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# Globalization of Cultural Heritage: Issues, Impacts, and Inevitable Challenges for Nigeria

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## Introduction

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behaviour. It includes the ideas, value, customs and artefacts of a group of people (Schaefer, 2002). Culture is a pattern of human activities and the symbols that give these activities significance. It is what people eat, how they dress, beliefs they hold and activities they engage in. It is the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organisation thus distinguishing people from their neighbours. In Federal Republic of Nigeria (1988), culture comprises material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects.

*The process of expanding culture has been under way for many centuries, but technologies have increased the speed and have also broadened the distribution of cultural elements beyond communities and nations' territorial frontiers.*

However, culture can be transmitted or acquired through information or symbol. Cultural identity is those attributes, behavioural patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms that

distinguish a people from other peoples (Omekwu, 2003). These are passed on laterally or inherited from one generation to another (cultural heritage), or horizontally passed on from one society to another through such agent as globalization. Henslin (2007) sees globalization as “the increased interconnectedness and under dependence of different societies around the world”. He also sees it as the breaking down of national boundaries because of advances in communications, trade and travel.

Today the paradigm is shifting with the new opportunities and challenges created by new technologies. *The message of this paper is therefore to examine;*

- *The emerging issues in the globalization of Nigerian cultural heritage.*
- *The impacts of technologies on the globalization of Nigeria cultural heritage.*
- *The role of libraries in the documentation, presentation and globalization of cultural heritage*
- *And the challenges and suggestions on how these effects may be overcome.*

*Now, what are the: Issues, Impacts, and Emerging challenges?*

## **Contemporary Issues**

**Colonial Legacy:** One of the greatest issues is that Nigeria is a heterogeneous society. Before colonialism, the territory known as Nigeria today was inhabited by different peoples, empires, tribes and kingdoms. These peoples have different cultures, traditions and religion. The colonialists did not consider these divergent issues, but went ahead and welded them together as one country. Until 1977, when the only cultural show was performed in Nigeria (FESTAC) there had never been attempts to nationalize Nigerian cultural heritage. So when we talk or plan for globalization of the heritage it is pertinent to start at home/domestic level before internationalization (i.e. cultural nationalization before cultural globalization).

**Cultural Diversity:** Nigeria is a society with abundant rich cultural heritage that are scattered within the diverse ethnic nationalities. These cultural heritages include language, marriage rites, burial rites, birth rites, dressing, greeting, music, folklore, religion, and other tangible cultural monuments, natural sites and cultural landscapes. Some of these cultures have died due to western cultural influence and therefore needed to be revitalized and uploaded in the net if those who know how they are performed are still alive.

**Information Technologies:** The advent of ICT has forced libraries and librarians to operate with such concepts and phrases like information society, digitization, computer or information explosion, globalization, cyberspace and information

superhighway. These technologies have forced the developed world to operate in a context of change which automatically affects the ways our cultural heritage are documented, preserved and practiced. It has brought the culture, folklore and heritage of western countries into our doorsteps, reading tables, desktop or laptop with just a press of the computer keyboard or a click of mouse. Where are Nigerian cultural heritage in the world cultural arena?

Cultural Policy: Efforts to globalize Nigerian cultural heritage have not been fully discussed, evaluated or strategized by the Nigerian government. There is serious lack of co-ordination of Nigerian cultural heritage between the Federal government and the Ministry of culture. Many Nigerians are not aware of the Nigerian culture due to the fact that cultural knowledge and practices are not included in Nigerian education curricula.

Environment of Cultural Globalization: How adequate are the libraries and information science in Nigeria prepared for the globalization of Nigerian cultural heritage? In an electronic environment, how many libraries in Nigeria have enough resources in terms of technologies and manpower for the globalization of Nigerian culture - steady power supply, computer literate society and cultural websites?

These are some of the contending issues that form the analytical framework for this paper. Other issues or questions are;

1. Can globalization of Nigerian cultural heritage serve as a unifying factor or would it widen further the ethnic and cultural diversities?
2. What would happen if Nigerian cultural heritage is not globalized?
3. Is increased reliance on ICT a threat or an opportunity for the globalization of Nigerian cultural heritage?
4. What specific roles should Nigerian government play towards the globalization of Nigeria cultural heritage?
5. What are the challenges for IT and librarians in the globalization of Nigerian culture? Is safeguarding or preservation of Nigeria cultural heritage necessary if such heritage cannot be accessible to the outside world?
6. What are the impacts of globalization of cultural heritage on Nigeria, religion, family, culture socialization (moonlight play give way to video game, cyberfraud, etc)

## Impacts

The positive impacts include (a) integration of Nigeria culture (b) speedy access to Nigeria culture in the internet, (c) digitization and preservation of cultural artefacts and (d) global access to the cultural heritage.

*Integration of Nigerian Culture:* The impact here is that

globalization would integrate Nigeria culture and allow each cultural community to view the other's culture in the internet. As a sport (football) which is a western culture unites Nigeria more than any other activities at the international arena, so would cultural globalization to Nigeria's cultural diversity. With the name "Nigeria Cultural Heritage" on the internet, so the world is viewing Nigeria as a more united cultural nation. A proponent of this view Lechner (2002) outlined thus (1) that interaction across boundaries leads to the mixing of cultures in particular places and practices (i.e. pluralisation). (2) That cultural flows occur differently in different spheres and many originate in many places (i.e. differentiation), and (3) that integration and spread of ideas and images provoke reaction and resistance/competition (i.e. contestation).

*Speedy Access:* Once globalized, Nigerian cultures can be accessed online. Cultural access through the internet can be localized. By localization we mean a process by which foreign cultures viewed in the satellite TV system or the internet can be practised in Nigerian environment or and vice versa. This information can be accessed online simultaneously without distorting the contents.

*Digitization:* Digital scanners and cameras can be used to capture digital images (of cultural artefacts) for importation into computer systems. Conway (2000) highlighted some of the benefits of digitization to include: (a) digital images offer unique advantages because information and contents may be delivered directly to end users; (b) the data can be easily formatted, edited, and printed; (c) the digital collections are accessible to a large number of users simultaneously.

## **Negative Impacts**

Globalization of cultural heritage has some negative impacts in some areas. Akande (2002) seems to understand more of this negative impact when he said that western adventures made efforts to undermine the cultural heritage of various peoples around the world through colonization, imperialism and now globalization. He said that cultural imperialism left the colonized in a state of cultural disorientation which is vulnerable to cultural invasion.

*Commercialization of Culture:* The most important far reaching effect of cultural globalization is the commercialization of culture. Production distribution and consumption of cultural goods and services have become commodities along with the essentials of life. Music, food, clothes, fashion, art, sports images, etc are now sold in the market, imported and exported.

Commercialization of culture has a disturbing impact on the people of Nigeria. For example, what was once an element of Nigeria's cultural way of life has become a product, rather than something unique which they have made to suit their specific

needs and circumstances. Nigerian markets are increasingly bombarded with new images, new music, new clothes and new values. The impact is that the familiar and the old artefacts are being discarded. The fact is that these will be lost simply because they are not valued by global markets. This undermining of the peoples existing values and cultures has a corrosive impact on the sense of who we are, what we want and what we respect. "The cumulative effect" in Akande's (2000) words "is a crisis of cultural confidence, combined with economic uncertainty and crime which global integration often brings".

*Religion:* In the area of religion, the impact of globalization is not left out. For example, Hock-Tong (2001) observes that Islamic fundamentalism has in many respects served as a bulwark against modernity, that Muslims generally see the secular influence of western science and technology as inimical to traditional Islamic values. This was the reason most non-Muslim researchers tend to attribute the underdevelopment and under privileged state of Muslim women to Islamic tradition.

As a result of cultural globalization, the movement of youths from the rural to urban setting has caused a significant depopulation of youths going to prayer houses in the rural setting. The arrival of Christianity has also depopulated the traditional religious adherents in many parts of Nigeria.

*Proselytization:* Information and communication technology is gradually spreading its influence on religious evangelism. This is in the areas and methods religious society globally use it for teaching, proselytizing and in belief systems. It is now possible for any religion to spread its faith beyond national borders, allowing even small religious movements to engage in overseas Proselytization activities.

*The Family:* In Nigeria due to the impact of globalization on cultural norms, socialization processes and values are affected. For instance some parents are no longer frowning at what the youths put on. The traditional pattern of subordinating when greeting an elder has changed to "hi".

*Our Languages:* Today, the use foreign language, English, has always been an important aspect of official language in Nigeria. Though there is high rate of illiteracy in the rural population, the use of our local languages has its limitations. Many elite families would like their children to learn English language better than their local language.

Today, Nigerians use and read books written in foreign language faster and more fluently than those written in local languages. In Nigeria, cultural globalization has impacted on the number of Movies produced by Nigeria Nollywood. Movies produced in English are much more than those performed and produced in Igbo and other Nigerian languages. *Globalization, Information Technologies*

*and Libraries:* Information and communication technology accelerates globalization of cultural values. As Omekwu (2006) reiterated, the internet is a key development in the growth of globalization because globalization has changed the nature of national government imposing national and international cultures on local culture. With information technologies, foreign cultures can be preserved in libraries and accessed simultaneously by library users and other Nigerians irrespective of their ethno-cultural learning.

Globalization and the internet also allow cultural heritage of different tribes in Nigeria to be uploaded, downloaded, and accessed by other people in another side of the world thereby projecting the cultural identity of Nigeria Omekwu (2003) captures this impact very well when he said, “the internet certainly offers the greatest opportunities for cultural exchange, causing more books, journal reference and paper based information media and cultural artefacts to migrate to electronic format. He cites Basser (1995) to have stressed on the negative impact of cultural globalization and the electronic media. According to him, as more and more people are relying on online access to culture, it is likely to have great effects on how people view culture and on the internal working of our cultural repositories, such as museum and libraries.

“As it become more and more convenient to view cultural objects on home computers” Basser continues, “people are likely to visit museums (and libraries) less frequently. More and more people access...museum objects online without entering the museum and libraries will rapidly become redundant and erode.”

## **Challenges**

This section, sought to address the challenges that face libraries and library professionals in globalization of Nigeria cultural heritage.

*Repositioning Library Professionals in the new age:* Today, professional librarians in Nigeria and other parts of Africa are facing the challenges of becoming irrelevant in the digital environment. This is because the analogue or traditional ways of handling and managing information are fundamentally changing. If professional librarians are not re-awakened to reposition their stand in the profession, they might be by-passed. Librarians in Nigeria must improve on their ICT and internet literacy in this changing environment in order to fit in very well in this era of information technology and globalization.

*Management of Cultural Institutions:* Libraries, museums and cultural institutions or ministries need to manage their cultural heritage in such a way that they will become access point to users. To do this, these heritage resources need to be digitalized for better preservation. The purpose of preserving anything is to

enable access to it in future. Without access, to cultural heritage it would be difficult for people to learn from the past successes and failures. Therefore, the challenges of digitization, preservation and accessibility of cultural values remain a big task for library professionals.

*Competition:* Increasing globalization creates winner-take-all market for cultural output. That is why Carden (2008) referred to it as a double-edged sword capable of helping national cultures to revitalize their culture to face other cultures. The challenge for librarians is that those with technology advances, the authors and creators of technologies are better positioned to use these tools to improve on their cultural heritage. This is capable of masking African cultures at the global level.

Professional librarians in Nigeria have the task of repackaging their cultural heritage in order to meet international standard. This is so because survival in the new global business market calls for improved productivity and increased competition.

*Expansion into the Hinterland:* There is the need to provide enabling facilities for the rural community. Cultural heritage information are accessible to only those who have the internet or satellite TV, leaving out a substantial segment of the world population. However the village or local areas in the country are places where some of the immovable heritage is found. For the rural community to benefit from the services provided by Information technologies, the government should extend these facilities to that area in order to bridge the ICT divide.

## **Conclusion**

Today's societies are multi-culture in themselves, which encompasses a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyle. Most people are shaped by more than a single culture, which is brought about by globalization. And globalization which is a concept of uniformity assumes that cultures are becoming the same as the world. In Nigeria, the instability of personality, family, community and other activities are largely due to the rapid erosion of our absolute traditional values and not due to the advancement of information technology. Instead, technology has come to accelerate our cultural heritage. Therefore, rejecting advanced information technology or globalization is not a solution for overcoming its disintegrating effects; rather, it may be viewed as a form of escape.

The only remedy in ensuring cultural stability is for the agents of change (government) to repackage and re-inculcate absolute values through the use of libraries, mass media, and advanced information technologies to counter negative changes that are emerging today.

Therefore very few human communities will neither want to



reject technological changes or globalization, nor will they want to return to the traditional pattern of community organisation especially now that they have evolved new pattern to suit their immediate needs.

## Recommendations

In view of the contending issues, impacts and challenges, the following recommendations are made for effective cultural preservation in a global world environment.

- There is the need for the legal protection of the intangible cultural heritage.
- There is need for the government to revive traditional and popular forms of a people's expression.
- Government should incorporate programmes relating to traditional cultures, heritage and folklore in education curricular at all levels.
- Government should develop legislative protection for traditional culture, heritage museum, archives, and libraries.
- Government should provide training in the use of ICT for documentation, digitization and preservation of cultural heritage.
- There is the need to establish "heritage club" where issues of cultural heritage would be discussed as a means of transmission of oral and intangible heritage.
- An international World Day for showcasing and safe-guarding traditional cultural heritage should be established.
- There is the need to hold seminars, workshops or technical assistance for training of managers and teachers in the field of traditional culture and heritage.
- Conservation, preservation and dissemination of expressions of the intangible cultural heritage should continue to be an important component of the library profession.
- Public policies to protect the young from the abuse and misuse of modern information technologies - indecent dressing, violence, sex and phonographic materials that find their way to some homes - should be made.

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