



THE LIBERATING POTENTIAL OF ORAL LITERATURE IN A GLOBALIZED CONTEXT



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ABSTRACT

Without sounding like a dissenter or an arch pessimist, it is pertinent to assert that indigenous African cultures are today at the brink of extinction due to marginalization and the imposition of European values made possible largely by advanced information technology that is a function of globalization. This erosive tendency, if unchecked, has the potential to obliterate African cultures and ways of life particularly given the rate at which globalizing trends that aim at international integration and interchange of world views, products and ideas, including democratic ideals, are fast enveloping African states, even at traditional levels. Already, African cultures are dubbed primitive, African democracy plastic and unsophisticated, even by Africans themselves. To attempt to reverse this trend and focus attention on the upliftment of the African image and identity, this paper explores the role oral literature can play within the current context of globalization and the attainment of democratic ideals. The paper therefore posits that the neglect of oral literature accounts for the continuous enslavement of the African mentality leading to the excessive reliance on Eurocentric paradigms for the interpretation of reality. It concludes that for Africa and Africans to impact democratically in today's globalized context, Africans should have recourse to the liberating potential of oral literature to strengthen their image and identity which can then be bandied positively in the modern capitalist market economy driven by globalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the attainment of self- governance by blacks in apartheid South Africa in April 1994, it was generally believed that the African continent has totally been liberated from the shackles of colonialism and imperialism by Western powers. Therefore the basic supposition in the minds of core Africanists and all those interested in the growth and development of the African personality and identity has been how a proper and sustained treatment of identity, tradition and African democratic ideals, embedded in collectivism, can strengthen the ability of Africans to cope with the challenges of neo-colonialism and the new world economic order dictated by the concept of globalization. It is, therefore, the supposition that to be what you are as an African or black African, you should be or must be part of others or recognize the otherness of others while being yourself; the philosophy embedded in the concept of “Ubuntu” or African collectivism which translates to ingrained African democracy. It is also believed that Africans are capable and must be ready to enrich other cultures through their own contributions in the philosophy of

“Ubuntu” to cultural, economic and democratic upliftment of the world, (See [Jennifer \(2007\)](#); [Pearl \(2007\)](#) and [Constantine \(2007\)](#)).

From this perspective, it becomes imperative for Africans to develop a sense of cultural pride in their own culture and ways of life which will then serve as a foundation of common identity that will enable the world recognize the unique potential in Africa and Africans. Following from Marcus T. Cicero’s postulation on Roman identity, one can safely posit that the lack of unity on an African identity consequent upon the debasement and erosion of our cultural values leaves Africa a fertile ground for occupation by other cultures of the world. Cicero asserts that

- ...there is very little that is more important for any people to know than their history, culture, traditions and language; for without such knowledge, one remains naked and defenseless before the world.

Today it is obvious that Africa and Africans are naked and hence grossly marginalized as a result of this lack of a common identity and personality profile. African governments and the elite have failed to invest enough resources in the development of their linguistic, cultural and human potential that will enhance the projection of a unique identity for black Africa. The development of this potential is as well consequent upon a reliance on the creative imagination which comes from an awareness of one’s environment and the potential it offers for democratic development and growth.

It follows naturally that an awareness of the African environment can only come from knowledge of the culture, customs and knowledge systems which are immensely found in the oral literatures of African peoples. These oral narratives provide the proper milieu for the release of creative energy necessary for the development of a sense of cultural belonging that sustains the foundations of a common identity making [Kimani \(2010\)](#) to assert that

- Orality has been an important method of self-understanding, creating relationships and establishing equilibrium between body, soul and the environment. Through oral narratives, communities have been able to pass on values, attitudes, knowledge and modes of practice for generations.

It is well known, after all, that a strong communal identity of a people strengthens their uniqueness and enables them live up to the challenges of modern day existential, economic, political and cultural changes occasioned by globalization. For this reason, it is incontrovertible, that the role of oral literature in any nation is principally the acknowledgement of cultural peculiarities, traditional elements and the promotion of identity, culture and lifestyle of local communities so as to contribute to the quality of life of citizens of these nations. [Ruth \(2007\)](#) succinctly brings out the supremacy and sophistication of Orality and what it achieves in the African context.

Furthermore, the importance of a historical and linguistic perspective on cultural studies pedagogy and the struggle for liberation is also aptly highlighted by [Bangura \(2005\)](#) who quotes [Amilcar \(1974\)](#) speech on “National Liberation and Culture,” at Syracuse University where he asserted that

- African [political] liberation would have been impossible without African people resorting to their cultures to resist domination.

However, this liberation is still incomplete as Africans continue to pander after European values while Europe continues to hide under subtle economic and political programs and policies, including globalization, to determine what African nations’ political, economic, educational and even cultural policy decisions should be. Bangura therefore concludes that

- ...it is because language has remained an “unresolved issue” in African development that present day education has remained an alien system.

African liberation and the quest for African democracy therefore lie in the development of a unique African cultural identity which will not only support the African personality but will also define a framework of African philosophy and ideology on which scientific models and theories can be built. [Amos \(1998\)](#) therefore defines culture as

- A process representing the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, ritual ceremonies and practices peculiar to a particular people and which provides them with a “general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality While Amos (1998) also adds that culture is
- Simply the ways by which a population solves its problems and meets the challenges of its environment. It is a set of rules and procedures...designed to create a certain type of society and a certain type of human being.

The development of a strong cultural identity can therefore be conceived of as a vital factor for resistance to foreign domination which is why Asar (2012) notes that it “fertilizes one’s seeds of greatness.”

The efficacy of oral narratives in the sphere of spiritual upliftment and evangelization is also adequately reflected by scholars like South African, Francisca Chimhanda (2014) and Nigeria’s Ighile (2012). Chimhanda argues that only culture as reflected in myths and legends and the gospel

- Have seeds for restoring the intricate plexus of relationships impinging on humanity’s creation...the integrity of creation and the baptismal vocation of sharing in the mission of Christ.

Commenting on the place of culture as reflected in traditional narratives that sustain the gospel in the liberation struggles of Shona women in South Africa, Chimhanda notes the importance His Holiness the late Pope John Paul II attached to African culture in the job of evangelization in the church when the pope admonished Africans to

- Reject...the so called “freedom of the modern way of life [typified by Western or so called civilized cultures] and instead... look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith.... Here you will find genuine freedom; here you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth.

Treading on the same path of liberation and development through oral narrative traditions in Africa, Ighile (2012) asserts that in an African society that is

- ...riddled with socio-economic and religious dis-equilibrium...and leadership dislocations...there is need for policy makers and stake-holders to have recourse to aspects of African ideology....there must be an active dialogue between the bible and African ideology, particularly as articulated in African folklore and proverbs.

The question that arises here is, where is the African ideology found? The bible we can find everywhere in the numerous Christian churches that populate the continent; but African philosophy and ideology are certainly not that easy to find, not because they do not exist but because the repository of this philosophy and ideology, the oral narratives of African people, are played down upon and neglected as primitive and worthless and a product of a collective consciousness, all of which are derogatory and erroneous appellations aimed at reducing the potency and efficacy of the narratives. The reasons for this are obvious and do not require prolonged debate.

This paper, therefore seeks to call attention to and examine the role of oral literature as a repository of African philosophy and ideology and its liberating potential in the bid to refocus Africans’ attention on the legacy they have and can bequeath to the outside world in today’s context of globalization. It posits that the neglect of oral literature accounts for the continuous enslavement of the African mentality leading to the excessive reliance on Eurocentric paradigms for the interpretation of reality and the African environment. It concludes that for Africa and Africans to impact positively in today’s globalized context, Africans must have recourse to the liberating potential of oral literature and return to the roots without shame. Africans, especially the elite, because of their colonial past, have made the grievous mistake of abandoning African culture and gone after the empty glitter of so called “modernism” and “civilization” without first thinking of the culture and civilization they have and can offer to the world. For this reason it is predicted and projected that globalization is either doomed and bound to fail in Africa if Africa must continue to survive as a unique entity or, alternatively, globalization will decimate the black race and along with it African cultural values in order to sustain Western values and globalizing trends thus vindicating Charles Darwin and his theory of the survival of the fittest (See (Chomsky and Barsamian, 1996; Brock-Utne, 2000; Joseph, 2002; Ghirmai, 2005)).

2. THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE: ORAL AND WRITTEN

Recounting the agelessness of orature and oral literature in human history, [David \(1974\)](#) asserted that oral literature is

- At the very least indispensable to any practical definition of humanity. For many millennia the only instrument of rhythmic words and narrative known in any part of the world was the tongue men were born with...so for long ages, the only way any knowledge could survive from one generation to another was through oral tradition. Rhythmic speech was the world's first great medium of communication for complex ideas and there were certainly media men of astonishing skill long before anyone on earth knew how to write.

He went further and concluded that

- One of the most important developments in this century in both the popular and academic understanding of culture has been the wide growth of awareness that Only a Tiny Percentage (emphasis mine) of man's total creative achievement has depended on literacy.

Through the ages, the definition of literature, oral literature inclusive, and consequently its function in society has been ubiquitous. Different ages have defined literature with respect to the functions it performs in society and in accordance with the aesthetic principle prevalently operative at a particular period in time and space. [Elliot \(1962\)](#) therefore posited in his time that the greatness of a literary work cannot be determined solely by literary and aesthetic standards, but also through the sociological relevance of the work within the environment of its creation. [McFadden \(1978\)](#) following from this defines literature as

- ...a canon which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. It includes works primarily artistic and also those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary (p.56).

Perhaps [Leavis \(1952\)](#) postulation can be said to be more relevant to our need in the attempt to examine the liberating potential of literature, be it oral or written. Leavis argues that

- ...political and social matters should only be examined by minds with a real literary education and in an intellectual climate informed by a vital culture...In analyzing these works for their sociological relevance, one should not restrict his analysis to only works that have been "printed and preserved," but rather expand the analysis to those works "whose subtlety of language and complexity of organization can be appropriately and appreciatively evaluated (p. 193).

This brings to the fore the relevance of oral narratives or oral constructs that possess literary merit and which constitute the major means by which predominantly oral societies, like African societies, define their own culture and identity. Most indigenous African societies lack a well-articulated culture of literacy and so depend largely on their oral traditions and literature for the maintenance of an identity and cultural advancement from one generation to another thus emphasizing the indispensability of oral literature in almost all indigenous African societies. Today, however, this culture and identity are harshly under threat of obliteration or total extinction due primarily to the impact of colonialism and the barrage of the forces of globalization epitomized in the spread of global information technology devices namely GSM phones and other social media networks.

It also brings to the fore the big contest between primary oral cultures like African cultures and literate Western cultures that threaten to overrun Orality and its emphasis on dynamic contextual delivery of material. In this regard, I have advocated for the adoption of oral literature as a base for the development of a pedagogical model for instruction of African children on African knowledge systems and values which are currently under serious threat of extinction given today's emphasis on Western values ([Ganyi, 2014](#); [Ganyi, 2015](#)). Foremost on the danger list for extinction are African languages which are the bedrock of African culture and civilization but most of which are already moribund because of the prevalence of English, Portuguese and French languages as official media of instruction in the school system, general communication and policy making in most African countries today.

Since globalization is certainly a political and social matter, Webster and Kroskrity (2013) have also very strongly argued that literature emphasizes socio-linguistic constructs which serve as empowerment indices to traditional communities in modern day power play and the politics of globalization. To them, therefore, literature presents a community with

- ...tacit forms of power which tries to reposition and restore power and importance to those speakers of language groups who, through consistent marginalization, have tended to be obliterated in terms of the global power play characteristic of the modern day literacy dominated world.

To this writer therefore, a return to African ideology and cultural norms and values, embedded in the literatures of African peoples is the surest way for Africans to offer resistance to the corrosive and dominating influence of globalization on African languages, values and ethical standards including democratic values inherent in collectivism. Africans need sustained education to rediscover and develop pride in their own cultural values as contained in their oral literatures.

The usefulness of literature, particularly oral to every community or people is therefore succinctly attested to by several scholars including the Kenyan scholar and educationist, Lorna (2012) who argues that

- The systematic relationship between oral literature and society is such that these two human institutions obviously evolve together and neither of them can exist in isolation from the other. People use the oral word to reflect on their everyday experiences and concerns... Oral literature reflects their lives as a whole.

She also quotes Kabira and Mutahi (1988) as asserting that

- ...in order to fully understand any community, it is important to look at their literature. Both written and oral literatures reflect and shape the lives and ideas of a people. Therefore to understand the totality of a people's way of life, we must study oral literature.

These powerful assertions reflect the attachment the Kenyan people have for their oral literature as a means for the liberation of their society from colonial domination and repositioning them for democratic development which explains why Lorna again posits that

- The study of oral literature is very important. One of Kenya's basic educational objectives, according to the Kenyan National Examinations Council regulations and syllabus (1993) states that a sound educational policy is one that enables students to understand the culture and environment of their own society before proceeding to learn about other cultures. A sound grounding of the student in his/her people's culture helps him/her become a useful member of the society.

Johannes Seema also argues that among the Basotho, knowledge systems are embedded in their proverbs; therefore she carried out an analysis of these proverbs to decipher the extent to which Basotho philosophy of development is enshrined in these proverbs. She submits that Basotho indigenous knowledge systems as embedded in their proverbs contain

- the philosophy of their development... Basotho oral art is used to formulate models of their development...

And again in Nigeria, stressing the need for the inculcation of strategies for peace education into the Nigerian educational system, Babatunde A. Adeyemi et al observes that

- Indigenous proverbs in Nigeria have been discovered to possess socializing and enduring values for peaceful co-existence.

If all these assertions are true and correct of literature generally and oral literature in particular, wherefore are we pandering after globalization and what it can do for Africa and African people in the quest for democracy?

Bean and Dagen (2011) therefore assert that "education underlies the struggle of all aboriginal communities to assert themselves and gain control over their lives in the present world of globalization." Again, a contradiction emerges. The inevitable question Africanists are bound to ask is, what are we really educating African children on, Western or African values? Since our educational curriculum, as at now, emphasizes acquisition of literacy skills over Orality, while African culture is predominantly oral and our traditional pedagogical models are based on Orality,

what values do the children imbibe? It is well known that education can only be achieved meaningfully through consistent efforts at language development and conservation. Unfortunately, language, as Ghirmai (2005) a foremost Eritrean linguistic scholar has noted, has become the weakest area of penetration into African culture since linguistic policies of African nations tend to favor western languages particularly English, French and Portuguese at the expense of African languages which are then gradually going into extinction. Negash quotes Jo Arthur as asserting that while accepting the indispensability of English language usage in Africa as an “instrumental” language he (Arthur) succinctly points out that

- ...the more fundamental aim of making a broad and varied primary curriculum accessible to pupils cannot be achieved through the medium of English, a domain which, [according to him] must be left to an African language...that offers the rich functional resources needed for this crucial educational task.

The assertion underlies the fact that curriculum development is not just a flimsy exercise that can be carried out without recourse to environmental and/or cultural peculiarities. Therefore, to achieve a democratic consciousness that is uniquely African, we must start at the level of curriculum development to re-order and re-orient the consciousness of our pupils to a patriotic spirit that will drive the democratic commitment. Globalization cannot achieve this for Africans.

Negash therefore, further berates the African elite and the academia of negligence and ineptitude when he amply asserts that, having failed to secure linguistic, economic and cultural liberation of the African continent even on the political platform, the African elite and academia have finally accepted their inadequacies and therefore

- In search of alternative paths, they look to the Western model of development, including its promises of cultural and intellectual liberalism, political democracy, economic capitalism and its new form, GLOBALIZATION,(emphasis mine), as an attractive and attainable mode for progress and prosperity. However, in spite of the receptive climate in Africa towards the western model and globalization, the projected expectations of Africans may, nonetheless, never come true.

This is the basis of this paper, that for globalization to succeed in ensuring the expected democratic dividends that purportedly accompany it in Africa, the right climate must be created educationally, culturally and economically. The projected failure of globalization and the so called western model of development in Africa can therefore, only be understood within the background of what globalization portends within the African educational milieu.

3. GLOBALIZATION AND THE AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

It is generally assumed and accepted that every human being is a product of his/her education. The big question that continues to loom high in Africa is whose or which education does the African child acquire or receive, African or Western? Education in African knowledge systems is certainly not what the African child acquires and western education only succeeds in turning him/her into a misfit for his/her African environment. The child develops a dual personality and ends up in confusion and mental and social retardation. If therefore, the modern concept of education aims at “taking an essentially indeterminate being and giving it a social identity,” Hicks (2004) then that education must take into cognizance the socio-cultural environment of the recipient of the education in order that he/she does not become a misfit in society. The present mode of education in Africa is formal and literacy oriented and western formal education emphasizes teaching that fits out the individual for competition and survival in a modern capitalist market economy which is the basis of the concept of globalization. Globalization therefore, aims at the establishment of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods and services across national frontiers without hindrance; a concept that could be detrimental to fragile economies like those of African nations.

Globalization as a subtle mode of colonization therefore attempts to impose itself without any physical damage or destruction to the personalities of those to be dominated through harmonization of economic, political, and technological linkage of the high culture with the low culture which is exactly what the West, through globalization, is trying to achieve in Africa.

The globalizing trend is driven by international trade and investment that is aided by advanced information technology which aims at international integration arising from the interchange of world-views, products and ideas that will enhance this interdependent world. In this global configuration, where does Africa fit? What products will Africa showcase in the global market having become a super dumping ground for European finished products? Globalization that aims at the establishment of a unified world order controlled by the technologically advanced economies and dictating standards for the domination of the less technologically advanced economies is certainly not desirable as it negates the principles on which the concept of democracy is foisted and sustained. Unfortunately this is what the west has in stock for Africa through globalization.

To achieve this, the educational curricula and language policies of African nations that pander to their colonial dictators are deliberately skewed to favor this trend which is why oral literature has always received very minimal attention up till date in the school system of most African countries except recently and only very keenly in Kenya and South Africa. The reason is that oral literature possesses the capacity and the potential to raise the consciousness of the people to the inconsistencies in the western mode of education bequeathed to Africans in continuation of their colonizing mission in Africa. Africans should return to their traditional narratives to invigorate their languages and democratic principles contained therein so that they can stand against the neo-imperialist strategies embodied in the concept of globalization.

Joshua (2001) perceived the global advancement towards cultural decimation through linguistic and literary marginalization of the weaker languages of the world when he observed that “this global dispensation favors a mono-cultural or mono-linguistic model” that categorizes the world into modern or “civilized” and traditional or “primitive” peoples who eventually become “endangered species.” This is precisely why Krauss (2001) reported that only about 600 languages spoken in the world today are assured of being around in the year 2100. The rest would have been decimated through the subtle processes of globalization. It is therefore, obvious that the barrage on the cultural and literary survival of Africa, through linguistic decimation is a direct function of globalization. It is also well known that because of the emphasis on the major western languages (English, Portuguese and French) in the African educational system there is a corresponding neglect of African languages and consequently African culture and literature. The departments of African languages in our tertiary institutions used to be the most ailing and beggarly; looking for students to admit while the departments of English and French or modern European languages were superfluous. (Note the appellation of “modern European” languages attached to French, Spanish, and Portuguese languages etc) to enhance their salability.

Erica (2009) graphically notes the extent to which African national language policies have gradually shifted to favor colonial at the expense of local indigenous languages while Vansani (2009) also observe the inadequacy of training usually provided children in most indigenous multi-lingual societies which does not adequately fit them out for required educational demands to enable them succeed in school and out of school contexts. In recognition of the devastating effect of this inadequacy, Vansani (2009) asserts that the book, *Social Justice through Multi- Lingual Education*, is in the real sense

a Powerful indictment of the sinister privileging of languages like English that are marginalizing and decimating humanities rich language resources.

The book is therefore, supposed to be an advocacy for linguistic human rights for all peoples of the world particularly the marginalized languages. From this perspective, realists or open minded and non-English speaking scholars who see the destruction being wrought on indigenous languages argue that local languages MUST be encouraged in English language classroom teaching contexts. They criticize the old methods of English language teaching that aimed at total decimation of local languages while globalizing trends, on the other hand, point towards total elimination of same in favor of a unitary communications network that will drive globalization. Mahboob *et al.* (2015) posit that

- ...if language is a semiotic tool, if language is multimodal, and if language proficiency is context dependent, then teaching [English as an official or dominant] language does not need to exclude local languages, but use them as part of the rich set of semiotic resources that can help students develop their understanding and use of language [as well as develop critical approaches to knowledge acquisition instead of total and passive acquiescence of what is being imparted by the teacher.]

In relation to the concept of globalization itself, the debate has, of late, been streamlined to two basic perspectives or schools of thought; the one maintaining that for globalization to succeed, all cultures must shed their individuality to fit into the mainstream of a world globalized economic and socio-cultural configuration. The opposite view, however, negates the first and holds instead, that globalization should thrive on unity in diversity hence each cultural entity must be encouraged to maintain its unique identity and individuality from which it can then contribute the most salient points to the globalized entity. If this were possible, it would be a perfect meeting point of cultures of the world, each as a unique outfit contributing to world cultural cohesion. What is obvious, however, is that the concept of globalization, unless modified, does not permit of any individual cultural growth particularly of the so called third world countries which would negate the concept of globalization in favor of multi-culturalism or cultural pluralism.

Furthermore, for globalization to succeed in Africa, the present educational system which emphasizes literacy over and above Orality and an oral pedagogical model based on oral literature has to be maintained and sustained to prevent the possibility of raising the consciousness of African people to the contradictions that the present educational system has created in their environment. To counter this, it is necessary, not only to teach but also to emphasize the liberating potential of oral literature to generations of African children to conscientize them to the realities of their existence. To achieve this, we have, in a recent paper (Ganyi and Affiah, 2016) advocated for the integration of an oral literature based pedagogical model into the Nigerian school system using the Freirian popular education pedagogical model which emphasizes interactive dialogue for the attainment of liberation to ensure the freedom of the African psyche for the exercise of democracy. The model can best be sustained in oral literature since it approximates to contextual performances that also emphasize dialogic action and interaction that enables pupils learn from their experiences and develop a critical instinct. It is hoped that the model will enable Nigerians and Africans acquire and emphasize knowledge about African languages, environment and culture that will sustain a unique African identity to be bandied in a world globalized context.

Because of the predominance of Orality as a pedagogical mode in Africa, Africans are more inclined or oriented towards a collective rather than individualist outlook on life which is best typified in their oral performance contexts that serve as the best repositories of African culture, democratic principles and cosmic viewpoint. It is obvious at this point that a total and uncritical acceptance of the tenets of globalization will spell doom for Africans as it has the potential for complete erosion of the already battered image of Africa as well as the potential to hinder industrial and economic growth.

In this scenario, while the West or advanced nations benefit from the gains of globalization, Africa and all so called third world countries or economies will remain perpetually stunted, impoverished and dependent on the technologically advanced economies politically, educationally, economically and even culturally. Ghirmai Negash quotes Joseph (2002) as asserting that the way out for Africa is the complete overhaul of globalization to enhance a new orientation. In Stiglitz's words

- The challenge today is how to reform globalization to make it work, not just for the rich and the more advanced industrial countries, but also for the poor and the least developed countries.

Negash finally attributes the excessive vulnerability and susceptibility of African states to these imbalances and poverty cycle to three major reasons namely

- 1) Globalization's greed.

- 2) Intellectual and political weakness of the African elite who have compromised their positions and power for ill-gotten gains and
- 3) Discontent of the African populations with their ruling class elite who have become corrupt and inept with resource management.

To stem this tide and attempt to look for a way forward for Africa and posterity we need to turn to African philosophy, ideology and democratic principles as embedded in our oral literatures.

4. THE LIBERATING POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURE IN A GLOBALIZED CONTEXT

So far, my discourse has concentrated on the identification of the contradictions and inconsistencies that emerge within the lives of Africans as a result of their colonial experience. I have noted, in particular, the inability of Africans to liberate themselves or achieve total emancipation of the psyche from Eurocentric modes of perception of the environment and reality. I have also noted the utter dependence of our educational system on a literacy based pedagogical model that plays down on Orality while emphasizing competition and survival in a modern capitalist market economy. The situation completely negates the African consciousness of collective existence espoused in the philosophy of “Ubuntu,” or African democracy. The consequence of all these is the inability of the African to proffer a strong identity and personality profile that can effectively match the barrage of Western ideological insurgence into Africa which also translates to the inability to develop an African framework for democratic and technological advancement.

Furthermore, the lack of a consistent African ideological framework translates to the African inability to espouse and sustain a strong framework of African philosophy of science based on the concept of “Ntu-ology” or the universal oneness of man and nature as explicated by [Asar \(2012\)](#) therefore advocates for the strengthening of this framework, the African image and cultural identity through a culture or oral literature based curriculum development exercise which he argues

- ...is about developing a centralized methodology and framework for recognizing phenomena, demonstrating the relationship between and categorizing these relationships in a way that can be used as a pedagogical tool in all stages of learning...in African/African American based learning institutions. In other words, this is about education, and education as well as curriculum development, are cultural phenomena. We aim, not to simply “infuse” culture into the curriculum, but to make our culture THE curriculum.

Here lies the answer to Africa’s ineptitude. African tertiary institutions, because of their excessive reliance on Western pedagogical models and the political links between the center of the center and the center of the peripheral nations, have failed to recognize the need to liberate and domesticate the African educational system to their needs as advocated by Imhotep. Our institutions must strive to emphasize African culture, values and knowledge systems and aim at making them “THE” curriculum of all African institutions of higher learning in the bid to stem the tide of globalizing trends that threaten the very fabric of the continuous existence of Africa as an entity. This should be the advocacy of Africanist movements and concerned scholars should be turning attention to oral literature and its potential for liberation and sustenance of African and other so called third world cultures and economies. [Okafor \(2004\)](#) aptly posits that oral literature is a vital force and requirement in our educational system

- ...because oral literature is common among various African communities, it is the best approach for instilling relevant citizenship competencies.

In the same vein, [Koross \(2014\)](#) adds that the appreciation of different cultures through oral literature has the potential for and

- ...enables us to effectively deal with our problems by learning from other cultures. Secondly, it promotes the inherent worth of each person and interest in the wellbeing of the society.

This, to me, is the bedrock of African democracy.

Globalization, on the other hand, speaks a different language, as its application, so far as we have seen, benefits only the rich or opulent nations through the world's powerful economic institutions, the I.M.F and the World Bank. The experience of African states with these two institutions is nothing to write home about as the loans offered by them are always tied to debilitating structural adjustments that totally cripple the economies of recipients and renders them perpetually dependent and beggarly. With these experiences, one is forced to ask how Africans can deal meaningfully with or even benefit from the dividends of globalization. This writer's position is very clear on this; that the reliance on and maintenance of a strong and viable African cultural entity and identity through a study of the oral literatures of African communities is the surest answer to the devastating trends of globalization and other neo-imperialist overtures of the West. Studying oral literature strengthens our knowledge of our cultures.

To fight the negative impact of globalization therefore, Africans must be made aware of the subtle ways by which it manifests. In this vein, Ghirmai (2005) has again noted what has been categorized as the two world economies namely:

- 1) The Material Economy and
- 2) The Cultural Economy

The material economy equates with what Negash describes as "the generation of tangible, material wealth by countries, based on sustainable local means of production, and fair distribution and consumption among the population." This correlates with Western technological development and materialist consciousness. Cultural economy, on the other hand refers to "the wealth that is produced through people's culture, literature and language when perceived as commodities;" but which wealth is, of course, hardly ever quantified by economists. This is where the strength of Africa lies; in the creative, literary or non-material aspects of her culture which she can show-case in the global market. Negash therefore, argues that the West and their globalization have excelled in the material economic sphere i.e. the state-craft of science and technology and Africans cannot but accept this superiority. On the other hand, the inner domain, also known as the "spiritual" domain, as opposed to the "material" domain, bears the mark of cultural identity which is where Africa excels. His conclusion is that

- The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture.

What this implies is that Africans should think less about imitating Western material skills so that they can preserve the distinctiveness of their spiritual culture.

Africans must therefore, be made aware of the vitality of their culture as their strength and they must be educated to the realization that the "forces of change are also, in reality, in the inner domain of spirituality and not only in the material or outer domain of technological accomplishment. This education is the job of the academia that must not just sit on the fence and wait for the forces of globalization to swallow up Africa and its cultural endowment. This is the time to rework the curricula of our institutions of higher learning to reflect the preponderance of cultural education with a reliance on oral literature as the best repository of our cultural norms and values. African countries must also be made aware of their own potentials; of the vitality and dynamism of their own cultures and their ability to impact positively on the global arena if properly harnessed. Unfortunately, in Nigeria today, the reverse is the case as emphasis is more on the acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge and skills to the detriment of the development of the Arts and Humanistic studies which are taken for granted. We fail to appreciate the hard truism that appropriate emphasis on cultural development and awareness has always preceded and propelled scientific and technological advancement in the entire universe.(ref: classical studies)

In defense of literature and the Arts therefore, Prasida (2013) argues that

- Love of knowledge [common to science and poetry] to which the growth of science is due, is itself the product of a twofold impulse. We may seek knowledge of an object because we love the object or we wish to have power over it. The former influence leads to the kind of knowledge that is contemplative [i.e. Artistic knowledge], the latter to the kind that is practical [i.e. scientific knowledge].

Now, in the development of science, the power impulse which is embodied in industrialization and technological advancement that has, in turn given rise to globalization, has increasingly prevailed over the love impulse thus making technologically advanced countries to always wish to colonize and wield power over the less advanced countries that tend to be more spiritual and contemplative than pragmatic.

This, of course, often leads to the rape of democracy thus making Prasad to conclude that

- Science has made a world of power that threatens to undo all [yet]...in the world of culture, in the realm of experience that we measure by time; science and literature exist [side by side];

And Imre (2002) posits that “globalization has opened up a new space for cultural studies pedagogy” while at the same time constituting a problem of and for pedagogy. Chomsky and Barsamian (1996) on his part, asserts that any country that wants to develop must

- ...do it the way every other country(or continent) did, by not closing itself from international markets, but by focusing on domestic development, meaning building up its own resources, protecting them, [and] maintaining them.

The ball is in our court. We know what globalization portends for Africa. We know also that we do not possess the high technology with which to compete favorably with the advanced nations of the world so what is the African commodity for the globalized market economy that emphasizes a “worldwide movement towards technological, economic, financial, trade and communications integration?”

Since Africa, like the rest of the world requires development and since we cannot shut Africa out of the globalizing trends as Chomsky has observed, we must either look inwards and focus on domestic development which entails building up our own resources or look for ways to moderate the globalizing machine to African standards which is beyond our capabilities. What Africa has is a very strong and dynamic culture; therefore the option open to Africans is either to develop a strong cultural identity which is sustained in the oral literatures of African peoples or alternatively to adopt the option that Samir (1993) has described as “Delinking,” or partially negating the system which would imply “standing aloof” from globalization and prioritizing our needs as Africans which, in itself, though a difficult option if we must exist within the globalized context, is in fact, the best option open to African nations.

If our culture is what we can offer the globalized world, Africans can insist on channeling their resources into the building of an identity and personality profile through the development of African Arts, culture and languages to enable her stand against the encroachment of globalizing tendencies. Since language is regarded as the pivot of culture, we can start from language development because African languages have become the target of onslaught by globalizing forces. Emphasizing the centrality of language in this scheme of cultural development, Asar (2012) once again avers that language

- Crystallizes the organization of the structures of the universe and a people’s educational structure is reflective of how they see the universe. A people’s language is its soul and character...All of these philosophies are embedded in the language and it is our perception of the environment around us, channeled through our language and culture [and sustained in our oral literature] which shapes our behavior and attitudes towards that environment and the life inside of it.

Language is therefore central to the process of cultural development which is why oral discourse and/or the development of performance studies in oral literature depend as such on the manipulation of linguistic resources available to the accomplished artist whose creative capacity sustains language and identity. Franz (1967) therefore asserts that “to speak a language is to assume its world and to carry the weight of its civilization.”

The advocacy therefore, is for cultural studies that are based on a pedagogical emphasis on oral literature for emancipatory politics. Here we must recognize cultural studies as a form of political power structure that also recognizes the political importance of pedagogy. It is important also, to emphasize here that we often make the mistake of limiting pedagogy to a narrow perspective, in the school system only. Pedagogy is, in fact, not limited to the construction of values, experiences and knowledge in the classroom context only. Pedagogy is embodied in the

lived experiences and interactions of institutions, public audiences and educators in all contexts and at all levels of the social structure. Pedagogy therefore implies that learning occurs at all times in the lives of a people as they attempt to come to terms with their environment at all settings and spectrum of social life.

The primacy of cultural studies to political, economic and technological development of a people is therefore captured by Henry (2004) in his abstract to an article on cultural studies in which he argues that

- Cultural studies seems to have passed into the shadows of academic interests, replaced by globalization and political economy as the new millennium's privileged concerns among left academics. Yet cultural studies' longstanding interest in the interrelationship of power, politics, and culture remains critically important. Matters of agency, consciousness, pedagogy, and rhetoric are central to any public discourse about politics, not to mention education itself...the promise of cultural studies, especially as a fundamental aspect of higher education, resides in a larger transformative and democratic politics in which matters of pedagogy and agency play a central role.

5. CONCLUSION

Several scholars of oral literature, Ethnology and communication studies, whose works need not be catalogued here, have attested to the efficacy of oral literature as a repository of cultural values in the lives of indigenous peoples as well as its liberating potential and sustenance of identity at least as far as marginalized peoples and languages are concerned. What this writer simply advocates is a return to the age-old traditional storytelling modes that emphasize contextual and dialogic delivery of tales thus eliciting interaction that helps to sharpen the critical instincts of younger generations of African children to make them better aware of the inconsistencies that bedevil their environment. This sharpening of the critical instinct is precisely what Western education prevents when it de-emphasizes interactive sessions with learners. Finally, and perhaps very importantly, African nations and educational institutions should beware of and desist from seeking for excessive grants and aid from Western donor nations and organizations that use them as baits to limit the autonomy of recipient nations and institutions in decision making. African leaders and the elite should learn to judiciously manage and channel scarce resources towards literary and cultural development which are, as at now, Africa's foremost legacy and bequeathal to the outside world. Brock-Utne (2000) aptly warns African nations about Western donor organizations and donor/recipient frameworks which militate against academic freedom and autonomy and the right to develop academic programs that enhance cultural and intellectual development of their students in the direction they wish.

Re-iterating the values of oral literature in liberation and the sustenance of freedom of the personality of the individual which borders on democratic and collective growth of society, Ngalim (2014) opines that

- ...stories and proverbs are metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination. They are mirrors for seeing things in a particular way. They serve as pedagogic devices [and are] a significant tool for teaching values that guide children's concrete behavior in society.

It is therefore through these narratives which place emphasis on African world view, environment and knowledge systems that the liberation of Africa from Eurocentric paradigms for the perception of reality lies. It is time now to emphasize or advocate for their inclusion into the school system at all levels to enhance the raising of consciousness of African children to the vitality, versatility and dynamism of African culture and literature which they are continually being brainwashed to reject as primitive in favor of Western values and culture. Attesting to the fulfilling role of oral literature in the Tanzanian society, Madumulla (1998) observes that

- Although the proverb in Tanzania has generally been regarded as the domain for adults, this is no longer the case now. There have been rapid social changes which have affected the traditional social structure thus opening up new avenues and horizons for the genre.

The same goes for all other genres of oral literature which can be relied upon, not only for the edification of society but also for the projection of societal norms, their likes and dislikes, their beliefs and their taboos. In our recent paper (Ganyi, 2015) we also posited that oral literature

- ...serves as a code for moral and ethical judgment for individuals within the society; it becomes the referential statute for adjudication and is particularly attractive for its aesthetic and indirect potential, (p.55).

Oral literature also has the potential to give credence and coherent shape to the meaning of societal life and experience thus serving as a means for the interpretation of ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic antecedents of a people. This, in turn, authenticates life and roots a people within their environment of existence.

Condemning the current commercialization of the school system evident in globalizing trends that emphasize education for a competitive, capitalist and profit oriented economy and affirming why cultural education in the school system is a vital requirement, Zygmunt (1999) asserts that

- ...public and higher education may be one of the few sites available [today] in which students can learn about the limits of commercial values, address what it means to learn the skills of social citizenship, and learn how to deepen and expand the possibilities of collective agency and democratic life.

The academia should, therefore, emphasize cultural education in public schools to attempt to build a proper

- ...balance between democratic public spheres and commercial power; between identities founded on democratic principles and identities steeped in forms of competitive, self-interested individualism that celebrate selfishness, profit making and greed [that characterize and epitomize the concept on which globalization is built,] p.170.

Public schools should, therefore, imbibe and emphasize the collectivism that is entrenched in African oral narratives that serve as the pedagogical model for total education as a collective responsibility of everyone in society. This kind of pedagogy enables the recipients to engage in the kinds of struggles and criticisms of the established system that in turn, will further the possibilities of living in a more just and equitable society. This way we can ensure that the seeds of African democracy are sown and well nurtured. What Africans require as a people therefore, is not to continue to lament their colonial predicament but to reposition themselves, build up their own resources and prepare for the match towards progress and development within the present context of globalization and taking into cognizance their ecological and environmental peculiarities conditioned by the historical experiences which have endowed them with the democratic philosophy of “Ubuntu” or collectivism unto which they must cling for survival. This is achievable only “when the language of education is the language of culture,” (Maiga, 2004) through which a culturally consistent educational curriculum and practice can be propagated since according to Wade Nobles, it

- Is a systematic process of developing and stimulating the knowledge, skill, ability, attitude and character necessary for students to undertake socially-defined, goal-oriented, and culturally-meaningful activities.

It is also achievable when, according to Imhotep,

- The content and pedagogy [of our educational system] permit students to see themselves and to experience their cultural heritage in the curriculum.

Within this background, globalization may be a meaningful concept in the African context as oral literature would have laid the foundation for the liberation of consciousness that will encourage Africans to discover and determine who they are within the global set-up and to understand that no system should define them except their own skills, knowledge and beliefs that are necessary for the definition of and implementation of an agenda for the development of a democracy that is suitable for their ecological environment; and taking cognizance of their historical antecedents.

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