

The Challenges of Globalization and the Use of Children's Literature in Achieving Cultural Literacy in Nigeria

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Abstract: In the past, Africans attached great value to the transmission of their values and norms to their younger generation. This was done through oral traditions, such as story telling, songs, lullabies, riddles, plays and more. This emphasises continuity and cultural preservation. Cultural transmission aims at producing a generation who will sustain the communities' values like honesty, perseverance, diligence, good community and brotherly relationship.

Children's Literature refers to quality books for children ranging from birth to adolescence; while globalization is the process of increased inter dependence and integration of cultures and values among nations, This paper thus, discusses the use of children's literature as an instrument of achieving national integration in the era of globalization. It also examines the relevance of children's literature to the society and asserts that children's literature could be used to promote and sustain the national heritage. It will serve as a voice to forestall loss of our values. It proffers suggestions and concludes, .by stating how to achieve these aims.

Keywords: Children's literature; Globalization and Cultural Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Societal development depends on the collective consciousness of the member's of that community. Great importance is attached to the preservation of Nigerian social and cultural values; the presence of "modernity" globalization not with standing, the study of literature has inestimable values attached to it while globalization is the symbol of our age. Literature refers to whole texts. Children learn to read by reading a whole text and not fragment thus the need to transfer relevant information to the children in prints lends a helping hand to the derivation of readable quality books meant for children (children's literature) literacy entrances education while education produces literacy.

Cultural literacy propagates old and global realities. Hence this paper examines the various perspectives on children's literature, globalization and cultural literacy. It also makes analysis of children's literature books, evaluates the relevance of children's literature as an instrument of national development and as a voice for cultural preservation and literacy education. This is based on the fact that a societies growing generations are paramount in her cultural preservation. This paper however makes

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her recommendations restating need for writers to make the child appreciate the cultural realities of his environment while capturing his national ideologies.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

An attempt to define children's literature identifies it as quality books for children ranging from birth to adolescence stage. However the term refers to fictive exploration of human experience in a lower language. It is both educative and morally edifying in knowledge transfer. It is divergent in nature; it is a lower version of adult literature. It holds information that nourishes the child's imagination. It is exclusively designed for children and assists them to learn new concepts and experience. It helps children to expand their language and aids free expression.

There are various categories of children's reading literature which ranges from; pre-reading materials to story books. Andzayi(2002) and Olaitan (1986) identified the following books as children's literature;

- Picture books
- Story books to be read to children
- Folktales and Adventure books
- Poetry books
- Wordless story books
- Information books
- Children magazines
- Children non-fiction.

These books match the child's background, needs and cultural experiences. They also contain functional illustrations, while providing meaningful activities for children. The vocabulary is written to suit the understanding of the child's age and encapsulate his interest. It is usually gender balanced and friendly. It induces moral reasoning and good heritage.

Globalization

The phenomenon of globalization is the prevalent issue of 21st century. It is a conceptual trend that has introduced departure points in our shared values. Although the emergence of globalization has a positive input in almost all spares of life in our nation, politics, management, philosophy, culture, education and mostly information technology; our interest in this study is to examine the ways of sustaining and preserving our national heritage in a country that is being globalized; using a text medium; children's literature.

The main idea of globalization is "globing" which implies that the earth has become a rounded-off enclave. This is observed by Aluko (2004)...

Globalization seeks to encompass all countries into one economic unit, possibly without governments and nations (Nigeria) whose social forces are not strong enough to compete with the advent of globalization.

Globalization specifically exposes our country to foreign cultures and values; it favors the rich and powerful nations and citizens more than the downtrodden. Advocates of globalization put forward arguments on modernity, progress, development, culture and positive changes. However, they alter and replace our cultural values, morals, norms, habits, customs and even behavioral patterns at will. This has earned globalization the despicable form of internationalization and homogenization which encourage loss of power, ethnic identity and autonomy by the affected nations.

The globe trend has suppressed the national communalism which allows fair play, justice, equal opportunity, true federalism and sustenance of good heritage has introduced the other side of the trend to

nation. There is mad rush for second handed goods in the country; no one values those old things that made our nation unique. There is corruption, mischief, violence, unemployment and conflict every where. The big men loot public assets without consideration for the nation and the people. The thrust of this trend thus becomes the deepening effect of transaction in all major spheres of human life. The individual is now encouraged to see himself as a very powerful person capable of predicting and determining his future, his desires, his life Patten etc. He forgets the prevailing social and cultural realities of his environments the nation should not fold their arms and watch in vain?. The new crusade must be used to curb some of these excesses; the younger generation must be recovered at an early stage; this will be largely achieved through exposure to good children's literature books. The will help the new generation to capture the national ideologies and discover his identity and himself.

Cultural Literacy

Although societies are established on some kind of specific shared information, the incursion of Globalization to the Nigerian society brought about great challenges of modern and global realities into the society.

In the words of Hirsch (1988; 2) cultural literacy is the network of information that all competent readers possess. It is the background information stored in their minds that enable them to take up a newspaper and read it with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the points, grasping the implications, relating what they have read to the situated context

Cultural literacy thus, requires an individual to acquire the basic information and knowledge need to survive and interact meaningful in his particular society and environment.

The reality of modern life and globalization takes into consideration the political and socio-economic relations of a community. Cultural literacy assesses the civilization of a society; It goals, culture, values, folklores and other relevant information about that society. Children's literature thus becomes an ideological tool which while entertaining the people is also used by adult members of the society to initiate their younger ones into their socialization process used in personality enhancement moral development, and cultural transmission.

Children's Literature as a Voice for Cultural Preservation

The literacy artist should strive to use his writing as a voice for promoting and sustaining the people's culture. Bishop (1992) asserts that "books can help us to see the world in a new way". This shows the relevance of children's literature as a means to studying about life. A child grows into a whole individual when he is exposed at his early age to lots of interaction with literature books. He becomes empowered. He is aware of situations like gentleness, compassion, patience, beauty, forgiveness, hope, love, wisdom, and even social values which he imbibes and utilizes in his lifetime.

Nigeria is a multilingual nation with a multicultural setting: we therefore need to give our children proper orientation to sustain our cultural values. This can be achieved through exposing children to quality children's literature texts. According to Bishop, Multicultural literature enables us to; "understand, appreciate and celebrate the differences among us, those things that make each cultural group unique.

Children's literature aids transmission of values to our younger generations. It provides a good framework for remembering good stories were is interesting. It serves as a major means of thinking and communicating our thought. We use stories to give cognitive and emotional coherence to the child's experiences. Through this medium we encourage them to construct and negotiate. Their social identity and also invites their experiential landscape with moral significance Rosen, (1992). Children's literature lends a voice in cultural preservation Bishop asserts;

Children's literature lets them know what we adults in their society consider as appropriate ways of believing, behaving and assessing who and what are important.

Children who discover their own experience mirrored in book receive a kind of affirmation of themselves and their culture.

Children's literature will therefore create appropriate empowerment, exposure and understanding that will help them subdue the negative influence of a changing society. It will sustain moral decision because they naturally reflect the information they get from stories and try to put themselves in that type of situation; thereby formulating their own concept of right and wrong. Their heritage is also sustained. They are connected to their root through stories; they evaluate tables, characters, expressions, and adage this makes them to appreciate it as part of their heritage. Through reading literature texts, they visualize and imagine being in the environment where the story is set, even when ordinarily they wouldn't have gone to such places.

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Children's Literature as an Instrument of National Integration

National integration calls for togetherness, unity sustenance of socio-cultural values, and development. It encourages better interaction for the interest of country. A better way of achieving national Integration is by using children's literature to expose children to the natural endowments of their environment in their formative years. In the words of Fafunwa (1980), children are curious about their environment –the people whom they meet, as well as the natural phenomena around them. They exhibit so much curiosity about things around them, they are also adventurous. These traits can be expended by providing exciting and educative children's literature texts.

The recent incursion of globalization into Nigeria's culture is a serious subject of re-evaluation. The African /Nigerian way of life is now seen as primitive; hence there is very little effort to preserve the country's rich, cultural, and moral reserves except through literatures.

Another example is the recently concluded 'Maitina' dance show held in Nigeria. The participants were no longer assessed based on their knowledge and ability to participate in their native dance; rather they had new dance styles like pantomime, cha- cha, classic, music, salsa, hip-up and even the acrobatic display they called abstract dance. The traditional Nigeria dance has been overtaken by the modern ones. We can hardly get the younger generation who can show the local flute or beat the local drums.

Globalization makes us believe that we are not civilized; one therefore has to metamorphose into an European to fit into present trend. This mentality has really influenced our values as well as our intellectual and cultural development. Although it has its contribution in national developments, it is very common for people to be considered as awkward or barbaric oral lien when they do those things which previously had a pride of place in our country.

People no longer eat with bare hands but with fork and knife. The usual "buka' for palm wine and "ugba'/'nkwobi' has been taken over by fast food centers like "Mr. Boggs" "crunches" 'De Simons" etc. Food are no longer tied in the local leaves but packed in disposable packs etc. Nigeria presence is gradually depreciating making way for the Global trend. The native cultural activities like wresting, folktales and other moonlight activities have been taken over by digital networks and DVD's. The local lamp no lantern exists but generators popularly called big pass my neighbor and solar lightings. There are few examples of the new way of life in our nation. It is very obvious that the facets of our national life is dwindling, and the only way of resuscitating it is by informing the upcoming generation that such a thing existed through written texts; children's literature.

“TEXT ANALYSIS” OF SELECTED NIGERIA CHILDREN’S LITERATURE BOOKS

Children’s literature serves as a voice for cultural preservation, individual evaluation, character assessment, heritage sustenance as well as national integration. Illustrations from these selected children’s literature texts lend a voice to these assertions.

An analysis of Ngozi Anyachonkeya’s

The strangled tomorrow reveals the effect of parental negligence on the growing child. The story revolves around the life of Tunde Olaniyi whose father holds the rank of a major in the Nigerian army. The father’s reckless life cost the entire family the peace and unity that should hold his family together as well as give his children whom to flourish and become better citizen for their family and the nation at large. In his early year Tunde was introduced to dangerous weapon such as gun, armored cars as toys to play with. These weapons and the experience he gained from television programs stayed in his mind and formed his character as a person. The climax of this is Tunde’s killing of his mother with a loaded gun kept by his father at home.

This is one of negative effects of globalization and its disadvantages on the social/cultural landscape of our nation. Children embrace modernity in place of our cultural values thereby suppressing our moral norms, habits, custom and even behavioral patterns.

In J. Umolu’s *Davou The Great Footballer*, the child Davou is greatly affected by what he sees around him and the personality of people around him. In this era of globalization and people’s penchant for money, people want to toe the line that can fetch them quick money. Thus, Davou aspires to be like Kanu Nwankwo who made a name in national and international Football settings. His academic pursuits could have been marred in his dream to be a football; He neglected his class work, domestic chores and other life pursuits for his aspiration to be a footballer. Thank God for the timely intervention of who helped him realize the realities of his environment. The globe trend is really surpassing the quest for sustenance of our social and cultural heritage.

Dizzy Angel by Grace Osifo reflects the argument put forward by advocates of globalization; on modernity, culture, development and changes. The novel reveals the life of city girls and what modernism did to our cultural values. Lizzy, born and groomed in the in city confesses to her friend Ogbanje thus;

“We city girls being our sophistication by having sex even in primary school.....it was unsophisticated to be a virgin. it is bush_.....” She even boasted on the number of abortions she had at that age.

This invariably is a threat to our culture which measure a girl’s worth and moral chastity by the preservation of her Virginity only and for her Husband. In this modern age, virginity is a thing of the past, a girl who preserves her virginity is looked down on and is referred to as “Uncivilized” and “Bush”.

The writer also reveals the situation of an ogbanje girl believed by many to die soon after her birth. Ogbanje the protagonist is betrothed to an Olokun priest, old enough to be her father in a bid to safeguard her life. However, the girl rejects this barbaric culture. She goes ahead to acquire westerns education. It is this singular act that gave “Ogbanje” a voice to speak even as a girl while unraveling the realities of her environment, she also held unto her ideologies.

In Gladys Babudoh’s *The Talking Calabsh*, our attention is drawn to moral values that should be inculcated in children. Ebiere’s ability to give a helping hand to an old woman in the village attracted good fortune for her and her family. The moral lesson drawn from the work teaches children to respects and help people in need of their help to matter the situation.

The book also teaches that there is always a prize for whatever we in life. Ebiere gets a Calabash from the old woman, Nene, whom she helped on her way to the stream. This is the prize she gets for her kind gestures to Nene this in turn helps her family in eliminating their sufferings. It is this kind of moral that our people are kwon for and should be encouraged in the present day situation.

SUMMARY

Deductions from these children's literature show that the writers actually presented the various values and relevant themes at variant degrees; these values are predominant in African society. Some of the values are honesty, hard work, love, patience, obedience, kindness, respect, discipline, offering a helping hand and in recent times the value of self-esteem and boldness to stand for your rights.

These writers presented the new order; globalization which has encroached into our value systems. In order words, while these works set out to educate and entertain, they also portray aspects of modernism Nigerian realities and values.

Although children's literature has the greater potentials to instruct, it is also obvious that its crux is to educate and entertain. It is about human life. Parents should therefore be cautious in the rush for global trends; rather they should speed up the responsibility of training the child in a manner that will make him/her appreciate the social and cultural realities of his environment while capturing his national ideologies and identities.

CONCLUSION

Children should be exposed to literature texts that will help them evaluate our socio-cultural process and strive to achieve national integrity and enviable culture. Moral instruction should be in the forefront of our national heritage offiong (2001). Well groomed younger generation as well as improved national service delivery is what our nation needs. Writers should produce more creative children's literature texts, with balanced values in the face of globalization. The concept of globalization should be seen as an encouragement towards upgrading, developing and promoting our cultural and national heritage and not as a means of subduing or substituting our heritage. No culture or language should be seen as inferior to another but should be accommodated; this will bring rapid national growth and better integration.

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