
Research Article

The Humanities and Africa's Development

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Abstract: African governments have made individual and collective efforts to promote development programmes/projects on the continent since independence was achieved in most of the countries in the 1960s. These efforts have resulted in marginal success and in some cases the aspirations have stagnated. The reality of the situation is that the majority of the countries are poor with weak socio-political institutions. The situation is complicated by the obvious fact that Africa is yet to make a significant breakthrough in the area of science and technology which could aid development as is currently obtainable in other continents of the world. Even with this gap, development planners in the continent have not paid significant attention to the humanities. This paper posits that the humanities are not only essential for the development of the African continent; but it is the superstructure upon which the continent's development efforts need to be based. It further demonstrates that no meaningful development can take place in the continent without an in-depth knowledge of the history, and culture like languages, religion and the traditional knowledge pool of the African people and same being used as a basis for planning and development.

Introduction

In 2001, the African leaders who gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, to unveil the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) pledged that "...based on a common vision, and a firm and shared conviction, they have a pressing duty, to eradicate poverty and place the African countries, both individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate in the world economy and body politic" (Izeze, 2002).

Sixteen years after this pledge was made, Africans have not witnessed any appreciable improvement in their lives and material conditions than they did in 2001 when the pledge was made. Indeed, living conditions in most African countries have plunged since NEPAD was born.

Before the advent of NEPAD, there had been other developmental efforts that shared the same theoretical connotations. Some of them include, the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa (1980-2000), the Final Act of Lagos 1980; the Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, APPER (1986-1990); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation, AAF-SAP (1989); The African Charter for Popular Participation for Development (1990); and the Compact for African Recovery (2000). These development programmes achieved varying degrees of success in their time. Before NEPAD, it was widely believed that Africa's development crises were wholly economic. This was why a military regime like that of former Nigerian leader General Ibrahim Babangida introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Time has however shown that all these developmental policies were all misguided, ill-conceived and ill-executed, as they failed to anchor the various development initiatives on the single most

important component of development itself – the human beings (Agwu, 2001).

This paper examines the humanities and Africa's development. It is divided into four sections. Section one is the introduction, section two examines the concept of development and conceptual clarifications of humanities and development. Section three focuses on the humanities and development in Africa and the contributions of the humanities to Africa's development. Section three is concerned with the challenges of the humanities to development in Africa, while section four is the conclusion.

The Concept of Development

There is no consensus on what constitutes development. What may be seen as development of a people at a particular stage in their history may actually be seen as retrogression if not destruction for another group of people at other stages in their development. It must be noted that definitions of development are influenced by the defining authority's philosophy and the socio-political inclinations of the sector so defined. For, instance development in capitalist, socialist and mixed economy is drawn from their environment and is also an indication of the author's socio-political leanings. It is difficult therefore to give a precise meaning of 'development'. Besides, the meaning of development has over the years become wide, varied and also depended on the wealth and living standard of the defining authorities. Based on the above, it is necessary to briefly consider some of the prevalent perspectives of development.

Development: The Marxist Perspective

Marxist theorists believe that a thorough and comprehensive

understanding of the meaning of development provides the most effective way of overcoming and eventually eliminating backwardness.

According to Rodney:

Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being...at the level of social groups; it implies an increasing capacity to regulate both the internal and external relationships...in the past, development has always meant the increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social group (Rodney, 1972: 1-2).

Marxist view of development focuses considerably on the development of the individual and groups within a society. It also emphasises the importance of material well-being of the human being and places the human being as the single most important or prime mover of development. The basic function of all economic activity is to provide as many people as possible with the means of overcoming the helplessness and misery arising from a lack of food, shelter, health and protection.

Consequently, Rodney posits further that:

Development is the ability...infringe upon the freedom of others – something that often came irrespective of the will of the persons within the societies involved... Moral aspects are difficult to evaluate depending as they do on the age, in which one lives, one's class origins, and one's personal code of what is right and what is wrong (Rodney, 1972 : 2).

From Rodney's definition, the exploitation of the human and material resources of other people, through colonialism and imperialism for the improvement of Europe constitutes development for the Europeans. But to the colonised and exploited the people of Africa, being deprived of their human and material resources, thereby stunting their growth cannot amount to development, but retrogression. He believes that development is an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship. Development in the past has always meant the increase in the ability to guard the independence of the social group (Rodney, 1972).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Perspective on Development

The UNDP on its part defines development in terms of human development not in terms of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as this was the most common indicator of human well-being. The general opinion two or three decades ago was that development must go beyond statistics and put greater emphasis on employment and meeting the basic needs of majority of the people.

The UNDP human development approach focused on creating fair opportunities for everyone. It focused on improving lives, rather than assuming that economic development will automatically lead to greater opportunities. Freedom and the opportunities to live the lives they choose were also seen as an indicator of development.

It also connotes;

Developing people's abilities and giving them a chance to use them. ..The three foundations of human development are to live a healthy and creative life, to be knowledgeable, and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living...Creating the right conditions for human development, such as environmental sustainability and equality between men and women (www. undp. org. United Nations Development Programme. Definition of Human Development. Retrieved 29/6/17).

Development in UNDP's view also means an improvement in a country's economic and social conditions. It specifically refers to improvements in the ways of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve lives. The UNDP elaborated further that while there can be value judgements on what development is and what it is not, it should be a universally acceptable aim of development to make for conditions that lead to the realisation of the potentials of the human being.

Development: The Liberal Perspective of Development

Liberal scholars consistently see development as an intricate part of the economy, as such economic development is gauged in terms of the Gross National Product (GNP). The Liberals defined development as:

The maximisation of the growth of the GNP through capital accumulation and industrialisation. Development implies change which often follows a well-ordered sequence and exhibits common characteristics across countries (Okereke and Ekpe, 2002: 102).

Dudley Seers, cited in Todaro and Stephen opines that in defining development, one should be concerned about:

What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have not declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has not been a period of development for the country concerned. If one of two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" even if per capita income doubled (Todaro and Stephens, 2011: 15).

The authors further point out that:

The phenomenon of development or the existence of a chronic state of underdevelopment is not merely a question of economics or even one quantitative measurement of incomes, employment and inequality. Underdevelopment is a real fact of life for more than 3 billion people in the world – a state of mind as much as a state of national poverty (Todaro and Stephens, 2011: 22).

The authors consider development as the sustained elevation of an entire society and social system toward what they refer to as a 'better' and 'more humane' life. They opine that what

constitutes a good life is as old as philosophy and that society must be periodically re-evaluated in the changing environment of world society. This is particularly necessary because the criteria for determining what constitutes development are constantly undergoing changes. Todaro and Stephen however listed what they consider as basic components or core values for development as the following: sustenance – the ability to meet basic needs, self-esteem – a sense of self worth and self-respect not being used as a tool by others for their own ends, and freedom. Freedom means the right to choose to have a wide range of choices.

According to the authors, everyone has life-sustaining needs without which human existence becomes almost impossible. Some of these basic human needs include food, shelter, health and protection. In their view, when any of these basic human needs is absent or in short supply, a condition of underdevelopment is said to exist. The development economists are therefore of the view that, the basic function of all economic activity is to provide as many people as possible with the means of overcoming the helplessness and misery arising from a lack of food, shelter, health and protection.

Humanities: Its Meaning

Humanities are academic disciplines that study aspects of human culture...The humanities include ancient and modern languages, literature, philosophy, history, religion, art and musicology (<http://Stanford Humanities, Stanford University>. Retrieved, 16/6/17 2017).

Stanford University's Humanities Department defines the concept as 'the study of how people process and document the human experience. Human beings have been able to use philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record their world'. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines humanities "as those branches of knowledge that concern themselves with human beings and their culture or with analytical and critical methods of enquiry derived from an appreciation of human values and of the unique ability of the human spirit to express itself." As a group of educational disciplines, the humanities are clearly distinguished in content and method from the physical and biological sciences. The humanities include the study of all languages and literatures, the arts, history and philosophy.

Humanities and the Development of Africa

For quite some time now, the relegation of humanities in the process of planning has been decried by scholars. It has been argued that humanities flourished in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s when Africanist scholars like Okot Bitek, Ama Ata Aidoo, S.O Biobaku, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, T.N Tamuno, Aime Cesaire, Buchi Emecheta, Ade Ajayi, K. O Dike, J.D Omer Cooper, Peter Abrahams, A. I Asiwaju, Camara Laye, Christopher Okigbo, T.M. Aluko, Isidore Okpewho, Amos Tutuola, and several others of their time made spirited efforts to present their traditional African backgrounds as they struggled to cope with modernity.

Taiwo added that:

It encouraged research by language experts working for the missions into the nature of operation of the various Nigerian languages, notably, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Nupe and Hausa. Many of these languages were reduced to writing, as early as 1860, translations of sections of the Bible, hymn book and even a newspaper in Yoruba, *Iwe Irohin* were already published (Taiwo, 1982: 2).

With such an early start, humanities took the lead in virtually every aspect of the individual's private and public life and also at the national level. The humanities understandably became one of the media through which African historians and literary scholars attacked colonialism. These experiences may not be the same for other countries in East, West and Central Africa under different colonial authorities, but the fact still remains that the humanities gained an upper hand, than any other branch of learning apparently because it served the purpose of the colonial administrations in Africa.

Some African historians such as Ade Ajayi, Okon Uya and Afigbo have clearly demonstrated that the humanities are invaluable to the development of the African continent.

In fact, Ade-Ajayi, cited in Uya asserts that:

The nation suffers which has no sense of history; its values remain superficial and ephemeral unless imbued with a deep sense of continuity and a perception of success and achievement that transcends acquisition of temporary power or transient wealth; such a nation cannot achieve a sense of purpose or direction or stability and without them the future is bleak (Uya, 2002: 688).

Temu also argues that, the study of African history must be for the sake of liberating the continent. To him, the humanities should help Africans understand the present better. The humanities can be used as a guide by present and succeeding generations in the continuous struggle for change in the African continent. He stresses further that the study of African history can liberate the continent from oppression and underdevelopment and bring about a just society in which people will contribute to the development of the continent according to their own means and energy.

Temu also opines that the history of Africa must be written not merely to understand and contemplate the present phenomenon of underdevelopment, but to be able to change the daunting reality, by giving a correct historical solution. Citing Rodney, he adds that:

History must deal with the past with a view of explaining the present. Hence, it must not be only descriptive but also analytical; it must not deal only with objective developments but also bring the discussion to the realm of value judgments'. In this regard the past should be regarded not as a mere object of contemplation, but rather as an instrument to mobilise the present and to discard what is irrelevant to today's concerns.

In the opinion of Obaro Ikime, the study of the humanities helps "us to remember and understand what had happened in

our societies in the past, how these happenings contribute to our present practice and what options are available for future planning. The study of literature, history, languages, philosophy and others also help to explain our situation and thereby challenge the people to find lasting solutions to our collective problems". The humanities can assist Africans to understand the diverse ethnic groups on the continent through a study of their histories, languages, literature and their cultures. It must be pointed out that language has a strong unifying force which it imposes on its learners. The ability to speak the language of another ethnic group immediately confers on the speaker the position of brotherhood, and this could make a difference in life or death situations particularly during times of violent conflict (Ikime, 2006: 43).

Ikimi adds that the humanities provide the necessary tools to build a continent that would foster equality and social justice since the humanities contain elements that can be usefully developed to assist in providing answers to the continent's problems. The humanities also helps to deepen understanding about men and their society, through the belief that a profound awareness of who our neighbours are would help to mould our attitudes towards them and thereby regulate their actions.

It is important to note that humanities as a branch of learning helps the Africans to acquire the knowledge of who they are and how they have come to be where they are at present. Indeed the historian, the linguist, and the literary artist have definite roles to play in building up the African in terms of helping him to realise who he is and the circumstances under which he came to be in his current predicament compared to other races. Ikime has emphasised that the level of development of Africa is a function of her history and that a proper understanding of that history ought to affect the modalities mapped out for overcoming Africa's underdevelopment (Ikime, 2006: 44).

The study of the humanities helps to develop informed and critical citizens, who think logically and process it in such a way as to ensure peaceful outcomes particularly in their relations with neighbours on the continent. He emphasized that the absence of encouragement of the humanities has partly been responsible for the intolerance among ethnic groups and incessant internecine wars on the continent (Uya, 2012: 521s). Collier, Hoefler, Anke and Polliner state that from 1945 to 2011, African continent has witnessed major political upheavals: 35 civil wars, 215 violent ethnic cleansing and a host of violent people's revolts. Africa currently has the highest number of displaced persons in the world. The authors point out that, out of about 27.5million displaced persons in the world in 2011; Africa's share was about 40 percent. With the advantage of hindsight, it is clear that the study of various ethnic groups especially their languages, song and dance, their history and culture could assist Africans to understand themselves better and learn to live together peacefully, and thereby bring to an end the wanton wastage of human lives through ethnic cleansing.

Anya has pointed out that human capital compared with material capital such as machinery, mineral resources and other raw materials is intangible and intrinsic so it cannot be

measured directly. He adds that it is only its manifestations, in terms of the prosperity of the nation, material and social well-being of citizens, the efficiency of nation's institutions and systems as well as the quality of human development indices that can be accessed. According to him, the level of development of the human population in any country is directly proportional to a nation's gross domestic product, income per capita, positive balance of trade, life expectancy, literacy rate, level of industrialization and quality of infrastructure. The implication of this is that the humanities can help decision-makers to understand the pivotal role of the individual in development. It can also help in developing character, building up people, teaching them to think creatively, to reason about issues confronting the human race and be concerned about their world. These would definitely improve the quality of the population (Anya: 2011: 115-120). It should be noted that of all the arms of society that can lead to a vibrant community – built capital, natural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital and financial capital, the most important arm is the human capital. Though other sections reveal overlapping functions, it also reveals the importance of the arts and humanities as part and parcel of a functional and healthy society. The most valuable asset of any society is the human population of that society, which is what the humanities are all about, a people centred branch of knowledge. By giving due value, encouragement and support to the study of the humanities, the authorities would invariably impact on the intellectual growth of the citizens, foster social justice and equality, build a country of wholesome citizenry with sound intellectual, moral and spiritual capacity (Anya: 2011: 115).

An example of a people who built on their cultural, social, spiritual and moral heritage thereby giving prominence to the humanities are the Japanese. Faced with an imminent threat to its continued existence as a sovereign state, with the appearance of Commodore Matthew Perry at Edo Bay in 1863, armed with American warships, the Japanese authorities embarked on massive industrialisation and modernisation anchored on the Japanese cultural heritage. The modern educational system was based on Confucian ethos, the Japanese religion – Shintoism remained the official religion. Children were taught the Bushido culture – the path of honour as the path to take in challenging situations. The Tokugawa and Meiji authorities went to great lengths to ensure that their society was not allowed to lose its history, language, arts, martial arts, music and mode of dressing. Every piece of technological know-how, acquired through whatever means was quickly adapted to Japanese local conditions and indigenized. All these efforts point to the realization, of the enormous responsibility of the humanities in building a healthy, wealthy and virile nation (Ekong, 2015:).

Anya has advocated that:

While recognising that knowledge is universal, specific attention must be paid to Nigeria's unique indigenous knowledge endowments in curriculum content and development. Deliberate efforts are required to integrate what is ordinarily regarded as traditional or

indigenous knowledge into formal educational system. In this lies the opportunity to subject them to scrutiny, organized analysis, scientific evaluation, documentation and refinement. A reformed national education system must place the highest premium in understanding, upgrading and adding value to Nigeria's indigenous pool knowledge (Anya, 2011: 115).

This passionate appeal for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the school curriculum of the Nigerian universities is a clarion call to Nigeria and other African countries to look into their history, their arts and culture, their religion, their pre-colonial, socio-political and economic systems to be able to find historical similarities to contemporary societal problems. It is also a call for the upgrading and improvement of the study of humanities in educational institutions. Indeed, the study of the humanities would well position African countries to rescue their economies from foreign domination and exploitation. Currently, discussions are rife about looking for home grown solutions to daunting political, social and economic problems in the continent due to the realization that imported solutions regardless of their good intentions could never solve Africa's myriad problems (Cited Akpan, 2017).

Contributions of the Humanities to Africa's Development

It is on record that virtually all the agitators for African independence were graduates of the humanities. The years, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s corresponds to the period of the agitation for African independence which reached varying stages of actualisation in the early 1960s. The intellectual liberators included: Peter Abrahams, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire, Camara Laye, T. M. Aluko, Elechi Amadi, Chinua Achebe, K.O Dike, S.O. Biobaku, F.K Buah, Jacob Ade Ajayi, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, Thomas Mofolo, Tafawa Balewa, Amos Tutuola, D. T Niane and several others (Uya, 2011, 126)

These Africanists were greatly influenced by their environment and by the circumstances in history which helped to shape the African continent of their time. Using indigenous culture, literature, history and religion, these writers and historians attempted to transliterate traditional customs, beliefs and attitudes into an entirely new context, that of contemporary twentieth century Africa. These people were committed to rescuing the image of Africa from European distortions, the disruptive influence of colonisation, conflict between European and African cultures and eventually the clamour and agitations for Africa's independence.

Another contribution of the humanities to the development of Africa, according to Ochefu et al is the defensive nature of African scholarship during the period before and after the 1960s. The works of these literary writers and historians were also an attempts to defend the integrity of Africa, highlight the sophistication of her cultures and bring an end to Europe's perceived benevolence on the continent. It has been pointed out that when most African countries were eventually freed of the constraints of colonialism, many African governments, through the establishment of archives, libraries, cultural

resource centres, universities and antiquities commissions, have to a considerable extent been able to recover some of Africa's glorious past (Uya, 2011: 128).

An investigation into the government workforce in most African countries showed that, most civil servants and bureaucrats in the governments of several African countries studied for degrees in the humanities. This large body of individuals could not only harnessed to positively affect decision-making at the highest levels of government in African countries, but could also serve as a group to encourage the study, and advancement of the cause of the humanities in Africa.

Challenges of the Humanities to Development

One major challenge to the humanities in African universities is the huge budget cut in the funding of universities. With lean funds, most of the universities in line with government policies decide which department needs to be pruned to allow funds flow into science and technology, and the humanities has always been on the receiving end of such decisions. This results in fewer lecturers of humanities being employed and a drop in student enrolment (Uya, 2011: 129).

Another challenge to the humanities is the myopia afflicting many policy decision-makers on the African continent. There is a festering believe that the humanities is partially responsible for the inability of the African continent to make significant advances in science and technology. This line of thought has resulted in some core courses in the Humanities being expunged from the curriculum and the student population in the humanities drastically reduced. A perfect example is the case of Nigeria, where the study of history was removed from the curriculum of secondary schools and replaced with Social Studies. Though the government of former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo did direct schools to re-introduce the subject, it was not heeded by all. The consequence of this anomaly is that most Nigerians born after the 1980s know virtually nothing, about the Nigerian Civil War, about Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa, Micheal Imodu, Louis Eyo, Harold Shodipo, Isaac Adaka Boro, other freedom fighters and major events that shaped the country's history (Ekong, 2016).

There is also a general social apathy towards the past in general which is referred to in the popular local parlance as "old school" and particularly towards the study of history. This disdain for history has been heightened by parents who do not seem to see the usefulness of the course and therefore discourage their children from studying it.

Another major hindrance to the humanities is the dearth of books particularly on African history. Back in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, books on African history and literature flooded the bookshops and libraries. According to Ochia Ofeinun, those were "the days that produced the great Ibadan History Series, the debates of Dar-es-Salaam, Zaria, Makerere and Legon". Nowadays books on African history are hard to come by, following the near collapse of the economies of most African countries, the ones that manage to get published show all the trappings of books written and packaged in a hurry. In

Ofeinum' opinion, the books that get published show evidence of famine – the food and book famine ravaging Africa (Ofeinum, 2012: 67).

The dearth of academic journals is another challenge to the humanities on the African continent. Most departments in the humanities never get round to publish their academic journals. Several reasons can be advanced for this; paucity of funds for publication, poorly researched and poorly written articles, and poor response to the call for papers and insincerity on the part of editorial teams handling journal publications. After conferences are held, papers are presented and conference fees are paid, nothing is heard about the journals that were supposed to be published after such events. The journals never get published; the researchers never get their money refunded and their papers are never returned. This state of affairs could clearly discourage academics from taking other call for papers and conferences seriously. The journals that may eventually get published are so poorly packaged, shabbily printed with pages missing; sometimes pages are turned upside down and inside out with ink blotting out entire paragraphs and pages that one is tempted to ask for a refund. In addition, it must be emphasized that very few academic journals go beyond volume one (Ofeinum, 2012: 66).

Students who would otherwise be interested in a career in the humanities are sometimes worried about what the future holds. The general complaint is that a degree in the humanities does not prepare the recipient for any particular job and when a job offer comes; the student of history, languages, music may have to be re-trained adding avoidable cost to the employer. There is also a general believe among the younger generation that a career in the humanities can rarely lead to accolades or wealth, that the lives of humanities lecturers are fraught with constant scrapping and struggle for financial support and public recognition. Only within the university environment are they able to attract some measure of respect.

The absence of a culture of mentorship is another challenge to the humanities in Africa. According to Ochefu *et al*, senior and near retiring colleagues in the humanities department should give more leadership direction and adequate mentorship to younger lecturers of the humanities to prevent the kind of shoddy work emanating from the various departments in the form of books, edited books, journal articles and papers at conferences. The scholar believes the current situation could do great damage to the reputation of excellence in scholarship (Uya, 2011: 129).

One of the challenges to the humanities is the paucity of books on the humanities particularly at the secondary school level. There is need to publish well researched and adequate history, cultural, literature, language, and music books for use in schools, colleges and tertiary institutions. Providing tools and effective training for the younger generation of language, music, literature and history graduates empowers them to carry on and according to Uya, become worthy disciples who will take the humanities as a discipline to greater heights in their own time (Uya, 2011: 129).

At present, academics in other disciplines are not convinced on the role graduates of the humanities are expected to play in

the society. Subjects taught in all the departments of the humanities, must not only help us to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, it must also provide us with a clearer and better view of the future. These it could do by helping students to build skills in writing and critical reading among other things.

Teachers of the humanities need to pre-occupy themselves more with the problems facing the African continent, and focus on issues that tend to highlight the similarities of her peoples and their culture, rather than the current practice of unhealthy emphasis on combative and separatist tendencies that may lead to xenophobia, ethnic revolts, ethnic cleansing and internecine wars. Adequate historical knowledge about other ethnic groups on the continent would cause other groups to empathise, rather than see fellow Africans as enemies or inferior (Ikime, 2006: 56).

State sponsored violence on teachers of the humanities is becoming increasingly frequent

throughout Africa. Governments now penalise, ostracise, detain, deport and in some severe cases eliminate humanities scholars who have the audacity to teach or present papers which the powers-that-be consider offensive. This state of affairs continued unabated during military and even under civilian administrations and has resulted in teachers of the humanities and their families being hounded by governments' secret agents.

The decay in the book publishing industry in the continent is a major challenge to the study of the humanities. Multi-national publishing companies who started the book revolution in the 1960s have since the last two decades of the twentieth century relocated from the continent. Writers who would otherwise have been able to go further have found their careers stagnated as trusted publishers are in short supply. Local publishers are largely distrusted by authors and financial institutions, who believe that they are advocates of book piracy and therefore are more confident to hand-over their manuscripts to foreign publishing companies than the local ones. Students of the humanities therefore have to rely mostly on books written by non-African authors and those donated to libraries, resource centres and sold at book fairs and bookshops. This will certainly limit their knowledge of the continent. It must be emphasised here that a thriving, autonomous local book publishing industry in Africa is an integral component of the development and cultural renaissance of the continent (Ofeinum, 2012: 69).

Conclusion

In recognition of the overwhelming role that humanities have played in Africa's development, the cut in funding the humanities departments, and the increased tendency of being relegated and sometimes sacrificed on the altar of science and technology, it is of paramount importance that scholars, decision-makers and school curriculum planners make concerted efforts to re-invent the study of the humanities in order to make it more relevant to contemporary African problems.

The current generation of humanities scholars should take

necessary steps to ensure that history, one of the core courses in the humanities which was removed by the Ministry of education in Nigeria, is re-introduced, this time from the primary school level. Even at the primary level, kindergartens need to learn about the heroes of their local communities before going on to learn about heroes at the state, national and continental level.

Besides, humanities scholars need to write more biographies about the real heroes of their locality with the aim of encouraging the younger generation to emulate them and go the extra length and achieve greater feats. Books on African heroes could help dispel the lies being peddled, that Africans are incapable of any meaningful achievement and it would also help to shore up the confidence of African leaders and people of African descent in the diaspora.

Today, the knowledge of the humanities helps us to understand and appreciate human experiences better now than in the recent past. The world is increasingly becoming a global village as an event in one country definitely has ripple-effects in several others. This therefore calls for learning the languages of others which might help us gain an insight into the similarities and the differences in cultures. In the light of this, humanities scholars are indispensable in the attempts to fashion out the way forward for the continent, considering the herculean roles they played during its formative years.

The humanities give broad education to our students which extend in several directions. The type of knowledge offered by the humanities feeds the body and also feeds the soul. By constantly underfunding the humanities, African governments are inadvertently entrenching inequalities in the university system. Pitching the sciences against the humanities, could cause real damage to students. African education planners could create situations of unhealthy competition among the continent's workforce which could be inimical to its growth and development.

A research and development (R&D) section of the humanities needs to be set up in every university on the continent for the systematic collection of data on African languages, oral and written histories, dance and drama, theatre arts, traditional communication arts, philosophy and African religious practices. Dramatisation of past and present major events of historical importance in the continent needs to be adapted for film and television viewing.

It is pertinent to point out that the humanities as a branch of knowledge must realise that to study African history, literature, languages and music for its own sake is an offence against the people of Africa. Modern history of Africa is a tale of poverty, disease and human misery. Humanities scholars, especially historians must not find comfort in its narration, but must go steps farther. They must thoroughly research it with the sole purpose of bringing an end to the negative trend.

Other continents on the Western Hemisphere – Latin America and Asia have left Africa behind in the improvement of their economies and the corresponding improved standard of living. More than fifty decades after independence, Africa is still in a bubble, frozen in time virtually untouched by the tremendous science and technological advancement the world has

witnessed in the last three decades. In the words of former British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, 'Africa's poverty is a scar on the world'.

Once again the African continent has arrived at another critical juncture in its history; it has a choice, faced with either leading Africa out of its present economic backwardness and a culture of poverty and disease or to continue to pander to the whims of a corrupt local oligarchy. The humanities as a branch of knowledge has to be vigorously pursued, encouraged and studied from the kindergarten to the tertiary level. Development efforts have to not only follow a bottom-up approach but also a matter of utmost importance be anchored on the institutions, histories, languages, local pool of knowledge, literature, arts and traditions of the African people. Genuine home-grown solutions to Africa's development crises are needed not imported ones.

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