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TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE EXPANSION IN AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH'S SOCIALISATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT AND NATION-BUILDING RESPONSIBILITIES¹

Solomon Tai Okajare

Abstract: Apart from compacting the entire world into a global village, the phenomenal breakthrough in technology, with its universally acknowledged impact of fast-tracking an unprecedented knowledge expansion, has, in turn, made the entire gamut of human society and life primarily knowledge-driven to such an extent that the most fundamental to the minutest human activities are now propelled by technology-inspired knowledge. Given its quest for development, Africa is inevitably within the fray of this critical bend in human history. However, the extent to which this seemingly beneficial development has influenced the thinking trajectory and perception of African youths vis-à-vis their preparedness for the task of development is open to debate. In this context the present paper argues that, in spite of its admittedly beneficial impact, the technology and knowledge expansion has far-reaching negative implications for the socialisation, psychological satisfaction and potential of African youths to contribute effectively to the nation-building process. Identifying family values, language and indigenous marriage system as the hardest-hit African cultural elements, the paper essentially posits that the technology and knowledge expansion represents a furtherance of cultural imperialism, having increased the African youth's propensity for Western values such that their life-defining decisions are mainly shaped by Western culture as against their indigenous African culture. It concludes that the emergent reality is a deepening of the intensity

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of underdevelopment of Africa and a widening of the gulf between the Continent and other leading regions of the world, thus expanding the frontiers of African paradoxical contradiction, namely a mix-grill of knowledge expansion and underdevelopment.

Keywords: *Knowledge expansion, socialisation process, African indigenous values, culture, underdevelopment*

Introduction

Africa has been incorporated into the global political economy for centuries, starting particularly with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The trajectory of this incorporation has been such that Africa has consistently been the victim of influential global forces in the context of its being sucked into the vortex of a skewed and exploitative international economic order in which it has perpetually been reduced to a mere consumer of finished products from other regions of the world while it contributes mainly and marginally by being a supplier of primary goods. This underscores the fact that the incorporation of Africa did not really begin with the recent phenomenal explosion of technology-based expansive knowledge. However, this latter epoch is more significant for the present state and the future aspirations of Africa given the fact that, due, in part, to the grave impact of the former epoch ending with decolonisation, the continent has not been able to develop the requisite capacity to effectively manage the growing impact of external forces as unleashed afresh through neo-imperialism. The slow pace of growing democratic institutions and people-centred governments across Africa is a fallout of the failure to mindfully engage in robust dialogue and consensus building in the process of policy formulation, particularly among divergent interests within each of the heterogeneous states of post-colonial Africa. Such a dialogue and its attendant results would have served the all-important purpose of creating policies and structures for a genuine development for Africa and a counterforce against new form of external domination.

Beyond this, however, it has been observed that the impact of the knowledge expansion that grew from the recent unprecedented technological breakthrough is a mix-grill of good and bad effects as it pertains to the space of the youth in Africa's quest for development. Olaopa (2015: 18) captures a positive side of this development in

what he calls “the remarkable transformations that have been brought about by ICT.” He adds that “We all daily live these changes which have greatly impacted different sectors of the world economies including financial system, health care delivery, commerce and trade, weather and traffic management, airline reservations and travel, consumer electronic devices, etc.” This is further stressed by Negroponte (1995: 30), who argued that “Like a force of nature, the digital age cannot be denied or stopped. It has four very powerful qualities that will result in this ultimate triumph: decentralizing, globalizing, harmonizing and empowering.” It goes without disputing that the unfettered expansion in technology and knowledge not only updates public awareness, it also continuously redefines lifestyle values across cultures in the world. In this context, Drucker (1993) saw knowledge as the only meaningful resource today. It can, therefore, be inferred as Olaopa (2015: 18) did, that knowledge in the contemporary digital age is driven by technologies and channelled by nations into a myriad of policies and development dynamics in a manner that makes for national progress. Olaopa (2015: 18) avers further that ICT contributes to the intelligent quotient of the digital generation youth and by extension deepens the development quotient of any nation through the adequate and appropriate deployment of technology in the educational system.

Arising from the foregoing is that a combination of weak structure as an impediment to development in Africa and the multiple benefits accruable from the technology and knowledge expansion constitute what can be termed the African dilemma in view of the fact that they are contradictory. One major problem confronting many African countries is how to empower the teeming youth population with enabling opportunities that can help them grow up to become useful adults not just for themselves but also for the overall economic benefits of their countries. In the United Nations World Population Report (2012), the African population for 2013 was projected at 1.1 billion, which was estimated to rise to 2.3 billion in 2050. Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi (2013: 1) have noted the demographic youthfulness of Africa: “In 2011 the youth who are defined ... as those between 15 and 24 years of age, constituted 21 percent of more than 1 billion people of Africa, whereas another 42 percent was less than 15 years old.” This signals that for a long time, Africa has the challenge of fixing its youths to contend with. This becomes more worrisome in view of the growing acquisition of technological knowledge by African

youth with little or no space to dissipate and utilise the potentials. In other words, while the increased connectivity of technology super highways offers tremendous opportunities, the technology-savvy African youths are yet to reach their potential. The immediate danger it poses, therefore, is that in as much as they lack the space to gainfully utilise their knowledge, the African youths are prone to using it the other (negative) ways, while the continent is prone to losing its young population to the negative implications that admittedly came with the knowledge expansion.

The foregoing explications are modestly offered to present an interesting but panoramic picture of the multiple benefits accruable from the unprecedented technology and knowledge expansion and to hint at Africa's challenge of providing opportunities for the youths. It remains to be added that the new reality of knowledge expansion appears to have provoked a serious disconnect between the typical African and his/her African identity, thus sparking off serious debate among scholars and observers as to its usefulness. As Falola (2010: 1) has argued, globalisation has provoked powerful forces that are "redefining identities within and between frontiers, producing conditions that denationalize and deterritorialize us as we travel, mix, mingle and develop a global framework or as we reconstitute national or local identities in new spaces." Furthermore, the (unrestrained) travel, mixing and mingling among youths across national boundaries has seriously impacted African youths' socialisation process, which is critical for their psychological fulfilment and readiness for nation-building responsibilities. It has also imposed on them what Falola (2010: 1) calls a "new or modified identity." Akanle (2012: 16–21) buttresses this scenario further:

Cultural boundaries today are very blurred within this framework and thresholds of cultures increasingly become fragile. Even media products like Nollywood and Africa Magic that are supposed to propagate local cultures are laced with foreign contents in manners that made adoption of foreign cultures easy and normal. Since cultural ethos(es) are not static and dynamic, even though globalization can breed cultural divergence, the potentialities of convergence are rife.

In essence, African youth now seamlessly adopt foreign cultures through a technology and knowledge expansion since national boundaries are only visual and can be easily penetrated. But beyond the well-known impact of globalisation on Africa, like sustenance of the established international economic order, thus keeping the continent as a junior partner in the contemporary international trade regime, and the subservient stature of indigenous culture, the direct implications of technology and knowledge expansion as the most critical associated consequences of globalisation deserve to be re-considered. This is the main objective this paper sets out to achieve by unpacking the implications of technology and knowledge expansion for the development trajectory of African youths. The fundamentals in focus include the youth's socialisation process, psychological fulfilment and preparedness for nation-building responsibilities. Understanding these in the context of the present reality, it is hoped they will serve as a means to ascertain how benevolent or malevolent the new technology is to African society, and how the aesthetic complexion of core African values has been affected by the pragmatic values of the new technology and knowledge expansion. This study rests on the oft-recited dictum that "youths are the leaders of tomorrow." What this dictum represents in the typical African context is that members of the young generation are the main corps of human resources that will drive the social engineering process of development in the future. Essentially, the quantum of knowledge they acquire in the present will definitely launch them to the future.

This study represents a departure from the majority of the existing literature, and a major point of reference to African studies in the contemporary age of globalisation. It is hoped that this study will stimulate further discourses and knowledge on Africa's present reality and future aspirations in the globalised world. The prevalence of trans-border cultural interactions, and the associated culture conflicts manifest in a submergence of African cultural values under the Western orientation, makes a study of this nature significant as a reliable solution to the biting challenges of development in Africa and for Africans. Designed to provide for deepening the understanding of the "other side" of the technology and knowledge expansion for Africa, aside from the tremendous benefits it offers, which have always been in the front burner, the study is structured into four parts in addition to this introduction. The first part covers the theoretical framework and

conceptual clarification, while part two offers an overview of African core cultural values of indigenous marriage, family and language and establishes the missing links between the knowledge expansion and the African values identified. Implications arising from the nexus and missing links engage our attention in part three, while the fourth part concludes the study.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories are adopted for this study including “social development,” “hegemonisation,” and “non-domination” as highlighted below.

Social development theory is chosen because of its universal application found relevant to the study beyond the narrow purview of a community-based project. This is premised on the fact that the quest for development is at the centre of the technology and knowledge expansion across the world and in all ages. Social development theory is useful to explain and understand the qualitative changes in the structure and framework of society that helps the society to better realise its aims and objectives. Such qualitative changes can be seen as the same with social changes, which of course, can only be driven by the mechanism of increasing awareness (a synonym for knowledge expansion) on the part of the members of society, as such awareness will predictably lead to a better organisation of the available human and material resources for the ultimate purpose of fast-tracking the development process. This is quite applicable to all ages and climes of human history, and no less to the present study.

Development, which has been seen as the result of society’s capacity to organise resources to meet challenges and opportunities, can be understood within the context of social development theory. Usually, pioneers in any society introduce novel and innovative ideas, practices and habits, which some conservatives impervious to change would naturally resist. Much later, these innovations are not only accepted but also imitated, organised and adapted for use by all other members of the given society. This is applicable to the process leading to the global expansion of technology and knowledge towards the close of the last century. This underscores the view that development is a human process as humans, not material factors, drive the process of development. Thus, the level of people’s education, the intensity of

their aspirations and energies, the quality of their attitudes and values, skills and information all affect the extent and pace of development. These elements, as Jacob and Asokan (1999: 51) point out, come into play whether it is the development of the individual, family, community, nation, or the whole world.

However, it should be borne in mind that social change is not always positive. Indeed, it can be negative as well. Also, a seemingly positive social change may generate negative consequences. It was perhaps in appreciation of this that Kristensen (1974: xiv) argued that a theory of social development must explain both the negative and positive changes taking place in the structure of human society. The present study locates its argument in this context that the phenomenal expansion in technology and knowledge is, for the African youth, a social development of positive and negative changes as will be highlighted shortly. Generally derivable from the above and related literature is that development signals change in any society. Therefore, social development is an all-encompassing term that describes the whole gamut of development as it pertains to human life and society. Paiva (1977: 329) sees social development as the development of the capacity of people to work continuously for their own and society's welfare when he argues that,

the goal and substance of social development is the welfare of the people, as determined by the people themselves, and the consequent creation or alteration of institutions (including people's values, individual behaviour, and motivation) so as to create a capacity for meeting human needs at all levels (especially those at the lower levels) and for improving the quality of human relationships and relationships between people and societal institutions.

In the same vein, Omer (Omer 1979: 15 as quoted in Mingley 2014) captures it as a process that brings about an integrated, balanced and unified social and economic development of society and one that gives expression to the values of human dignity, equality and social justice. She adds that social development seeks "to create humanistic societies committed to achieving peace in the world and progress for all." On his part, Mingley offers a quite instructive perspective that social development does not happen by chance nor is it a product of accident. He conceives social development as a process of planned

social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic multifaceted development process (Mingley 2014: 13). Asphalter and Singh (2008: 2) define social development as “planned and directed change that enables people to achieve greater happiness, satisfaction and peaceful life.”

What is common to the foregoing postulations of social development theory is that it is society-focused and people-centred. It is therefore a theory that can provide a good intellectual context for a better understanding of man and society, their interface and mutual relations as well as how the former manages the latter and handles or adjusts to changes that emanates as a result of such interface.

The theory of cultural hegemony was promoted by Antonio Gramsci to explain the relation between culture and power under capitalism. One of its main theses is that man is not ruled by force alone but also by ideas. While there is no specific definition of cultural hegemony in his translated writings, Gramsci came close to labelling hegemony as the “spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production” (Gramsci 1971: 12). Gramsci’s theory is more or less a rebellion against the positivist view of history, which prevailed in the Italy of the 19th century.

Admittedly, cultural hegemony can be better understood within historical and intellectual contexts far more expansive than the capitalism/economic production axis in which Gramsci located it. Yet, his efforts are worthwhile in illuminating the social phenomenon of relations between or among groups. It should also be borne in mind that hegemony has little or no meaning unless it is paired with domination. Of course, the hegemon (dominant group) has domination as its main objective. For Gramsci, consent (of the subordinate) and force (imposed by the dominant group) almost always co-exist, though one or the other predominates (Lears 1995: 568). Consent, therefore, involves, for Gramsci, a complex mental state, a contradictory consciousness “mixing approbation and apathy, resistance and resignation” (Lears 1995: 570). An outstanding feature

of Gramsci's theory is his recognition that the line between the cultures of the dominant and subordinate groups is a permeable membrane, not an impenetrable barrier (Lears 1995: 574).

The above postulations of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony significantly describe the nature and character of Africa's relation with the West in the present age of knowledge expansion via modern technology. This historical phenomenon has created a global system in which the dominant group (the West) has continued to impose the general direction on social life, while the subordinate (Africa and other Third World countries) continue to give spontaneous consent. Arising from this is that Western culture is steadily hegemonising African culture in all facets. There thus emerges what Gramsci identifies as an organic crisis, which involves the totality of a historical bloc. It can be inferred that the contemporary international system is a historical bloc with the contradictory and variant impact of modern technology and knowledge expansion as an organic crisis. As Bates (1975: 351–366) argues, an organic crisis is manifested as a crisis of hegemony in which the people cease to believe the words of the (national) leaders and begin to abandon the traditional parties. It is common knowledge today that African youth particularly no longer listen to the words of leaders at every stratum of the social order. They have also abandoned many aspects of the African traditional heritage.

The theory of non-domination as propounded by Philip Pettit is also relevant to this study in view of the impact of technology and knowledge expansion on the level of Africa's freedom in the international system. Pettit's contribution to the debate on the Republican theory has been rated unparalleled. As Larmore (2001: 229) notes, "Pettit has given to the republican model of political life a systematic development it has never received before." In his Republicanism, Pettit propounded the concept of "liberty as non-domination" to set out the meaning of freedom and political liberty as conceived by the Republican school of thought. The Republican conception of political liberty defines freedom as "a sort of structural (not just symbolic) independence – as the condition of not being subject to the arbitrary or uncontrolled power of a master" (Stanford Encyclopedia 2014). Pettit (1997; 1999: 65) puts it more philosophically that, "a person or group enjoys freedom to the extent that no other person or group has the capacity to interfere in their affairs on an arbitrary basis." In other words, we are

free to the extent that we do not find ourselves under the domination of others, subject to their will and exposed to the vicissitudes of their desire (Larmode 2001: 229). This implies that in the Republican sense as represented by Pettit, freedom means securing enjoyment of non-domination.

In its post-colonial history, Africa has not enjoyed this leverage of non-domination. More often than not, its affairs have been arbitrarily interfered with, simply because it has suffered vulnerability over time due to its structurally weak position at many levels of international relations. This underscores the ease with which technology and knowledge expansion has also combined to shape the outlook of African youth such that their African identity and personality are being steeply eroded.

Indigenous African Values and Contemporary Knowledge Expansion: An Overview of the Missing Link

It suffices at this juncture to take a cursory look at some core African values that are relevant to the present study and to expose the missing link between them and the contemporary knowledge expansion as applicable to the African youth. To begin with, one of the core family values across Africa is according due respect to the elders. Africa is a society where the process of socialisation entails a rigorous but smooth process of initiating the young minds into various aspects of inter-personal relations including a disposition to all categories of people. Strongly founded on the connection between the past and the present, African cultural values ensure that elders are well respected and deferred to in many things, including the maintenance and sustenance of the established social order. They are duly acknowledged as the living representatives of the departed patriarchs and the gods and, as such, any act of insubordination against them is frowned at and severely punished. The elders are always seen as the fountain of guiding wisdom, who must always ask questions and get answers from the younger ones. During meal times, elders are served first (Wiens 2011).

Closely associated with this family value are others like a sense of community life, good human relations, hospitality, the sacred and

religion, time, respect for authority, language and proverbs (Emeka 2015). The first three are particularly instructive. In the African perspective, there is no life outside the community. This is why everyone is expected to contribute to the well being of the community in the interest of the general well-being of all. According to Davidson as quoted by Emeka, an African proverb that captures the essence of the African sense of community is that “Go the way that many people go; if you go alone, you will have reason to lament.” Over time, this largely assured a strong link between the African and his/her community. For the African, a community is like a living clan “where real life is assured, where one can suffer neither social nor cultural alienation. It is a clan that is alive because life in it is human and humane” (Emeka 2015). It offers their members psychological and ultimate security as it gives them both a physical and an ideological identity, and as such remains the custodian of the individual. While individuals live and die, the community lives on beyond and after the individual. The Africans’ sense of community life is a principle based on community identity directed at building individuals that will be the bearers of community culture. For this reason, such individuals are made to subsume their personal identity under the larger community identity. Hence, individualism as an ideology and a principle of living is discouraged in Africa. Biko (1978: 42) furthered this scenario:

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all we do we always place man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism...

Arising from the above is the natural flow of a deep sense of good human relations in Africa. It is appreciated that in the interest of the community, each individual must be a good neighbour to his/her fellow human. It entails the mutual recognition of human dignity and worth manifested through empathy, intimacy and show of understanding. As Ifemesia (1979: 2) notes of the Igbo in Eastern Nigeria in what he calls humane living among an African people, their relationship is “a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy, and by consideration

and compassion for human beings.” An important aspect of the good human relations in Africa, which takes place at both the inter-personal and inter-communal levels, is the effective deployment of dialogue, communication and conversation. People freely discuss issues of common interests so as to arrive at meaningful solutions. Often, the refusal to freely discuss is viewed as a sign of enmity or bad manners. As the Yoruba proverb goes, *Adake ma fohun, ao mo t’eni to nse*, meaning it is difficult to know the position of the silent one. This implies that interaction with such a character could be dangerous. Biko (1978: 41) underscores the intensity of inter-personal communication as a vehicle for good human relations in Africa:

Ours has always been a man-centred society. Westerners have in many occasions been surprised at the capacity we have for talking to each other not [*only*] for the sake of arriving at a particular conclusion but merely to enjoy the communication for its own sake. Intimacy is a term not exclusive for particular friends but applying to a whole group of people who find themselves together whether through work or residential requirements. [*Emphasis in brackets mine*]

It suffices to note, however, that an ingenious mechanism for avoiding rancour and misgivings in such communication and dialogue is that personal sentiments and weaknesses are respectively recognised and understood. As the Yoruba would say in a proverb, “You don’t count the fingers in the presence of the man who has only nine.” In other words, don’t mock people for their inadequacy or incapacity.

A good sense of hospitality predictably follows the above. Africans have different ways of showing hospitality to themselves and to strangers ranging from the presentation of water, kola nut (as common with the Igbo), traditional gin and palm wine (in many parts of Yorubaland) to the full incorporation of strangers into society and the offer of land to them for farming. The interest and upkeep of the stranger are always considered paramount. According to Okafor (1974: 21),

In traditional African culture, whenever there is food to be taken, everyone present is invited to participate even if the food was prepared for a far less number of people without anticipating the arrival of visitors. It would be a height of incredible bad manners

for one to eat anything however small, without sharing it with anyone else present, or at least expressing the intention to do so.

While it can be asserted with some measure of plausibility that, in Africa today, respect for elders, a sense of community life, good human relations, and a high level of hospitality still remain values among aging Africans, the same cannot be vouched for the youth. This is not unconnected with the centrality of individualism in Western culture as propagated through the ICT/internet devices. African youth are gradually losing touch with these African values that define human decency, happiness and dignity in Africa. Instead, they are beginning to curry the Western persuasion of life in the fast track. Young Africans no longer believe in prostrating, stooping, bending or such other gestures to greet elders, and they spend most of their time “taking instructions from the Internet” on modern ways of doing things. To many of them, the elders’ advice or instructions smack of what is commonly referred to in Nigeria as “old school” ideas, useful only as historical relics or mere reminders of how things were done in “those days.” This is a missing link!

The African concept of sex and marriage is rooted in the traditional belief that sex and marriage are sacred realities. Hence, there must be a sexual morality derived from that sense of sacredness of the procreative function. Sex was, until recently, in Africa a taboo matter that should not be toyed with. Thus, Africans found the show of public love even between spouses in the Western world rather scandalous. African parents are expected to be reserved and restrained in their expression of love in the presence of their children. In the same context, virginity was held in the highest esteem. A virgin bride brought honour not only to herself but also to her entire family, particularly the parents, who could be especially appreciated for the proper upbringing their girl-child. In such a case, the bride’s virginity issue would become a matter of public knowledge, and the girl’s prestige would soar among her in-laws. Ayobami (2008: 45) underscores the importance of virginity in his claim that,

In times past, the virginity of the female at her marriage called for a family celebration with appropriate gifts and visits from the in-laws. This highly esteemed the woman before her husband; set her

on high and entrusted her the treasury and keys to her husband's power room.

This is further buttressed by the fact that virginity as a cultural practice helped to check social ills among juveniles in pre-colonial Yoruba society (Ehinmore 2014: 365). A rare example of this happened in Nigeria recently when Adams Oshiomole, the Governor of Edo State in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, celebrated the purity of his new wife, Lara Fortes, from Cape Verde. Oshiomole announced to, one is sure, a bewildered gathering in a local church that he met his wife a virgin:

I can boldly tell all of you that I was a very principled man during my first marriage. I didn't succumb to the worldly pleasures of this lustful environment, even though I had lots of opportunities. And it was this principled sobriety that made me fish for a virgin wife. I can boldly say to you all that I was the first man to know her (Lara Fortes) and initiated her into the worldly ways (*Daily Post*, May 2015).

Also, Africans believed in sexual abstinence within marriage at certain periods of the year, e.g., during the weaning or planting season as a sacrifice to obtain the favour of the gods in the planting and subsequent harvest. On the other hand, children are seen as a symbol of blessing in every marriage, and as such, the idea of deliberate barrenness is inconceivable in the African worldview. Hence, a case of barrenness is handled collectively in any given African family. This is the community dimension of marriage whereby it is not seen as just an affair between two individuals but rather an enduring relationship and life-time alliance between two different families. As Fasoranti (2003: 4) argues, "For the Yoruba people, marriage is a social affair and so entails ritual and ceremony, representing social approval and also entails role playing and reciprocal obligations as directed by the culture." This is further expounded in the complex process of marriage, which as Ehinmore (2014: 361-371) observes, ranges from the manner a man seeks the hands of a young girl in marriage through the role of a go-between, thorough a historical investigation to ascertain the non-existence of a blood relationship between the two families, the scrutiny of family histories, the involvement of the boy's parents, a preliminary visit to the girl's family, the preparation for

a traditional marriage and payment of bride-wealth (dowry), as well as pomp and fanfare. In such arrangements, the entire community or two communities, in case the would-be spouses are from two different communities, were involved one way or the other.

It is posited here that Western ideas as proliferated through ICT in recent times have de-emphasised this social setting in favour of more personalistic concepts. This has led to the practice of consummating relationships and marriages on-line through Facebook and other social media. More often, the reality is that most of these marriages don't survive, as there would be no sufficient prior knowledge of one another between the intended couples. The social commitment that Africans have attached to marriage may appear to affect the personal freedom of one or both of the spouses. But, a closer observation easily reveals that such multi-party commitment as Burke (1987) avers, does not, in any way, erode the personal values of desire for self-fulfilment, mutual love, and personal choice of the couple. As implied above, it was the young man who more often initiated the whole process by first indicating his preference among the available young girls. After this, the family would step in. The rejection of this African commitment as implicitly canvassed through the influence of modern technology amounts to a hidden and excessive self-concern that can lead in time to the refusal to face up to the demand involved in the mini society which is the nuclear marriage itself, and to a subsequent collapse of the marriage (Burke 1987). It goes without saying that this is yet another missing link between knowledge expansion and African values.

Language remains the main instrument and medium to drive communication and propagate ideas and peoples' cultures. As a critical segment of culture, language undergoes modification from time to time by dropping some words and accommodating new ones. This modification on a large scale implies some form of domination and subordination of languages across cultures, a situation that is attributable to the impact of slavery, colonial rule and globalisation. In this context Falola (1992: 2) asserts "... a standard Yoruba language that everyone can understand emerged as a written language during the nineteenth century." However, due to what he calls rapid, chaotic and reformist changes in the century ranging from war, the emergence of new power centres, a population shift from the savannah to the forest region, the emergence of the intelligentsia, the abolition of

the slave trade, the return of liberated slaves, the evangelisation by foreign missions, the British annexation of Lagos and the imposition of colonial rule, all combined to impact on the survival of Yoruba language in its original form. A keen observation shows that, in recent times, African languages are not merely undergoing a modification; they are threatened to extinction among the youth. As Awobuluyi (2014: 6) notes, "... we are in a similar fashion now gradually dropping our native language and adopting a presumably better foreign language to replace it." Oke (1984: 88–89) notes along the same line that

The influence of the English Language, for instance, is felt in every Nigerian language. An average Nigerian youth could hardly speak a sentence without including an English word. Much has been written about pidgin English, a mixture of local language and English words and expressions.

The dilemma of Africa in the context of modern reality is both externally imposed and internally inflicted. Adamo (2005: 21) argues convincingly that

The imposition of the English language on the world, Africa, and in particular Nigeria (through the media, information technology, and other means of propaganda and under the guise of globalization) is a form of linguistic terrorism ... the continued use of English in all spheres of life will make the Nigerian state stagnant, if not indeed retrogressive, rendering growth and development elusive.

Adegbite's optimistic observation on the possible survival of indigenous languages is instructive at this juncture. He argues that

From all indications, it seems that, although a *greater number* of the elite class still do not have favourable dispositions towards their indigenous language as they do towards *English*, the seed of the positive realization of the complimentary roles of indigenous languages and English in national development has been sown among a *few* Nigerians ... (Adegbite 2003: 185). *Emphasis mine.*

The above assertion indicates that while foreign languages are imposed on Africa, the greater number of the people does not appreciate the need to liberate indigenous language from what Adamo calls linguistic terrorism. While it is most likely that the greater number

draw membership from the rank of youth, it remains to be seen how the few (also most probably the aged and aging) can salvage the situation. Indeed, the subordination of African languages has been officially endorsed by the African Union, which has adopted a language policy that recommends only Kiswahili as the only African language in addition to four European languages, namely English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, and one Asian language (Arabic) as the official languages of the continental body. It is stated in Article 11 of the AU Act that

The official languages of the Union and all its institutions shall be Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Kiswahili and any other African language. 2. The Executive Council shall determine the process and practical modalities for the use of official languages as working languages (Protocol on Amendment to the Constitutive Act of the African Union 2003)

The missing link of this trend of foreign language domination on African languages, which is of course another phase of the entrenched subordination of African cultures to those of the Euro-American axis, with the knowledge expansion for African youth are grave. In the immediate, it represents a hold down on any chance of Africa for true development. While English and French languages have been predominantly used in Africa, there is no longer any justification for the continuous use of these foreign languages as the only vehicle of knowledge transmission. The Japanese, Chinese and German examples are well known that with a strong adoption of their indigenous languages as vehicles of knowledge sharing in their institutions, their development trajectory has not been impaired. As Awobuluyi (2014: 7, 12) argues “No human language was ever expressly created for discussing any discipline or set of disciplines. Any language found suitable for discussing specific disciplines today only became so mostly through collective conscious efforts of its speakers/users,” and that “No language ever suddenly becomes suitable for matters it had never before been used for.” The forces and promoters of the slave trade and colonial rule did not allow the nurturing of these collective conscious efforts in Africa for their imperial interests. This is now being reinforced by technology and knowledge expansion under the cloak of globalisation. Thus, multilingualism, which should have been beneficial to Africa, is an agent of ruin and obstacle to

development. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998: 114) aver “every language in a multi-lingual society has the right to exist and to be given equal opportunity to develop legal and other technological limbs to flourish.” A globalised world is supposedly a multi-lingual human society. If it is, then the current reality of international languages forming a huge threat against African indigenous languages is an anathema. Ndhlovu (2008: 143) furthers expounds the grave implications of this trend of language marginalisation that,

... when languages are marginalized and remain invisible in the development matrix, it is the accumulated wisdoms that die – wisdoms about politics, about philosophy, about ideology, about living on the planet earth and successfully doing so. Every ethnolinguistic polity is unique and has a different history from any other. How they interacted with the environment makes each African community a unique people with a unique language, a unique wisdom, a unique ideas (sic) and unique knowledge systems, which have the capacity to transform the socio-economic fortunes of the world for better.

The above illustrative discussions provide some clues to the nature of interface between some core African values: family values, sex and marriage, and language as critical aspects of African cultures, as they relate to the contemporary knowledge expansion vis-à-vis the African youth. It has been established that knowledge expansion as a offspring of globalisation has far-reaching missing links with the extant African values in the context of the present and future aspirations of Africa and African youth who are supposed to be held on and sustained by their clear African identity.

Implications for African Youth

In the typical African setting, youth socialisation process entailed preparing the youth for autonomy and responsibility. This process involved mindful guidance and dynamic parenting between experienced extended family members and neighbours as well as friends of parents. The outcome of this process was such that the youth would grow with the consciousness that his or her disposition and general patterns of behaviour were being watched by certain elders of

vested interests. His or her life was thus their investment from which they looked forward to an overall responsible youth who would, in no distant time, be capable of taking decisions and providing leadership for the even younger generations. The cycle goes on like that. This trend has, however, changed in recent times with the knowledge expansion that followed the techno-breakthrough. Altruism has witnessed serious atrophy, while egoism has triumphantly emerged as the in-thing. Traditional familism has given way to the misplaced fear that asserting rules and regulations would rupture the youth's socialisation process. Instead, subjective and unguided aspirations for autonomy are reinforced with the result that the typical African youth now becomes unruly and downright hostile. Dizard and Gadlin (1990: 156) argue that "preparing children for autonomy tends to make them precocious, even unruly, yet, there was reason to fear that imposing rules would inhibit or stultify a child's movement towards autonomy." In specific terms, the implications for socialisation, psychological fulfilment and nation-building responsibilities are considered below.

On Socialisation

The information and communication media grown by the expansion of technology and knowledge have exposed African youths to dual (conflicting) socialisation institutions, namely that of the traditional parents and the media/electronic devices. While the family would seem to still provide a sanctuary of intimacy and a zone of stability, the media develop the child's (later youth's) capacity for self-expression, autonomy and self-control with respect to affective behaviour. The youth has to make a continuous adjustment between these two spheres (Denick 1989: 155–180). This is not a smooth or easy process. More often, the youth is unable to form the necessary communication link between the two environments. As responsibilities are not clearly defined between the home and the electronic devices platform as agents of socialisation, the intrusion of the latter has severely trimmed the potentials of the former as the provider of crucial aspects of the youth's socialisation process. There is also the challenge of what Elkind (1981) calls the permeable family, which more often develops the tendency to rush the young minds into adult roles. According to him, these permeable families

hurry their children to take on the physical, social, and psychological trappings of adulthood before they are prepared to deal with them. Permeable families tend to thrust children and teenagers forward to deal with realities of the outside world at ever-earlier ages, perceiving them as competent to deal with the steady diet of overt violence, sexuality, substance abuse, and environmental degradation that they view on television.

This often results in a huge gap in the transition of teenage children to adolescents where they constitute real youth.

Parental perception has also changed. While African parents are still generally concerned with their children, the digital generation parents in Africa have now shifted their focus from intuitive parenting of developing a whole child to developing specific techniques of merely growing the child's positive sense of self-esteem, thus depriving the young mind of a customised treatment. This is taken as deficient (or failed) parenting, which is seen as a result of the lack of ability to blend ICT knowledge properly with the dynamics of culture. The present study contends that a whole child can be reared if parents are willing and ready to adjust the new ICT-based knowledge to the dynamics of African culture as manifested in its diversity.

Peer-group influence has always been a critical force in the child socialisation process. The current knowledge expansion has severely expanded the scope of that influence. It is not disputed that youths interface and communicate through many devices nowadays without the awareness of their parents. The devices of knowledge expansion have not only provoked the uncontrolled flow of information, they have also shielded youths from the supervision and monitoring of their parents. Consequently, many African youths are now more vulnerable to peer group influence capable of leading to diverse criminal tendencies ranging from cultism to cyber crime, examination malpractice, plagiarism and pornography. Other deficiencies like weak research culture and a lack of relevant and qualitative data for effective planning and decision-making are associated with peer-group influence in the modern age of knowledge expansion.

Sexual activities among African youths, particularly adolescents, appear to be growing reckless and uncontrollable as the youths

are now exposed to pornographic and related visual items on the Internet. Masturbation, pre-marital sex, lesbianism and so on are no longer strange topics among many African youths. Before the age of technology and knowledge expansion, the general picture in many parts of Africa was that pre-marital sex or sexual activities among youths were perceived as sinful, indecent, anti-social and unacceptable. And, any form of involvement (real or perceived) in such acts would result in the immediate loss of self-esteem by the person involved (Bingenheimer et al. 2015: 1–19). In a study that offers a fairly comprehensive assessment of the negative impact of technology and knowledge expansion on African youths, George and Ukpong (2013: 167–173) argue that:

Among the negative impacts of science and technology are the Hitech business crimes e.g. credit cards and internet robbery and theft, hooking on to false business link and contacts on the internet; cyber crimes which promote all forms of examination malpractice for example the use of phone for cheating in examination, pornographic shots and films which lure our youths to unhealthy and indiscriminate sexual activities, access to ungodly websites also known as (satan.com), juvenile robbery clips, unauthorized and destructive clips showing crimes, shooting and sexual lawlessness. Others are building of nuclear and sophisticated weapons of crime and warfare which are used by reckless youths and criminals e.g. suicide bombers for crimes against humanity.

On Psychological Fulfilment

Psychological fulfilment, which may also be taken as self-actualisation, defines a state of the inner feeling of accomplishment, which nourishes the sense of human dignity and usefulness. An individual who acquires psychological fulfilment would present himself/herself as a huge human capital of tremendous value to society. This feeling, in turn, stimulates the uncommon energy to continuously stay relevant in the scheme of things in a given milieu. Abraham Maslow, as noted by Olson (2013), takes self-actualisation as implying “growth of an individual toward fulfilment of the highest needs; those for meaning in life, in particular.” Olson illustrates further that Mahatma Gandhi,

Viktor Frankl and Nelson Mandela may serve as examples of people who each personify a reality self-actualisation. According to him

At risk of his life, Mahatma Gandhi utilized civil disobedience for purposes of freedom, Viktor Frankl was a holocaust survivor who never relinquished his grasp of life's meaning, and Nelson Mandela maintained an attitude of meaning in life even while he was imprisoned. The safety needs of these individuals may have been threatened in these particular life circumstances, but it may be understood that many people whose safety needs are compromised may be cognizant of being values. They may find life to be meaningful explicitly because of situations of danger to their lives, situations represented by the dichotomy of life and death, in particular (Olson 2013).

What can be deduced from the foregoing is mainly that self-fulfilment promotes the psychological well-being of the individual and makes him/her more functional, thus acquiring the inner strength to achieve being values, resolve life contradictions and dichotomies, attain peak experiences and meaning in life. It can, therefore, be argued that self-actualisation is a possibility for all creative individuals depending, of course, on some other variables as well. In the case of the African youth, some realities within Africa would seem to conspire with technology and knowledge expansion to stifle their potentials of psychological fulfilment or self-actualisation. For instance, many African countries lack the capacity to bring more youths on board the train of science and technology. Meredith (2011: 14) hints at the not-too-impressive post-colonial African situation in the following way:

Although Africa is a continent of great diversity, African states have much in common, not only their origins as colonial territories, but the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced. Indeed, what is so striking about the fifty-year period since independence is the extent to which African states have suffered so many of the same misfortunes.

It can be easily observed that while the technology and knowledge expansion has helped to broaden the knowledge horizon of young Africans generally, and to qualify them for tertiary education, the tertiary institutions lack sufficient capacity to take on a high percentage

of the youth. This is common knowledge in Nigeria for example where, in recent years, the number of students that are offered tertiary education admission is usually far lower than the number of those who applied for tertiary education even when their performance scale is relatively impressive. This provokes a psychological disillusionment and a sheer lack of fulfilment, thus making them prone to using their technological skill for other less dignifying ventures. It goes without disputing that the crime rate has increased among African youth in recent years due to the “exposure” gained from technology and knowledge expansion.

Associated with the above is what can be termed the African youths’ skewed and disadvantaged access to learning as compared to their contemporaries in other parts of the world. It can be reasonably argued that the quantum of knowledge available to African youths follows the established trajectory of the neo-imperialist world order of Centre versus Periphery. Falola (2006: 17) rightly noted: “if the Europeans used their military to impose colonial conquest, globalisation of the modern era uses the World Bank and the IMF to impose economic imperialism.” What can be added to this in the present context is that knowledge expansion is fast becoming an additional weapon to deepen the intensity of neo-imperialism against Africa. It is not grown to genuinely aid the educational development of Africa. While there are a few instances of intervention support to some African tertiary institutions, such are few and far between. Many larger and older universities in Africa, with a fairly large student population, run on low-grade, under-stocked but over-stretched facilities like libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and broadband Internet access. In the sustained global order, Africa is presented as a poor continent, but, as Falola (2006: 19) argues, the Western public is not inundated with why many Western multinational companies and corporations remain in Africa raking in stupendous wealth. A new form of scramble to the raging point of heated rivalry has thus been unfolded on Africa such that the United States and China are “struggling for economic control of these (African) resources” (Falola 2006: 19; Okajare 2015: 27–55).

There has also been a serious disconnect between the acquired education and the labour market demands. In the contemporary age of globalisation, any purportedly educated African youth is expected to operate in a global environment in keen competition with his/

her counterparts from other parts of the world already dominated by Western cultural hegemony. Such competition becomes lopsided against the African youths in view of the minimal standard of knowledge available to them and their cultural exclusion. Where an African appears exceptionally outstanding, the usual practice particularly from the West is to lure him/her through various enticing programmes into the Western world. This is another dimension of the new form of scramble. While, according to Webster and Boahen (1972: 228), through the 19th century scramble and partition of Africa, “a forcible possession of our land has taken the place of a forcible possession of our resources,” the current reality signals a state of things in which a forcible possession of our resources has been (and still is being) followed up with a systematic but devious possession of our brains. It is commonplace in recent years to label many African young graduates as unemployable by operators in the labour market. This is due to the poor quality of education they received, which is attributable to, among other factors, the low standard of so-called technological knowledge.

On Nation-building Responsibilities

As already implied above, nation-building, which may be taken as a euphemism of state-building as understood in the post-colonial African context, entails deploying a national identity to develop a home-grown process of building and maintaining infrastructure and institutions for the ultimate purpose of promptly delivering public goods and services to the citizens so as to protect the larger public interest. This comes with certain responsibilities. In view of the fact that “people,” “balance of the differences between the governing and governed classes” as well as the “bond of unity between them” are core elements of a nation, it goes without saying that the youth are critical to nation-building (or state-building) in all climes, more particularly in Africa, where the colonial masters had arbitrarily adjusted boundaries and imposed political units erroneously labelled nations. However, technology and knowledge expansion have some impact on the propensity of African youth to play their roles as nation-builders in their different countries. The development gap between Africa and the Western world whose culture is promoted by the devices of knowledge expansion continues to widen to such an extent that the necessary

citizen-state bond of unity between African youth and their countries continues to weaken. The core African value of collective well-being (a critical pole of a nation) is gradually giving way to individualism, an integral part of Western culture, as promoted by technology and knowledge expansion as critical forces of globalisation. Of course, individualism in its extreme sense can be related to corruption because it entails actions of self-rewarding agents who always target improvement of their personal welfare. Admittedly, this had started with colonial rule and continued with the successive leadership that ushered Africa to independence. Mbaku (2010: 1) notes in this regard:

Unfortunately, the leaders of many of these countries engaged primarily in opportunistic institutional reforms that produced laws and institutions that were not geared towards maximizing the public interest (i.e. the collective well-being of citizens) but offered the new state custodians opportunities and the wherewithal to maximize their personal interests.

It can, therefore, be reasonably argued that the indigenous African value of collective well-being suffered erosion with colonial rule in such a way that, in terms of a retention of positive values, post-colonial Africa was a radical departure from the colonised African continent. Consequently, the inclination to pursue a selfish agenda is growing in many African youth in total disregard for the indigenous African value. This is the more so because the new perception of life they acquire through the technology and knowledge expansion almost totally negate provisions of African unwritten codes of conduct. For the umpteenth time, it is here confessed that the technology and knowledge expansion offers multiple opportunities for African youth. Yet, the films and documentaries they watch, the forms of interpersonal relationships they cultivate, the sundry use of the Internet for some not-too-decent-and-rewarding purposes, all combine to promote gangsterism, intimidation and other forms of egoistic tendency as they are exposed to a negative classroom culture, school violence, movies on digital and satellite television, and a growing societal incivility.

It is common knowledge across many African countries that there is such an entrenchment of age hierarchy in culture that youth have limited opportunities for self-expression and for full participation in social and political matters. The general opinion is that the elderly are

the wise ones capable of distilling the intricacies of politics and social development, having the mandate to socialise the young. While this is not contested, it is instructive that the sheer lack of space for self-expression offers a leeway for the youth's reckless and uncontrolled subscription to the negative aspects of technology and knowledge expansion. Youths should be involved in making African states grow to cohesive nations with a clear-cut prestige and national orientation.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to examine the implications of the technology and knowledge expansion for the African youth in the context of the present and future aspirations of Africa in the contemporary globalised world. The broad thesis is that the nature and character of the African youth's socialisation process, psychological fulfilment (as a follow-up to the former), and their level of preparedness for nation-building responsibilities are critical and cardinal for the continent's chances of genuine development in the modern world that grows ever more competitive on a regular basis. There is no doubt that any youth whose socialisation process is faulty is vulnerable to losing psychological fulfilment, and those two malaises will, most certainly, stifle such youth's potentials of becoming useful agents for nation-building in his/her environment. This finds expression in a famous Yoruba (Southwestern Nigeria) adage that *Omo buruku lo'ndagba buruku*, which translates as "A bad child (youth) will grow to a wicked elder (leader)." The present study posits further that, while the technology and knowledge expansion offers tremendous opportunities for African youth in diverse areas of human pursuits, it has become, more or less a double-edged phenomenon, which has severely disconnected African youth from the indigenous cultural persuasions of the diverse African continent. This simply leads to a loss of identity whereby a typical African youth with a black pigmentation and background situated within the cultural milieu of Africa suddenly grows Western in orientation and disposition without taking into account the unassailable fact that the (Western) creators of technology are not for any reason offering any free lunch. It, therefore, is a double-way loss: loss of identity and lack of equality with fellow humans across the divide, in spite of the professed dictates of globalisation.

The unequal pedestal of Africans and the rest of the world (particularly the West) in the global political economy within the knowledge expansion thrust of technology was recently echoed by Donald Trump – a frontline torchbearer of the Republican Party in the forthcoming American presidential election. Trump made some derogatory and undignifying remarks about Africans, but the specific one found instructive for the present purpose was made at Indianapolis when he observed that Africans are “lazy fools only good at eating, lovemaking and thugger.” He adds rather disgustingly:

From the government to opposition, they only qualify to be used as a case study whenever bad examples are required. How do you trust even those who have ran (sic) away to hide here at the United States hiding behind education? I hear they abuse me in their blogs but I don't care *because even the internet they are using is ours and we can decide to switch it off from this side* (Trump 2015). *Emphasis mine.*

The emphasised phrase above is quite instructive for views of Africa and Africans. While we may not take Trump's to be the American voice, there is the need for African leaders to realise that Trump's opinion of Africans as presented here may capture the disposition of some millions of Americans. The statement has clearly indicated that anti-Africa racial discrimination in the United States is gradually becoming globalised.

The implications of the technology and knowledge expansion, some of which are herein discussed, have eroded the significance of its admittedly multiple benefits. Thus, what should have become a great leap for global all-round development if globalisation would accommodate cultural heterogeneity, has become a ready tool for deepening the intensity of underdevelopment of Africa and widening the gulf between the Continent and other leading regions of the world, thus expanding the frontiers of the African paradoxical contradiction of knowledge expansion and underdevelopment as a mix-grill. Therefore, the governments and peoples of Africa must quickly rise up to the challenge by accommodating the technology and knowledge expansion for its diverse opportunities but only within the cultural reality of the continent. This is to avoid cultural imperialism, which the current unbridled acquisition and unguided consumption of many elements of knowledge in the Internet by African youth will amount to

in the long run. The continent cannot afford a second round of cultural imperialism as a precursor to Trump's recommendation that "In my opinion, most of these African countries ought to be recolonized again for another 100 years because they know nothing about leadership and self-governance" (Trump 2015). African governments must develop a genuine youth policy capable of synergising the benefits of ICT with those aspects of the African culture that promote decency, decorum, self-restraint, moral uprightness and a deep sense of commitment to nation-building and the collective well-being. Africa must pursue certain lines of action in the contemporary global system that will press for the appreciation and recognition of its culture among others in the family of humanity. Towards this end, as Falola (2006: 24) recommends, African must "Remain committed to the promotion of cultural policies that would check the excesses of globalization and prevent a homogenous world." He hinges this on the fact that "Diversity and cultural hybridity are not a threat, but actually a source of power."

Good governance, a strong anti-corruption drive, the development of positive orientation among others are steps that governments and peoples of Africa have to take urgently to inject some innovations as a platform of attraction to the continent. There must be a healthy competition between the African environment and the rest of the world. This will make Africa a point of arrival for the international migration engendered by globalisation, and it will reduce the propensity of African youth to look forward to foreign lands. It will reduce the gap between the quality of skills supplied by Africa and the quality of skills actually needed by employers. The entire educational curriculum has to be reworked to accommodate good aspects of African culture, sustain its uniqueness and blend it with the positive reality of modern technology. Youth education and training should be mainstreamed within African culture in such a way that it will not only increase the youth's skill formation to exploit the burgeoning global information and communication breakthroughs, but also offer them the uniqueness capable of boosting their productivity and competitiveness in the global labour market.

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