

Education in Traditional Igbo Society and its Manifestation in the Modern Global Technological Development

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Abstract

This write up which took over views of education in traditional Igbo society and its manifestation in the modern global technological development asserted that the Igbo people who travelled far and wild within the enclave of Africa and equally had contacts with the outside world were exposed and enlightened people. Therefore Ndi Igbo had well institutionalized traditional educational system. in the traditional Igbo society which developed children, youths and adults physically, intellectually, vocational training, skill development, character, social, religious, participation in community life and maturity to adult hood of the society. Education in the traditional Igbo society was so advanced since the Igbo people were among the fewer countries of the world that developed picture writing called nsibidi. This indigenous

writing was very prominently used for communication, commerce and travelling. The nsibidi writing was inhibited from further use/ development by the colonization of Ndi Igbo by the white imperialist. The traditional education of the Igbo people had manifested in the modern global technological development since it enabled transitions and successes in the western formal education system. The blending of Igbo traditional education with the formal western education enabled the production of prominent educated Igbo men and women that contribute in the national, regional and global socio-political, economical and technological development. Certain factors such as non institutionalization and non formalization of the Igbo traditional education had served as obstacle to its elevation to the international levels. Therefore recommendations aimed at further development of the traditional Igbo educational system to civilize the Igbo people to a more modern society are hereby made.

Introduction.

Education could be said to be involved with teaching and learning as the means of transmitting knowledge, culture, tradition, values, skills and heritage from one generation to another. Universally, education had been one of most acclaimed systems of human transformation that had always served as the torch bearer of civilization, transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes, culture and traditions. It is the most efficient means of liberation of individuals and the society from ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, disease, low/un productivity, slavery and many others. Education could equally be said or be classified as formal when it involves teaching and learning in organized educational institutions (schools) and informal or non formal when the teaching and learning takes place outside the educational institution. This is said to be traditional education where children and youths up bringing at their homes

or immediate environment and continue education for the elderly persons take peace. Cobb (1988) wrote that education is the field of human endeavour designed to meet the needs of individual/society and advance the course of humanity. Cobb added that the ultimate goals of education center on human growth, civilization and development.

All societies whether simple or complex, traditional or modern have ways of training and educating its young generations. The concerns for all men had been education for good life and a better progressive society. The Greeks had tailored their education to produce good state men for better society, the Spartans aimed at good soldiers with perseverance/endurance to defend their home land and the Romans combined the philosophy of Greeks for Rome for state man of nobility and skills to build and defend the Roman Empire(Okparaeke 2013).

Fafunwa (1974) wrote that traditional education which was informal education system was very prominent in the traditional African society. The African society in general and Nigerian people in particular has varied in traditional systems of education which had remained according to the various tribes. He added that the traditional education aimed at producing state men, skilled persons, heroes, hunters, persons of characters and nobility who are intellectually balanced, physically strong, socially accommodating and spiritually prepared to serve their society at any capacity selflessly.

Farrant (1980) said that traditional education had consciously aimed at meeting learning needs of children, youth and adult of the community based on their societal norms, culture and believes. Farrant added that the traditional education involves learning which goes on unconsciously from those things practiced by the family, friends, peer groups, communities, experiences and environments with permanent effects.

Education in the traditional Igbo society

In all the societies, education have always been used for technological development as veritable tools for the transformation of the society through the modification of culture and traditions to ensure the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude. Therefore, education involved technological development of the society to encourage literacy, good health, productivities, provision of the material needs of the society and general well being of the people.

In the traditional Igbo society education was informal but very prominent since the Igbo people travelled far and wide. They mixed up/ interacted with other races and tribes. The Igbo people in the traditional society trained their children in the non or informal educational system outside the four walls of education institutions such as home where the teaching and learning was not done by trained teachers and formalized curriculum was not used for instructions.

The traditional Igbo society transmitted their culture, values, traditions, skills, attitude, knowledge to their young ones, adults and from generation to generation through their traditional educational system that was informal. Writing on education in the traditional Igbo society, Okoro (2015) submitted that the Igbo language as medium of traditional education (though full of dialectical differences) was universal and intact with other cultural values like community life, brother hood, family, marriage, respect for elders, laws means of livelihood and taboos of the society.

Okoro added that the broad view of traditional Igbo society is that the individual Igbo man's cultural characteristics, is known to be hardworking, individualistic, religious, adventurous, gregarious, competitive, intelligent, achievement oriented,

abhors being bottled up and has a sprite of never say die. Okoro concluded that the above Igbo man's cultural heritages and values are transmitted from generation to generation through the traditional education which involves all men and woman of the society through oral traditions, apprenticeships in all trades/crafts, festivals and others. Okoro finally pointed out that the traditional Igbo education which was functional and technological oriented was not left for the parents alone but involved all members of the society.

To the Igbo people, educated person is person of character, a state man, a warrior and a person who can combine the above with productive skills. Functionality was therefore the guiding principles of education in traditional Igbo society use for the induction of the youths into the society and preparation for adult hood (Peil 1977).

In the traditional Igbo traditional education system, there was no specially trained teachers, no formulated curriculum, no institutions set aside for the teaching and learning. Methods of instruction were by observation, imitation and reasoning, at graduation period certification was not made and instructional materials were not used. But then, the traditional education system was technologically result oriented survival of the people with external influences.

The aims of education in the traditional Igbo society

In the traditional Igbo society and indeed in all other African societies the aims of traditional education were multi lateral to produce individuals who are honest, respectable, skilled, productive, and cooperative and conform to the social order of the day. The objectives of education in the traditional Igbo society include:

1. To develop the child latent physical skills- through physical training, the Igbo children learn to develop

physically through observation and imitation of adults or siblings involved in jumping, climbing trees, dancing, performing acrobatic acts and other physical exercises. The children learn to play music and dancing skills without teachers. The children get involved in plays, physical exercises and competitive games to test and enhance their physical, intellectual and social attributes.

2. Character development- the traditional education laid more emphasis on character training and religious education. Parents and relations train the young ones to be sociable, honest, truthful, courageous, humble perseverance and of good conducts. The seniors who show good examples or good manners teach the children how to behave, use corrections and punishment to indirectly develop the children with the encouragements of the parents and elders.
3. Respects to elders and peers are next essential to character training. Igbo children and youths are trained /educated to show respects to parents, elders, relatives and peers. They are meant to show politeness in addressing, greetings or salutation of others especially their seniors and constituted authorities. Those who do not show respects to others are regarded as lacking family training and education.
4. Intellectual training- intellect means the demonstration of knowledge and experience. Intellectualism involves process of reasoning in abstract and concrete terms. The traditional Igbo society education enhances growth and development of intelligence. The learning processes of developing intellectually involve observation, imitation, and participation in the community activities. The youths are taught to speak in proverbs, riddles and jokes to improve their intellectual capacities and retentive memories.

5. Vocational training- the Igbo traditional education played vital roles in the training of the youths to acquire skills with which to earn their living. Therefore the youths were educated in farming (live stock, crops and forestry), trading (merchandising) and crafts that facilitated technological and traditional industrial production. Igbo traditional education for skills in the above areas had been more of apprenticeship involved in practical training and technological driven.
6. Community participation- in the traditional Igbo society children are made to appreciate the facts that they belong to the immediate, extended family and their community. The children of the Igbo people were educated on community consciousness/life, they are therefore prepared for community services.

This was because Igbo communities carry out many tasks or activities such as constructing houses for their members. Igbo people equally build or repair roads, streams or water sources or village squares communally. This is in addition to active participation of all the members of the family or community in the burial of members or marriages ceremonies. This can best be ascribed to as social and technological orientations of togetherness.

During the above events, the children as observers and participants imbibe community ways of live and education. The children were equally educated by the community during initiation such as masquerade, age grades, dancing and hunting groups or even religious organizations. From the above, through community education the Igbo people passed their cultural heritage from one generation to another, had created and inculcated social, economic, political, technological balanced society that had passed through all stages of human civilizations.

In efforts to achieve the above educational goals and many more others, parents in the traditional Igbo society were aware that they cannot serve as effective teachers of their children education especially in apprenticeship training. The parents had therefore engaged the services of friends, relations or master craftsmen to educate/train their children for them.

In the area of vocational education, the traditional Igbo society trained/educated the male in farming, trading and crafts by the fathers or other relations. The girls were trained by their mothers in domestic activities such as child care, food preparations home keeping, trading, and some other aspects.

Writing on the history of the Igbos, Isichei (1976) wrote that the Igbo people and indeed other West African people were isolated from the outside world due to their hinter land habitations. As a result of trading and crafts the Igbo people had contacts with the people of Sudan, Arabs from Sahara and the Europeans who influenced and enlightened them educationally as wise and learned people hence the adage that a sojourner is more educated and knowledgeable than an old white gray hair man just domiciled with in the immediate environment only.

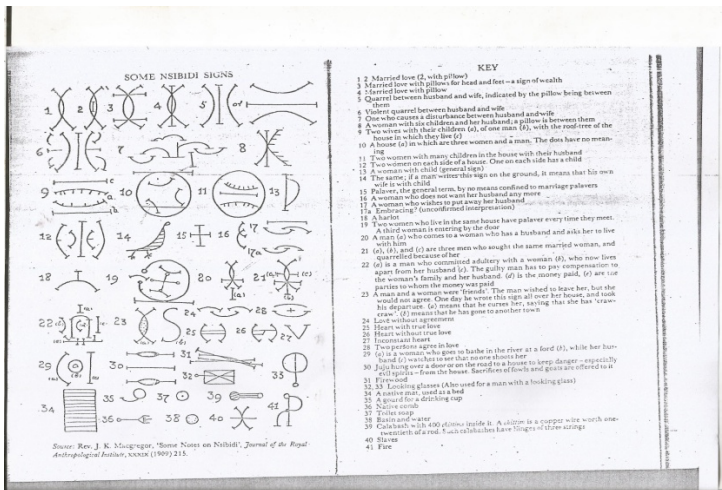
Writing further on the high knowledge, technology and literacy levels the traditional Igbo people, Isichei (1976) wrote in the whole Sub-Saharan Africa only Vai people of Liberia developed scripting system in the nineteenth century in response to outside influence. The Igbo people however developed in the pre-colonial era a widely used system of writing which owed nothing to external stimuli. The writing which originated from the great Igbo tribe which was called Nsibidi was in form of signs and symbols written mainly on cloths were used by travelers, black smiths and others.

The best account of Nsibidi given by a missionary in 1909 had it that the writing was taught in a school around Abriba area.

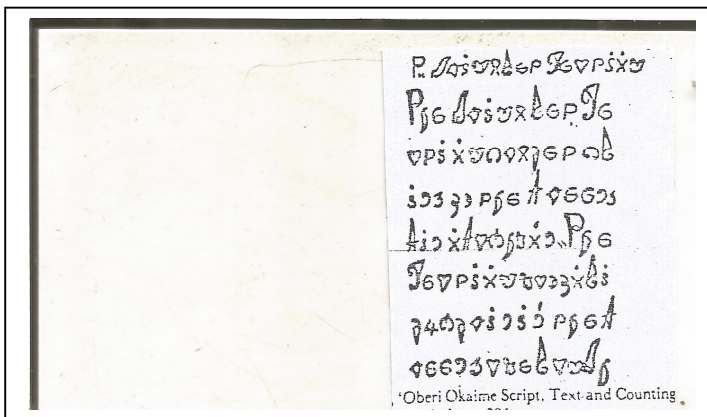
The sample of the Igbo writings Nsibidi are here by attached to display the great extent of the Igbo civilization, technology and the development levels of education in the traditional Igbo society.

Isichei (1976) decried further that the Nsibidi which was eroded by European colonization took the form of formalized pictograms like Chinese writing. If the experience of colonial rule had not deflected the Igbo people from their own patterns of education/development the people would have stood out as one of the foremost nationalities of the black race of the world today.

Isichie rightly pointed out that as in other societies knowledge of literacy would have become more diffused in the Igbo society just like Chinese, the script would have acquired more characters, becoming a richer, more flexible vehicle of literary expression and technological production. Isichie concluded that, the Igbo form of writing meant that like Chinese, it could be used by speakers of different dialects or even languages. Below is the sample of Igbo writing- Nsibidi with the interpretation key as presented by Isichie (1976) is hereby included as insight to the development strides in education and technology in the traditional Igbo society.



SAMPLE OF IGBO TRADITIONAL WRITING THE NSIBIDI



The above accounts of education of the traditional Igbo society indicated that Igbo people had a well entrenched educational system which was informal and developed writing which was inhibited by colonization. The educational system of the traditional Igbo society indicated that the Igbo people were learned, knowledgeable and intelligent. Igbo sons and daughters who were opportune to get educated in the formal system performed excellently as to use their western education to contribute in the national and modern global technological development.

The culture of parents of the traditional Igbo society adjudicating the responsibilities of education or training of their children to others had been adopted in the global educational development systems as manifestations where by educational institutions are established by the governments and private agencies to take the responsibilities of education of the society instead of allowing parents or relations to educate or train their children for the society.

The above development notwithstanding, the traditional education in Igbo land had coexisted side by side with the western formal education systems. Both the traditional education and the western formal education systems had complimented each other in the development of the society. Therefore, parents, relation, community and members of the society work with the facilitators of the formal educational system to the educational and technological development of the children.

The Igbo youths who became slaves were guided by their traditional education background to free themselves from slavery and later enabled them to acquire western education that helped in their services to both God and humanity in modern global technological development. Isichie (1976) enumerated the fore most Igbo Slave youth who ventured and

achieved distinctions in western education and technological development as Olaudah Equiano- 1745-1797.

Olaudah Equiano was the first author to write about the Igbo people in English. He studied arithmetic after he bought his freedom. He equally worked to stop slave trade and use his given position of responsibility to send black settlers back to Sierraleone. Isichie added that Africanus Horton a Sierraleoner of Igbo blood who read medicine served in English army and used his position to help blacks in Europe and Africa. Isiche also wrote about many other Igbo persons who got involved in early formal education.

These people succeeded because of the traditional Igbo education prepared the beneficiary on creativity, character, hard work, innovation and others traditional education virtues of the Igbo society which enable success in formal education.

The traditional Igbo education which is for people of all ages that had existed from the traditional period and had continued till this day can best be said to be responsible for the numerous break through of Igbo language such as:

1. Creation or formulation of Igbo alphabets and numerals which are very standardized and comparable to all others in the world today.
2. Conversion of the holy bible from English to Igbo language - the conversion of the holy bible from English to Igbo, language was made possible by the knowledge derived from the traditional informal Igbo education.
3. Conversion of Igbo language to literary language - the reading and writing of Igbo language which made it a language of literacy as the result of the benefits derived from Igbo traditional informal education.

4. Making Igbo language to be used in the academic fields - the making of Igbo language to be used in academic programme in the educational institutions such as from nursery to university doctorate degree is as result of the impact of Igbo traditional education system.
5. Language of broad casting - airing of Igbo language in such as media like radio and television locally, nationally and internationally owed its credits from traditional education. Today Igbo language is broadcast by British Broadcasting co-operation (BBC) and other international media out fits.
6. Authorship/publication of Igbo language—the publishing or authorship of various areas of Igbo language such as: philosophy, Igbo grammar, literature, history, religion and many others is as a result of literary knowledge derived from traditional Igbo education system.
7. Use of Igbo language in creative arts- the use of Igbo language in music home video and Nollywood for entertainment stem from knowledge and skills acquired from the traditional Igbo education system.
8. The technological transition and success of the Igbo people from the traditional technology to the emerged modern global technological development remained credits to the technological oriented traditional education of the traditional Igbo society.

Writing on the pursuit of western education which the Igbo people transferred the hard work, zeal, vigour and sense of commitment of the traditional Igbo education system to western education and technology, Ejiofor (2002) wrote that after initial resistance to colonization and when the Igbo people discovered the prosperity inherent in the white man civilization/technology, the Igbo people became addicted to western education and labored to be educated hence the rush

for education. Ejiofor added that at that time, communities organized fund raising ceremonies in Umunnas, villages and town unions to sponsor their sons in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

The communities equally established primary and secondary institutions in collaboration with the missionary. The government that emerged in Igbo land after independent was interested equally in education. They established more primary, secondary and the first autonomous university in Nigeria Ejiofor concluded.

The above efforts of the Igbo people in the pursuit and development of western education was due to the values derived from the benefits of the traditional education system. This could be said to be value transfer systems from traditional to western educations.

According to Okoro (2015) the positive impact of traditional education system manifested in the achievements recorded by Igbo men and women in the pursuit and acquisition of western education, religion and technology responsible for the migration of the Igbo people to all parts of Nigeria and the seizure of opportunities from 1930 to 1950 and from 1950 to 1966 in the affairs and administration of Nigeria. During the above period, Okoro continued the Igbos had filled virtually most of the top positions or jobs in large number in the civil service, parastatals, the army, police and in schools and colleges.

Ejiofor (2002) equally added that the efforts of the Igbo people in both traditional and western educational systems yielded fruits, the Igbo people took over all aspects of Nigerian administration before and at independent such as head of government, civil service, the military, corporations and

industries. Educated Igbo persons took the center stages pioneering leader of Nigeria as first indigenous Governor General, first President of the Senate and the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria- Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, first indigenous Commander of the Nigeria Armed Forces and later first Military Head of State of Nigeria General Aguiyi Ironsi, the first Nigerian Common Wealth Gold Medalist- Emmanuel Ifeajuna, the first Middle weight Boxing Champion- Dick Ihetu (Dick Tiger), the first Nigerian World Heavyweight Wrestling champion- Power Mike (Mike Okpala), the first indigenous Vice Chancellor of a Nigerian University- Professor Kenneth Dike, the first Ph.D holder of Mathematics- Prof. Chike Obi, the first Post Graduate Army Officer Chukwuemeka Odukwu Ojukwu, first greatest Nigerian novelist- Prof Chinua Achebe, the best known Nigerian economist- Dr Pius Okigbo, the best Nigerian Sculptor Prof. Ben Enwonwu, the greatest Nigerian Engineer- Prof. Gordian Ezekwe and many more others who had been at the fore front of Nigeria development were beneficiaries of the both Igbo traditional and the western educational systems Ejiofor concluded.

Though the civil war served as set back to the progress of the Igbo people in education and development strides. The Igbo sons and daughters are at fore front of modern global technological development in almost all the fields of human endeavours. These include positive impacts in all the fields of education such as science, arts, and social sciences, vocational and technical education.

The Igbo people play leading roles in the technological fields like transportation, commerce, industry, crafts and trades. These back grounds were derived from the hard work and commitment to both traditional and western educational system which have made the Igbo people to be rated as among the indigenous nationalities with highest literacy level in Sub-

Saharan African in particular and the black race in general. Notwithstanding of the above benefits of the modern formal education system to the Igbo people, the unemployment, indecent dressing, homosexuality, corruption, examination mal practices, certificate forgeries and many other ills that characterized modern society under the formal educational system were not experienced under the traditional Igbo educational system.

Fafunwa (1974) wrote that the western formal educational system is very expensive, non skill oriented, promote unemployment and very align to the African child whom the education should develop. Fafunwa concluded that what each of the African societies needed is the reorganization of her educational system in such a way as to integrate the traditional and modern apprenticeship systems into the overall educational system or process. This will enable the Igbo traditional education system to manifest in the modern global technological development.

In similar development, Ogu (2015) decried that the educational system in Igbo land today is in sorry state since the academic destiny of students including courses of study are in worse financial gambling, lack of directions, extortion, discrimination, crowded class rooms and inadequate human/material resources. Ogu added that the governments in various state of Igbo land are mismanaging education to point of deadly stunting and stagnant frustration.

The above are negative development which the Igbo society had never been subjected to by the traditional educational system from the traditional period to the present modern global technological development. This is because the Igbo traditional education system sustain/maintain civilized culture of the people.

Conclusion

Education in the traditional Igbo society played vital roles in the high literacy and technological development of the Igbo people during the traditional eras due to influences of the contacts the people had with other African tribes and Europeans. Igbo language which stood out as a language of communication and education that enhanced or facilitated teaching and learning informally in the traditional Igbo society looked very outstanding based on the fact that it is very meaningful and educative in both spoken and written forms. The use of proverb in Igbo language which many acclaimed international languages lack, distinguishes the Igbo traditional education system as special and universal in nature. The invention of writing called nsibidi which the origination had demonstrated high levels of literacy showed outstanding quality which many languages of many societies lacked demonstrated inherent qualities or very high class of the educational system in the traditional Igbo society. Many nations adopted writings and numerals of other societies in the educational system to develop and maintain their acclaimed international status. The forceful colonization of the Igbo people derailed their traditional education and therefore constituted hindrances to the survival of Igbo writing and language at the international levels.

However, Igbo language has manifested in the technological development since it is used for commerce, education, technology and trans-acculturation. Unfortunately, Igbo language had been singled out as one of the indigenous languages in the world that will resort to extinction due abandonment the Igbo traditional education by many Igbo home, families and communities and preferences of other peoples languages. More efforts should be geared towards saving Igbo language from death for the sustainability of Igbo tradition education inherited from our fore fathers. If the

development of Igbo language is intensified upon, the language will enable the Igbo traditional informal education system to develop and compliment the formal education for the development of the Igbo society to world class standards. This will equally sustain Igbo traditional education and language to enviable position as one of the best indigenous educational system and language in Africa in particular and the black race in general.

Recommendations

- The development of Igbo language should accorded top priority by every Igbo man (individuals, the government, corporate bodies and the friends of the Igbo) through sponsorship and organization of workshops, conferences and seminars to update Igbo language.
- The Igbo traditional education system should be develop to exist side by side and compliment formal education to encourage Igbo land as one nationalities in Africa highest literacy levels.
- Parents and families of Igbo descendants should be encouraged to use Igbo language at their homes as mother tongues, means of communications and languages of commerce for continuity and survival of the Igbo traditional education system which still have relevant in this modern era.
- Igbo language institutes should be established in countries with reasonable Igbo populations to enable Igbos living outside Igbo land to learn the language with ease, prevent the extinction of Igbo language, avoid mastering of foreign languages at the expense of Igbo language and provide Igbo traditional education system out Igbo land..
- Broad casting Medias of other counties of Europe, America, Asia and Africa should be encouraged to

broad cast Igbo language and Igbo traditional education (teaching and learning in Igbo) in their national/international radios and television stations out fits to encourage the learning of Igbo languages by the Igbos and non Igbos.

- Igbo language should be made compulsory general course for all students studying in the tertiary institutions located in Igbo land to encourage the traditional education informally in our education institutions..
- Publication of news papers, magazines, periodicals, newsletters and text books in Igbo language should be encourage through sponsorships and investments.
- Igbo languages should be used in the social media, internets and e-learning to update the language the Igbo traditional education to the global Information Communication

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