teaching them to wait for their time to do things and that they should not be in a hurry in life pursuit.

3. *Omotikobako, yioḡbeleti a bako ta*

**Lit:** If a parent refuses to train his/her child and he/she is building a house, the child will end up selling the house because he/she lacks training

**Phil:** Children should be trained appropriately at a tender age, so that when the child grows up, he/she will be useful for himself/herself. The child will not end up to be a criminal who will sell the father's house.

### Vocational Training

Vocational Training was basically a job-oriented training through apprenticeship. It prepared both



Igboand Yoruba children to face the realities of life through;

(1)**Agriculture:**The mothers teach the girl children how to plant seedlings appropriately, how to weed the farm and how to harvest them. Parents teach their children how to decipher a fertile land and a non-fertile land and the particular period for planting what. The girl child is made to understand that both cassava and cocoyam, and vegetable planting and carrying home harvested food are reservations for the female folk while yam plantation, cleaning and burning of the bush for farming activities and making of mounds are reservations for the male folk. The girl-child is given some seedlings to practice with and is given a small portion of land to plant the seedlings under the observation of the mother.

Other agricultural activities the child is taught are: fishing, cattle rearing and animal husbandry, wine tapping and rearing of domestic animals like chicken, gardening and other allied activities. The boys also engaged in such activities as archery, tree climbing and (palm tree climbing and harvesting).

(2)**Trades and Craft:** The child is taught how to weave baskets and cloths for these areas where cloth-weaving is practised like in Akwaete and Nsukka areas of Igbo land. Other activities in both Yoruba and Igbo land that children are exposed to are: hair plaiting, salt making, pot making, smiting, hunting, sculpturing, trading in all kinds of merchandise, carving, weaving, drumming, soap-making, dress-making, mat-making, body decoration and painting, dyeing, co-operative banking (Ajo or Esusu), food-selling and a host of other trades and crafts.

Certain trades and crafts owned by families are regarded as sacred and are passed from generation to generation till even today.

(3)**Profession:** The Igboand Yoruba child was introduced to some roles or professions like traditional medicine (awosise), nursing (ijiime), catering, and sewing and laundry activities. Most of these activities are aimed at preparing the child to be a good man, husband, son, and house wife, mother and daughter or sister in-law in future. The profession of (ijiime or Awosise) is not open for every woman/man except for those who have undergone the apprenticeship or those who are naturally gifted.

Tattooing was a special profession which the Umudioka people of Igbo land were specialists. Both their boys and girls are trained in the art and later become professionals and they are invited to many parts of the land for the purpose especially

when individuals are to receive titles' of 'igbuichi' (a title received during which the titled person body is tattooed in particular designs. Yoruba tattooing specialists are called "Onikola" They go from one place to the other to inscribe different types of tribal marks on the faces and bodies of people from one Yoruba town to another and they train their children and other young ones this art.

### Cultural Training

Culture being an embracing and heterogeneous concept, encompasses every aspect of a man's life and experiences. The Igboand Yoruba children learn their ways of life, their belief system, religion and worship pattern, food items and how they are prepared and eaten, dance and dance patterns music and how the traditional instruments are produced and used, the performance of certain festivals and ceremonies from either their parents, siblings and the members of the entire community. The children also are trained to master the language through songs, poems, riddles and jokes and tongue twisters. They are trained to master the art of oration by listening to adult orators in the act especially during family meetings, association meetings, and age grade meetings or at the village assembly.

### Advantages of Pre-colonial

#### Education and Socialization Processes

Though there are many disadvantages associated with pre-colonial or indigenous education and socialization process of the child which includes the dependence on power of people's memories to facilitate the retention and transmission of all learned ideas to future generations. Moreover memory can fail, and in the event of death of a custodian of some useful information or skill, all was lost and other disadvantages. The truth remains that we cannot but agree that there are also some advantages that accompany this form of education. Here are some of the advantages of pre-colonial education and socialization processes.

### Acquisition of skills.

Pre-colonial education and socialization process of the Igboand Yoruba expose their children to some utilitarian skills acquisition that even at young age; they are already contributing to the economic growth of their individual families, immediate community and the society at large. For instance, the blacksmith's child assists the father in his shop and, their production is increased meaning more income to the family. The farmer's child helps to make the farm work easier for the parents, that instead of the family producing 100 tubers of





yam per annum, they now produce 150 tubers. In fact, it was for this reason majorly that most men those days married many wives and had many children that it became the bases for determining the extent of a man's wealth.

### **Sufficient Supply of Food Items**

In the pre-colonial period, every family was involved in the cultivation and production of food for their families' sustenance. Children, having been taught how to farm, combined efforts with other family members to boost agriculture. Every family had enough to eat so there was no room for any form of lack. Few of the items lacked were bought after the sale of their farm produce formerly through trade by barter and later, when the use of money (owo, ego ayoro was introduced), by exchange of money.

### **Less Crimes**

Pre-colonial education and socialization process of the Igbo and Yoruba gave no room for crime. Rarely were there crimes and those who committed crimes were easily identified and severely publicly punished. Punishment for bad cases ended by death and jungle justice: some were buried alive, hanged, thrown into evil forests to be devoured by wild animals or are made to appear naked before the public in their market square on their market days etc. People dreaded crime because of their consequences.

### **Good Citizenship**

Pre-colonial education stresses good citizenship. Children are taught the duties of the individual to his family and immediate community. At particular ages, there are some expectations and responsibilities demanded on the child. The child is deemed irresponsible if he is not able to serve those purposes so every child in order to be recognised in the society makes sure that he/she meets up with the demands of the society. They often equated their achievements to those of their age mates and did their best to achieve economically, politically, socially, vocationally or religiously.

### **Lack of Unemployment**

In this form of education, much emphasis was placed on vocational training aimed at job orientation. The jobs they were trained in could be agricultural education, trade and crafts and the professions. Agricultural training involved the knowledge of farming, fishing and veterinary science. They are taught how to study the seasons, and weather and know when to plant what and how

to care for planted crops. They were trained in professions like traditional doctors, priests, witch doctors, village chiefs and kings, shrine keepers and so on. Everybody was gainfully engaged in one job or the other. There was no room for idleness, laziness and unemployment as people were trained to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour and participate actively to the development of their families and community.

### **Respect for Elders and Humanity**

Children were offered character training which makes them learn how to respect elders, their peers, chiefs, leaders, the diviners, relatives, and the king. They learn how to greet at particular periods and how to address their greetings to particular people with respect. Women those days were respected than is the case nowadays. There were fewer cases of rape, ritual killing, robbery and other human inflicted crimes. Prostitution was abominable because women treated their bodies with some respect and were reserved and most relationships between the opposite sexes were based on love not money.

## **II. Suggestions**

This paper is of the opinion that the Igbo and Yoruba traditional education due to their agricultural, economic and job-oriented focus should be reviewed and inculcated into the present formal education system by the government of Igbo and Yoruba lands, Nigeria and all other African nations and other stakeholders. This will reduce the number of job seekers and jobless children who some of them are causing a nuisance presently to the African society. However the focus can now extend to other fields of life and not only the stereotyped gender-restricted roles. Those other aspects of development, education and socialization patterns introduced in pre-colonial education which favour the development of the child and increase the child's level of participation as active members of the family and community should not be overlooked but should be emphasized right from their early age.

Families should go back to the farm and general agriculture. Government should make farming compulsory for all children in the primary and secondary schools in Africa. Pupils should be given portions of land in the school where they will be made to cultivate and nurture their crops until they are harvested.

In the tertiary institutions, general agriculture should be taught at all levels whereby a student must acquire a skill or vocation from their



first years in the institution till graduation. Students are made to choose any vocation or skill of his or her interest which forms part of the courses he/she must pass before graduation apart from the students' major academic courses. Wesley University in Ondo, Ondo state has been practicing this perfectly. Their students apart from their academic work are registered under a skill acquisition class housed in the university where they learn and partake in the production and processing of the Universities pure water, or are involved in the Universities poultry business or any other available skill of their choice. Such training is done in a way that before graduation, the students must have acquired one skill or the other perfectly as an additional qualification apart from his/her major course of study.

Crime should be treated with utmost condemnation like the days of old. Offenders should be brought to public ridicule through the media like the case of Evans the robber and Kingpin of kidnapers in Nigeria. Criminal offenders should be taken to their hometowns to let their kinsmen know the crime they committed before final punishment is meted to them. When a death sentence is passed on a criminal, the execution should be done in the criminal's hometown to serve as deterrent to the people of the community and a shame to the family that produced the criminal for other families to take precaution. This is necessary because most criminals hide their nature from their family members and people from their immediate community and as such are respected and regarded as responsible people especially when they have some ill-gotten money to throw about. Africans, especially those in security forces, should stop protecting the image of criminals on the media. Faces of criminals should be shown open to the public in the media just as it is done in the American FOX Television and not covered. With this measure, people will be conscious of their public image and would be made to refrain from crime. The Imo state government has taken to this indigenous method of punishing criminals. Family houses of criminals guilty of kidnapping are demolished no matter the type of building to make the families of kidnapers feel a bite of the pain their child has caused the society and be put to shame for being unable to raise their child well.

Rapist, kidnapers, ritual killers and robbers should be stripped naked on the media like in the pre-colonial period, paraded to their home towns and the place of crime before being jailed for life. African government should refrain from

releasing criminals from jail back to the society. It is for this reason that crime is on the increase. Criminals who committed heinous crimes should be jailed for life with hard labour.

Communities should be encouraged by the government to handle criminals found in their midst by jungle justice or whistleblowing like it has already been put to work by Nigerians. In some parts of Nigeria, robbers, kidnapers, ritual killers are either burnt to death or are stoned to death before the arrival of security officials.

### III. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the mode, method and forms of Igbo and Yoruba traditional education and socialization. It is noted that traditional education and socialization are passed on from generation to generation through apprenticeship, observation, practice and participation. However, some of the advantages and disadvantages with particular attention paid to the fact that traditional education is job oriented and prepares the children to conquer their immediate society. This paper also concludes by stating that in order for Igbo and Yoruba societies and the African nations to maintain their culture and conquer joblessness curb crime and other social evils in the present African society and transform the Children of the continent whom some of them are already engrossed into crimes. Various governments of the African continent should include indigenous education which was the form of education in the pre-colonial period and make it the spring board for the present formal education. The traditional arts and crafts should be introduced into formal education system. Productive agriculture should be made compulsory at all levels of education in Africa meaning that pupils and students should be enforced to begin to practice agriculture at all levels of education. This will help to increase the production of food items in Africa. Fishery, for instance, farming, weaving, and even palm wine tapping and palm fruit cutting and processing, should be part of the present school curricular. Science should be focused on agricultural innovations to improve African traditional practices in the area of agriculture, skills and vocation. In the higher institutions, agricultural science should be part of the compulsory general studies courses after which a student should be forced to display an agricultural product or innovation as part of his final project apart from his academic project. With the above suggestions and conclusion, African Children will be transformed for a better future



while Africa as a continent will be transformed to a better society with less social evils.

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