

# Impact of Transculturalism and Globalization on the Concepts of Oral Literature and “Ubuntu” as Educational Paradigms for African Liberation and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## To cite this article:

Francis Mowang Ganyi, Jayne Ise Owan. Impact of Transculturalism and Globalization on the Concepts of Oral Literature and “Ubuntu” as Educational Paradigms for African Liberation and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *English Language, Literature & Culture*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 2016, pp. 30-39. doi: 10.11648/j.ellc.20160103.13

**Received:** August 31, 2016; **Accepted:** September 12, 2016; **Published:** September 29, 2016

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**Abstract:** The concepts of transculturalism and globalization have, of late, occupied the front burner in discourses of many disciplines the world over as peoples and institutions examine, not just the potency but also the relevance of the concepts to their existence and well-being. In many educational institutions, the concepts have formed the basis or themes for conferences aimed at examining their effect on the progress and development of human society. African states and educational institutions have also joined in these discourses, and rightly so, since they cannot isolate themselves from the world polity within which they live and operate, except that the focus and concern of Africans seems for now, to be misplaced. It appears that Africa’s focus on the gains of these concepts, without the high level of technological advancement required to effectively and gainfully key-in to the envisaged or resultant new world order, should be on how it can meaningfully impact on the technologically advanced cultures of the world rather than struggling to accept concepts to which they have nothing to offer or even gain from now. It is from this perspective that this paper examines the meaning of transculturalism and its impact on the concept of Oral literature and the African philosophy of “Ubuntu” as educational paradigms for African liberation and development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to enable Africans re-assess their educational curricula and refocus same on Oral literature for positive advancement in the envisaged new world order propelled by these concepts.

**Keywords:** Transculturalism, Globalization, Oral Literature, Ubuntu, African Culture, African Philosophy, Knowledge Systems, Identity and Education

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## 1. Introduction

Barring all earlier and more complex definitions of transculturalism as proffered by the South American scholar, Fernando Ortiz (1940), Wikipedia defines transculturalism simply as “seeing oneself in the other...or extending through all human cultures, [or] involving, encompassing, or combining elements of more than one culture.” The idea of “seeing oneself in the other” is what is aptly represented in the African philosophy of “Ubuntu” from which Abdul-Karim Bangura (2005) coined the term “Ubuntu” as an African educational paradigm. From the above, what one perceives as being central to the concept of transculturalism is the meeting and intermingling of different peoples and

cultures the world over which could result in the production of a mono-cultural universe. This intermingling would naturally result in many consequences, positive and desirable as well as negative and detestable. Naturally, therefore, what should be uppermost in the minds of every people or group who get involved in the debates and discourses on any of these concepts is what gains accrue or what their status will be as a people, group or race, or what the future holds for them within the confines or limits set by the transcultural or global configurations, when the major proponents of these new world concepts, the advanced economies of the Western world, have set out the rules for participation. However, for Africa, without the necessary technology and apparatuses for effective contribution to and benefits from this envisaged

new world order, the question remains, how can Africa benefit from becoming an active discussant in the gains or otherwise of these concepts?

From this viewpoint, transculturalism has given rise to several perspectives and discourses arising from multi-faceted views to which it has been subjected by its disciples in the different disciplines of politics, cultural studies, demography, history and above all education where curricula are subjected to the modifying influences of these concepts (see Bangura:2005, Nussbaum:2003; and David Mande: 2009). Several countries including the United States, Canada, Britain, the Caribbean, South Africa and India etc., have viewed transculturalism and its effects from their own ecological backgrounds and perspectives either as “victims” or as beneficial practitioners of the concept and the debate rages on. (see Lucia Grosu: 2012; Donald Cuccioletta: 2001/2002).

Speaking on Literary translations as forms of transcultural contacts that can elicit negative reactions from the recipients among the Nordic communities of Eastern Europe, [8] argues that

- *The notion of the transcultural evokes the movement of ideas and practices, as well as cultural phenomena, from one society to another, usually it is associated with elements of force, with one of the societies as imperial, dominant, a conqueror, while the other is inferior in power, yet possibly rebellious and resistant... What is seen in Anglo-American discussions [call them discourses] as opening doors to other cultures through literary translations turns out to function as a new form of cultural imperialism, all the harder to resist because it operates within a market system.*

For the same reasons that transculturalism and globalization operate within a market system, and smack of economic and cultural imperialism, they are very difficult pills to swallow by Africans and other third world economies that are sensitive, critical and operate as underdogs in their relationships with the technologically advanced Western countries.

On the other hand, drawing on the pros and cons of multiculturalism, [11] finally submits that

- *Multiculturalism has become a buzzword all over the world and it has acquired mostly a positive connotation. Nevertheless, there are voices that point out the drawbacks of this policy... Cultural diversity is [therefore] seen either as a melting of cultural markers (transculturalism) or as a gathering of multiple and distinct contributions to the mainstream culture (multiculturalism).*

It is precisely from this perspective that this writer wishes to x-ray or analyze the tenets of transculturalism in relation to African Oral literature and the African philosophy of Ubuntu or “Ubuntugogy” within the context of cultural diversity and the African educational environment. The aim is to examine the practicability of the concept against the background of the current multiplicity of educational “systems” in Africa and to decipher whether it can provide more fertile grounds

for the impartation of African knowledge systems than African Oral literature or Ubuntugogy as African educational paradigms.

## 2. The Import of Transculturalism

The Canadian director of *vice versa*, a transcultural magazine in Montreal, Canada, [34] views transculturalism as

- *...A new form of humanism based on the ideas of relinquishing the strong traditional identities and cultures which...were products of imperialistic empires, interspersed with dogmatic religious values.*

This definition presupposes the destruction of the concept of nationhood based on a mono-cultural identity and geographical contiguity to be replaced by a unitary state of the world, a practice which is already aimed at by the concept of globalization. To Tassinari, however, two basic issues arise out of the concept of transculturalism which appear uppermost from the two questions namely;

- 1) Can a cultural entity exist as a pure, unadulterated entity without any contact with other cultures? and
- 2) Are cultures of the world really that distinct?

These are questions which have agitated the minds of many scholars (see Cuccioletta: 2001; Grosu: 2012) making Jeff Lewis (2008) to argue that transculturalism is characterized by cultural fluidity and the dynamics of cultural change from which Wikipedia highlights Lewis’s salient points to be the major characteristics of transculturalism. Wikipedia posits that in Jeff’s view,

- *...Transculturalism emphasizes on the problematic of contemporary culture in terms of relationships, meaning making, and power formation; and the transitory nature of culture as well as its power to transform... IT IS INTERESTED IN THE DISINTEGRATION OF GROUPS, CULTURES AND POWER. (Emphasis mine).*

If Wikipedia’s summary of Lewis’s postulation is to be accepted as salient then transculturalism does not center on the unique or distinctive qualities of cultures but is instead interested in the “disintegration of groups and cultures.” These issues and assertions made Tassinari to observe that transculturalism “...opposes the singular traditional cultures that evolved from the nation-state.” In today’s globalized configuration, transculturalism would simply imply the breaking up of international boundaries and barriers to enhance the free-flow of culture, ideas and economies as opposed to multiculturalism that re-enforces the distinctness but co-existence of nations and cultural heritages. Transculturalism, like globalization therefore, recognizes a strong central culture, the disappearance of other cultures and the monolingual existence of universal humanity to the detriment of the concept of the nation-state.

But according to [30] author of *The Transcultural Journey*, transculturalism emphasizes

- *...Shared interests, and common values across cultural and national borders [which implies] thinking*

*“outside the box of one’s motherland”, or allowing for a chameleon sense of self without losing one’s cultural center.*

If Slimbach’s concept is accepted as central to transculturalism, it would allow for distinctiveness of cultures that can favor unity in diversity as was envisaged by Pierre Trudeau in his 1972 legislation on a multi-cultural Canadian society. However, the highpoints of transculturalism, according to [15] are that different cultures would

- *...Share their stories, symbols, values, meanings and experiences. This process of sharing and perpetual beaching releases the solidity and stability of culture, creating the condition for transfer and transition.*

Transculturalism, therefore, tends to emphasize cultural “transfer and transition” to fit into the new world economic order envisaged through the process of globalization, while multiculturalism, on the other hand, attempts to re-enforce differences and uniqueness in cultural identity thus allowing a people their cultural hegemony but only encouraging the co-existence of multiple cultures while working to enhance a unitary existence of all cultures. Jeff therefore submits that transculturalism “allows human individuals and groups to adopt and adapt new discourses, values, ideas and knowledge systems.” In multicultural parlance, African culture can exist as a unique and distinct entity and contributing its own quota, through African knowledge systems, to the realization of a multi-cultural universe. In the transcultural set-up, however, there exist a possibility for the eventual decimation of some so-called backward or lesser cultures and the dominance of others or the perceived sophisticated cultures, which is precisely what is aimed at through the concepts of globalization and its ally, transculturalism.

It appears therefore, that the Darwinian theory of the “survival of the fittest” is subtly playing itself out. The West, having failed in the utilization of forceful means through colonization and imperialism, to occupy and decimate particularly African cultures and languages, are now developing subtler programs through and by which they can penetrate African countries and continue the process of neo-colonization, (the French assimilationist policy refers). Unwary Africans therefore, easily fall prey to the glare of these concepts when they unwittingly subject their economies, information systems and educational curricula to the modifying influences of Western policies and technological advancement. [21] warns against this reckless acceptance of concepts by the African elite and the academia, who themselves have failed their constituencies in their responsibilities and instead

- *...Look to the Western model of development, including its promises of cultural and intellectual liberalism, political democracy, economic capitalism and its new form globalization as an attractive and attainable mode for progress and prosperity.[21]*

Negash concludes that “...in spite of the receptive climate in Africa towards the Western model and globalization, the projected expectations of Africans may, nonetheless, never

come true.”

Africans must therefore look for alternatives that can ensure the sustenance of African culture and a unique African identity rather than subsume the “African personality” under the guise of a universal cultural and economic world order propelled by the Western concepts of globalization and transculturalism. Transculturalism like globalization only seeks a mixture or synthesis of all world cultures and the eventual emergence of a super-culture in contemporaneity to pave the way for continuous economic imperialism of Africa while multiculturalism defines borders of interaction between the several cultures that co-exist with one another on equal basis.

- *...Multiculturalism establishes borders of recognition [of cultures and their distinctions] and institutionalization of the multiple cultures that co-exist within it, transculturalism stresses the fluidity of these borders.[2]*

The ultimate aim of the shift from multiculturalism to transculturalism in public discourse remains the Western recognition of and emphasis on fusion of cultures rather than maintaining individual identities of cultures. The whole idea,

- *...Is based on a liberal economic perspective of which consumption practices are a visible side. This means consumers are targeted by evermore subtle practices of power aimed at obtaining their consent and approval by an increasingly competitive neo-liberal social order.[2]*

Globalization and transculturalism are as such simply two sides of the same coin; they complement and re-enforce each other and are aimed at the subjugation of the cultural identity of Africans so that their consciousnesses cannot be raised to the level of recognition and realization of the neo-colonialist and imperialistic implications or overtures of these programs.

- *...Transculturalism is characterized by its compatibility with globalization, as it supports free trade [sustained and driven by the multi-national corporations]...transculturalism therefore aims to go beyond a strictly culturalist vision, as it overcomes the concept of culture as “way of life specific” of a given community...It has become globalized due to the influence of globally hegemonic patterns as far as current consumer practices are concerned.[2]*

One posits here that once this fusion is achieved, to the detriment of African and other third world cultures and economies; perhaps through hybridity, a new world order will emerge with a new identity and social status. (See McRobbie: 2005, and Kraidy: 2005).

The implications of this synthesis, according to Alvares, is that while globalization can be criticized as economic capitalism, transculturalism can largely be seen as a concept that transcends economic, social, cultural and political boundaries. It is, as such, a direct attack on African culture, evident principally in the linguistic hegemony of English, French and Portuguese languages over all African languages. The big question that arises from this therefore is how African states can overcome this threat to their corporate

cultural existence. To bring it nearer home, Of what benefit is the concept of transculturalism to the development and growth of traditional African or Nigerian societies literarily, economically, culturally and politically, especially now that Nigeria and most African countries, are engulfed in internal strife and insecurity and threatened by disintegration as a result of cultural, political and religious diversity? Finally, can a resort to transculturalism or a unitary cultural universe favor or bring about the much desired African unity? It is this writer's candid opinion that what Nigeria and Africa require now and perhaps, should emphasize, is multiculturalism that tends towards recognition and perhaps eventual integration of our cultural diversity. It is the envisaged furtherance of this recognition and integration that I highlighted in *The Liberating Potential of Oral Literature in a Globalized Context*, [10] and also advocated for the need for *Integrating an Oral Literature Pedagogical Model into the Nigerian School System*, using the Freirean popular education model, [9].

The two papers bring out the usefulness of Oral literature, not just to Nigerians but to the entire African people, as a repository of African culture and knowledge systems which should be vigorously tapped as a means for the enhancement of the liberation of Africans' consciousness from Eurocentric paradigms for comprehending reality in the African context.

### 3. Transculturalism and African Oral Literature

Transculturalism's emphasis on a monocultural and monolingual existence of the universe cannot, therefore, favor the growth of Oral literature and the impartation of African knowledge systems embedded therein and thriving on our numerous linguistic backgrounds and oral literary heritages. The concepts of transculturalism, globalization and economic and information technology advancements, though necessary and desirable in their own right, contain the potential to impact adversely on the growth of African culture and identity already under severe threat of extinction by current popular media practices. For this reason there is dire need for the liberation of the African mentality, but how can this be achieved except through re-invigoration of the study of Oral literature and the attendant culture and knowledge systems therein.

Emphasizing the need for a more vigorous and consistent study of Oral literature in particular and the humanistic discipline in general for the achievement of this most desired liberation, Professor Nkem Okoh posits that

- *...We live in an age indisputably propped and propelled by the twin forces of science and technology. It is an era in which concerted measures are in place to relegate the humanities to the background. It is a rapid technologizing, even highly technologized age, one in which the arts are grossly denigrated, distorted, underfunded and undermined.*[25]

Okoh goes on to note the centrality of humanistic and literary studies as integral and indispensable to the lives of

every human being by arguing that

- *...Literature (whether oral or written) has the ability of addressing itself, not just to an individual or a particular society but to the generality of humanity.*[25]

Explicating the potency of a massive global silent crisis that threatens the future of democratic self-governance and a world-wide crisis in the educational sector due largely to the neglect of humanistic studies, Martha Nussbaum (2010) quotes Rabindranath Tagore (1917), an Indian educator as asserting that changes are taking place in the educational sector that are capable of

- *...Producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements.*(23)

This arises from the fact that globalization and transculturalism are fast decimating humanism and humanistic studies in preference for technological advancement that will drive the global economic village, evident in the fact that the Western industrialized nations, driven by the urge to expand their capitalist empires to ensure maximum economic profits, always enunciate concepts and educational programs that essentially serve as baits to greedy and unsuspecting third world nations whose governments and intelligentsia serve only the interests of the center of the peripheral countries to the utter neglect of public interests. Nussbaum herself therefore identifies the changes to include but are not restricted to the fact that

- *...The humanities and the arts are being cut away in both primary, secondary and college/University education in virtually every nation of the world. The reasons are that these are useless frills at a time when nations must re-order their priorities "to stay competitive in the global market."*[23]

She further adds that

- *...Nations are losing sight of what is regarded as "the humanistic aspects of science and social science"—the imaginative, creative aspect and the aspect of rigorous critical thought are losing grounds as nations prefer to pursue short term profit guaranteed by the process of globalization.*[23]

Finally, in Nussbaum's opinion, "the world in which we live is [now] driven by forces of insatiable economic gains and a mechanistic desire for productive citizens..." One can only imagine the grave danger posed to Nigerian and African culture and the arts through excessive exposure to the discourses engendered by the twin concepts of globalization and transculturalism. The current craze in Nigeria for technological advancement and technology transfer, evident even in admissions policies which are skewed in favor of the sciences is gradually beclouding cultural growth and advancement along creative and imaginative thought. After all, scientific and technological development is a function of cultural, ecological and environmental factors which must be properly analyzed, understood and then harnessed for technological take-off. Unfortunately, our educational system

is completely dependent on Western formal models to the exclusion of traditional African modes of knowledge acquisition. Western formal education on the other hand, is formulated and formatted to produce individuals that will fit into and drive the global economic village envisaged in the successes of globalization and transculturalism. The result is that African life and culture remain neglected and jeopardized.

It is therefore pertinent at this point to advocate an African cultural renaissance through refocusing on African Oral literature that serves as a repository of African cultural life. One is not here requesting for a return to the ways of our fore-fathers. That will be almost impossible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but one can argue for an emphasis on cultural studies that focuses on a restructuring of our educational curricula to lay emphasis on Oral literature as a means of inculcating in younger generations a sense of patriotism and identity in young Africans.

Speaking on the efficacious potential of Oral literature as a bastion of African cultural life, Johannes Seema points out that Basotho knowledge system are embedded in their proverbs, and therefore Basotho philosophy of development is enshrined in these proverbs. She therefore posits that “*Basotho oral art is used to formulate models of their development.*”[29]

Again in stressing the need for the inculcation of strategies for peace education into the Nigerian school system, it is argued that “*indigenous proverbs in Nigeria have been discovered to possess socializing and enduring values for peaceful co-existence.*”[1]

In recounting the agelessness of Orality and Oral literature in human history, David Bynum asserts that Oral literature is

- *...At the very least indispensable to any practical definition of humanity. For many millennia the only instrument of rhythmic words and narrative known in many parts of the world was the tongue men were born with...so for long ages the only way any knowledge could survive from one generation to another was through oral tradition...Rhythmic speech was the world's first great medium of communication for complex ideas and there were certainly media men of astonishing skill long before anyone on earth knew how to write.*[6]

Bynum concludes with the very powerful assertion that

- *...One of the most important developments in this century in both the popular and academic understanding of culture has been the wide growth of awareness that ONLY A TINY PERCENTAGE (emphasis mine) of man's total creative achievement has depended on literacy.*[6]

These assertions speak for the centrality of Orality and Oral literature in human life and if these assertions hold water, Africans must realize that the basis for advancement lies, not in technology transfer but in their cultural heritage as an endowment that will then drive technology creation and technological advancement. It follows that reason or cognitive ability and technological innovation, just as

origination of complex ideological postulations, is not a function of writing or literacy; yet the West often denigrates African thought systems by narrowing the definition of reason and intelligence to the possession of literacy skills. It is incontrovertible that for technology to be relevant, it must be domesticated to a viable cultural and economic environment sustained through an educational curriculum that recognizes and upholds the values of that culture so it can be useful to the people who require it. In the same way the concepts of globalization and transculturalism need to be domesticated to an African environment that is already culturally and ideologically prepared to adopt and adapt them to African environmental peculiarities in order for them to be relevant. Oral literature will therefore, assist in the preparation of this environment because it is the reservoir of African values and knowledge systems.

The value of Oral literature to the sustenance of culture is therefore, succinctly attested to by a Kenyan scholar and educationist who aptly argues that

- *The systematic relationship between Oral literature and society is such that these two human institutions obviously evolve together and neither of them can exist in isolation from the other. People use the oral word to reflect on their everyday experiences and concerns...Oral literature reflects their life as a whole.*[38]

To the Kenyan people, her own homeland therefore, Oral literature forms a vital ingredient of their total existence and Lorna states that

- *The study of Oral literature is very important. One of Kenya's basic educational objectives. Accordingly the Kenyan National Examinations Council regulations and syllabus (1993) states that a sound educational policy is one that enables students to understand the culture and environment of their own society before proceeding to learn about other cultures...A sound grounding of the student in his/her people's culture helps him/her become a useful member of the society.*[38]

This is a sound educational policy that focuses on the acquisition of indigenous skills based on the culture and environment of the students from which they can develop and build on a technological model that will be relevant to their society. This is what Nigerians and Africans need rather than pandering after concepts they have no control over and can contribute almost nothing to their realization except provision of ready markets as dumping grounds for finished products of the industrialized nations. As if to prepare grounds for Lorna's assertion, other Kenyan scholars had earlier asserted that

- *In order to fully understand any community, it is important to look at their literature. Both oral and written literatures reflect and shape the lives and ideas of a people. Therefore to understand the totality of a people's way of life; we must study Oral literature.*[12]

Unfortunately, however, what obtains today in the Nigerian educational system is putting the cart before the

horse. Nigerian and most African children first learn about an alien culture in the formal schools systems they are pushed into at very tender ages before acquiring any knowledge of their own home culture and environment, if they ever. It is therefore rather ironical that instead of focusing on the development of our cultural potential and acquisition of African knowledge systems embedded in our oral literatures as a basis for identity formation, Nigerians and Africans emphasize technology transfer without a solid base on which to domesticate even the transferred technology or enhance the development of their own indigenous technologies. The past Nigerian civil war serves as a succinct example to all Nigerians, where, starved of sophisticated weapons through blockade, the rebel Biafra people resorted to indigenous technology that helped sustain the war effort for many months against popular belief that the regime would soon collapse. The problem is that that technology was never utilized. Its exponents were disbanded soon after the war ended to cater for their individual needs.

To further buttress this misplaced emphasis on technology transfer and debunk the efficacy of such concepts as globalization and transculturalism in the African context especially as they affect educational policies and programs enunciated in Nigeria and Africa, [16] point out that, *“much of the education seen on the African continent has continued to be burdened by colonial connections.”* The quest for and incessant focus on discourses on transculturalism and globalization are therefore another attempt to import or rather export economic orders which, like alien education systems, only continue to marginalize and/or retard Africans’ quest for liberation and growth as independent nations and along African standards. The argument is always that we cannot isolate Africa from the rest of the world yet from the focus and conceptual framework of these ideologies, this isolation is absolutely necessary, desirable and even inevitable to enhance re-assessment of Africa’s goals and re-order our priorities towards repositioning our educational curricula for possible advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized context.

It is obvious from this that the Western colonial powers, in order to sustain their colonial empires and to perpetuate their neo-colonial and imperialist control of African states, drafted educational curricula and language policies, which incidentally, Africans continue to depend on but which were meant to train Africans to fit into the colonial machine they had established in the colonies. Knowing that this machine has neither been dismantled nor overhauled, Western colonial powers have resorted to subtly utilize same, this time through the introduction of such purportedly beneficial concepts as globalization and transculturalism that will ensure their continuous dominance of their African colonies. Africans on the other hand, advertently or inadvertently accept these policies and programs without critical examination and continue to perpetrate the training of Africans to oil the global market economy dictated by the forces of globalization and a unitary transcultural world. Witness the continued emphasis on an educational system that prevents critical participatory methods even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century and

still dwells on spoon-feeding students who cannot critically contribute to knowledge acquisition even as it concerns their own environment. Africans are yet unable to extricate themselves from Western colonialist formulations to function as independent countries dictating their own developmental programs and policies based on an Africanist ideological framework.

It is therefore from this perspective that one argues that what Africans need today is a strong emphasis on traditional African education which refers to the teaching and learning that is based on knowledge systems that are integral and indigenous to the traditional African environment as well as encapsulates knowledge embedded in folktales, myths and legends and other forms of Oral literature that emanate from the African environment and teach African children about Africa. It is also for this same reason that one advocates the adoption of the African philosophy of Ubuntu to serve as the basis for the formulation of educational curricula for teaching African children African values as espoused by the black American cultural studies scholar, Abdul-Karim Bangura in his “Ubuntu-gogy” as more relevant to the African experience as a pedagogical model than ergonagogy, heutogogy or andragogy. This, it is hoped, will augur well in African tertiary institutions for the impartation of African knowledge systems to African children and the raising of a consciousness of African personality and identity that can be bandied in the transcultural or globalized configuration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

#### **4. Transculturalism and the African Educational Paradigm of Ubuntu-gogy**

In order to ground this argument, it is pertinent to explicate the relevance of the concept of “Ubuntu-gogy” as an African educational paradigm espoused by Bangura. “Ubuntu-gogy” as an educational paradigm in the African context was first espoused in 2005 and was seen by Bangura to be superior to pedagogy, andragogy, ergonagogy and heutogogy which were all founded on and reflected different cultural and environmental peculiarities and backgrounds from African while “Ubuntu-gogy” is based on the African existential philosophy of “Ubuntu.” The etymology of the word “Ubuntu” is diverse. The word is, however, generally believed to have emanated from the Zulu and Xhosa languages and is simply translated as “Humanity towards others.” Among the Nguni Bantu, the word is “unhu” (see Samkange & Samkange: 1980), while the Igbo in Nigeria have “unu” and the Ejagham, also in Nigeria have “wun,” all meaning the same thing and expressing love and humanity towards others. This African philosophy of collectivism requires that at all times the individual effectively represents the people from among whom she or he comes, (Tutu: 1999, Mande: 2009, & Samkange:1980). Ubuntu stresses that it is taboo to call elderly people by their given names; instead they are called by their appellatives or simply “elder” to “banish individualism and replace it with a representative

role. The individual’s identity is thus subsumed or replaced by a larger societal identity” (Samkange: 1980). Sibanda [31] also asserts that from the Zimbabwean Bantu perspective, Ubuntu requires that an individual must

- *...Meet the standards of a reasonable citizen. He or she must be able to represent the community and the whole ecological system. Thus the person should be able to uphold the norms and values of the family, the community, and the society at large. In addition, this person must be able, to abide by the country’s laws and statutes, respect him/herself, the elders as well as youngsters and also respect the leadership of the community, state and the world at large... Ubuntu is [therefore] more of a corporate responsibility than an individual worldview.[31]*

This summarizes the African concept of communalism and collectivism and it is as well emphasized that “*the ethical values embedded in Ubuntu include respect for others, helpfulness, communal sharing, honesty and trust as well as unselfishness,*” (Mnyaka & Motlhabi:2005). The ideology of Ubuntu is to enhance cohesion and peaceful interaction between people in the universe within which they live and operate. This explains why, to the African, there is no distinction between man, nature or creation. Ubuntu therefore emphasizes collective and reciprocal existence as we all depend on each other and on nature for sustenance. [17] therefore, opines that the foundation of Ubuntu is

- *...Based on the emphasis of promotion of ethics for the humankind...the promotion of wisdom, not only for human beings but also for the whole creation.[17]*

Ubuntu is as such a traditional African philosophical tenet that expresses and implies understanding humanity in relation to the rest of the world. This philosophy recognizes the relationship and link between human beings from which humanity discovers the essence of human interactions. [22] therefore posits that Ubuntu is

- *...The capacity in African cultures to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining community and communal life.[22]*

She adds that “the eclipse of Ubuntu has darkened the spirit of modern-day African political systems.” This is a truism precisely because most Africans have abandoned and are still abandoning their ingrained spirit of communalism and collectivism inherent in the philosophy of Ubuntu and gone after political and economic ideologies alien to African culture and environment. What Nigerians and Africans require now is an emphasis on multiculturalism that will most likely recognize our diverse cultural heritages and the oral narratives that sustain them within the background of the philosophy of Ubuntu as the bedrock of an African renaissance that can enhance the creation of an African personality and cultural identity to be branded in the current global dispensation. [5] therefore, describes Ubuntu as

- *...A more informal and relaxed way of living and speaking which manifests in singing, dancing, laughing, painting and sculpturing. Many Africans*

*regard this happier style of living as unique and peculiar to Africa. It is this reference to a certain way of living that makes Ubuntu life so different from life in other cultures.[5]*

Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour, a Ghanaian educationist however laments the destruction of this unique life-style and philosophy of life when he posits that

- *...One must, however admit the fact that in view of the influence of colonialism, western education and its values, the cardinal features of Ubuntu (i.e. communalism) seem to be eroded and less visible in many African cities as compared to rural communities where African identity and culture are still very much admired, encouraged and practiced. This has been some of the consequences of formal education which overtly and covertly sought to “create Europeans in African skins.[27]*

Baffour sees this erosion as peculiar to the cities but one hastens to add that today the rural African communities are not different from the cities as they are fast being penetrated by these erosive tendencies and unwholesome practices evident in erotic films and lewd nomenclature propagated through advanced mass and popular media technology, all functions of globalization and transculturalism. It is from this perspective that this writer is of the opinion that a strong adoption and reliance on the philosophy and ideology of Ubuntu propagated through “Ubuntuogy” as an African educational paradigm is desirable and inevitable for African development and to refocus the minds of young African children on their cultural values.

“Ubuntuogy”, as a learning system emphasizes collaborative and co-operative learning as is practiced in traditional societies where education of young ones is the collective responsibility of every adult individual in the community. “Ubuntuogy” can therefore be described as a model of traditional African knowledge dissemination system through communal education carried on by the narration of folktales, myths, legends and other traditional festival enactments that contain the wisdom of our traditional communities. The aim here is to produce a rounded and well cultured child in whom, not just the family but the entire society can entrust their well-being when the need arises. Finally, “Ubuntuogy” recognizes and emphasizes the value and potency of African traditional knowledge systems that can sustain African culture and identity against the barrage of Western technological advancement.

Despite this perceived collective agreement on the efficacy and usefulness of Ubuntu as an African existential philosophy and framework on which “Ubuntuogy” can be built and effectively utilized for the educational advancement of African communities, Ubuntu as a concept and African philosophy of life has not gone without its fair share of criticism. Some Western scholars feel that it is really not entirely practicable in today’s global and cosmopolitan life expectations hence Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen (1992) are quoted by Sibanda to have argued that

- *...Such a rigid conceptualization of humanness [or*

*Ubuntu] would not allow for novelty and change...it defeats the spirit of globalization and acts against the rubrics of cultural diversity and multiculturalism.[31]*

This writer however feels that this view of Ubuntu is untenable because rather than restrict, Ubuntu supports and conforms to the concept of multiculturalism as is depicted in its uniformity of application across all diverse African cultural backgrounds which approximate to unity of world view and philosophy of life but within linguistic, ecological and cultural diversity.

A re-assessment of the African educational system with a view to laying emphasis on traditional modes of knowledge impartation which will concentrate on African culture and traditional values will succinctly bring out the essence of African life and those salient aspects that can serve as Africa's bequeathal to the outside world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized and transcultural context. Africans generally and educationists in particular must be committed to the resuscitation of African traditional values embedded in African narratives. As earlier asserted, one is not necessarily advocating for a return to our earliest origins which is not now possible, but rather that Africans must imbibe the wisdom of our forebears and show-case same as our own cultural identity upon which our technology and democratic values can be foisted. This re-assessment or repositioning is what [32] envisaged when in her introduction to her edited volume, *Rethinking Education for a Global, Transcultural World*, she posits that

- *The global networking promoted by technology, globalization and migration[which enhances transculturalism] that are occurring at a large scale, requires school systems that develop in the students new types of skills, based on the ability to understand the world and its problems and instill a sense of responsibility and co-operation to enhance the resolution of the great problems of mankind...[ therefore the book centers on] how to build relationships between the school and society and the possibilities of transcending the barriers IN DIFFERENT NATIONAL CONTEXTS, (Emphasis mine)... The main goal we want to achieve with the contributions made in the book is to know how education systems and schools in different countries respond to the social changes caused by globalization, migration and new communications technologies.[32]*

Africans therefore are in dire need of this re-assessment or, indeed, a revolutionary approach in their educational systems to reflect the peculiarities of their environment so that they can appropriately fit into these changes created by a 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized and transcultural world. Africans need an understanding of their own cultural environment and values to be able to assess the usefulness or otherwise of these new world concepts to their lives and progress. Africa cannot afford to enter this new world without looking back at what she can positively offer this new dispensation and this can best be achieved through the philosophy of Ubuntuism and the knowledge embedded in their Oral literature.

## 5. Conclusion

The usefulness of Ubuntu as a cultural philosophy is not restricted to only Africans. Other races of the world can learn from Africa and key into this philosophy of collectivism as therein lies the fact that it directly contradicts and revolutionizes the Cartesian philosophy of individualism that characterizes Western thinking and underlies the concepts of globalization and transculturalism; evident in their economic undertones. Mande again argues that

- *...African values (in Ubuntu) could contribute much to world consciousness but people in the West misunderstand Africa for many reasons...African traditional culture is inaccessible because most of it is oral rather than written and lived rather than formally communicated in books and/or journals[and other sophisticated media technology], it is difficult to learn about from a distance.[17]*

For this reason, one proposes that the concept of "Ubuntugogy", if adopted as an African educational paradigm will enhance the opening up and eventual fusion of Oral literature into all African institutions of learning and beyond to ensure the teaching and impartation of African values and knowledge systems to younger generations and those interested in studying African culture and ways of life. This way we can keep Oral literature alive and as dynamic as it has always been. [24] therefore argue that

- *...Ubutuism is a moral philosophy of traditional African societies...that bound together traditional African communities to ensure their corporate existence and co-operative and communal interaction for the realization of their common goals.[24]*

This same moral philosophy is what is expanded and embedded in the concept of "Ubuntugogy" which also thrives on collective responsibility and co-operative interaction that ensures stability and cohesion in African traditional life. The infusion of "Ubuntugogy" into the curricula of African educational institutions is therefore expected to aid the diminution of excessive reliance on Western values which promote the Cartesian concept of individualism among Africans as against their own traditional African philosophy of collectivism that is the bedrock of African cultures. This way we can hope to eliminate moral decadence, greed and corruption that were originally alien to traditional African societies.

Finally, the introduction and reliance on "Ubuntugogy" as an educational paradigm in African institutions of learning is expected to cultivate and inculcate a patriotic spirit and a feeling of cultural identity among young African students that can stand against the barrage of Western "civilizing" influences and concepts being spread without any challenges. Nyaume et al [24] therefore posit that this much needed cultivation of a spirit of patriotism can be achieved by "*...resuscitating Ubutuism in the younger generations through promotion and co-operation among students learning subjects using local contexts.*" Since current emphasis everywhere is on education and the most effective

methods of knowledge impartation, this writer believes that the easiest context and best approach is the introduction of African Oral literature into the school curricula of all educational institutions in Africa. This is precisely where Abdul Karim Bangura’s advocacy for adoption of “Ubuntuogy” as an African educational paradigm best fits and can be modified and infused into the school system as an African model of knowledge impartation to reflect local conditions and environmental variables.

To this end, a synthesis of the Freirean concept of popular education pedagogy and the Banguran “Ubuntuogy” will be expected to adequately ground Oral literature studies within the African educational context which can be regarded as a “core curriculum” in African institutions of learning. The emphasis here is therefore on participant classroom activities integral to Oral literature and expected to sharpen the critical instincts of the students. McKay[18] as such urges that

- ...Education should enable learners to take a critical stance and not just absorbing information that the educator decides to teach them.[18]

This is the modern concept of education which is very aptly replicated in participatory Oral literature performance contexts. However, in Nigeria today, the prevalent mode of education is the Western formal type which feeds the students rather than aiding the development of their critical instincts. “Ubuntuogy” is therefore aimed at revolutionizing this approach to achieve the desired cultural emphasis and lay the foundation for technological take-off of Nigeria and Africa. It is noteworthy that the renowned educationist, Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour[27] presages this kind of revolutionary approach when he observes that through the philosophy of Ubuntu

- Africans lead communal life where sharing of resources, ideas, and information are part of the true African identity and daily practices...precepts which are completely negated in the formal individualistic knowledge acquisition methods espoused in Western formal education.[27]

The same individualist centered or unitary universe is what is envisaged in the concepts of globalization and transculturalism which militate against the African existential philosophy and so cannot augur well for African development. Africans must therefore look back to the application of the precepts contained in Ubuntu to propagate and promote learning that will be geared towards practical problem solving approaches and experiences to uplift the continent and its peoples. From the foregoing, it is obvious that potent as the forces of globalization and transculturalism may be, traditional African cultures and societies are still largely oblivious of their existence and so will continue to be passive towards their purported gains and the changes they portend. In as much as they are incapable of rejecting them, they are equally incapable of total acceptance and positive contributions towards the actualization of the envisaged “gains” that will accrue to the Western world when the successes of these concepts in Africa are finally recorded or their failures celebrated, for as Donald Cuccioletta quotes Immanuel Wallerstein, “culture is the ideological battleground of the modern world system,”

because even with improved physical boundaries and sophisticated information technology, the question that still remains unanswered in our minds according to Cuccioletta [7] is, whether “*Our facility for rapid physical and virtual travel really put us in contact with “the other” and so fostered an understanding of “the other;”*” that we can now start envisaging a unitary or monocultural universe?

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