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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Every society has its own ways of living which are handed down from one generation to the other orally or behaviorally. These include folktales, traditional beliefs, practices, customs, values, proverbs, idioms, riddles, sayings, songs, dance stories, food and dressing. Globalization has brought with it a common culture which has become a popular culture among various nations of all ages. The Youth have their own culture unique to them. While oral performance produces good citizens with appreciated societal values, it is facing a lot of challenges from modern technology. During the colonial era, the colonizers imparted their own language and culture to the nationals making them lose their indigenous language and all forms of culture to adopt the colonizers’. When the states attained their independence, they vitalized their indigenous languages and culture. In schools, the curriculum was adjusted to suit their independence goals and values changed. As a result, the pre – independence and post – independence youths have a different character. The technological advances brought with them the use of electronic media in the likes of television, videos, computers, laptops, and cell phones accessible to everyone. Communication changed from the traditional letter writing, telegram and telephone to cell phone and internet. Globalization has brought about communication through internet. The youth have established their common Youth Culture which has become popular and unique from the preceding generations. It is the aim of this paper to highlight the impact of the Popular Culture, Youth Culture and Globalization on oral performance in Africa. The significance of this research is to show how globalization has affected the lives of the youth in general and how they have diverted from the traditional culture to that of their own making. Scholars and readers will be well-informed of how the youth across nations share common traits of behaviour learned through globalization and that they may be challenged to research on other similar areas of interest to them.

Keywords: Youth Culture, globalization, traditional culture, oral performance, modern technology, electronic media and internet.

Background

Culture has become a very conspicuous concern of sociologists and social theorists, that development being reflected in and promoted by the many journals and organizations devoted to cultural and ‘intercultural’ matters which have been founded in recent years (Robertson, 1992). Research into social psychology is undertaken in many parts of the world and the results are published in numerous technical journals. The results of these studies are then transmitted to a wider audience through medium of students’ textbooks. We cannot be sure that where a study was done necessarily tells us what cultural groups were represented among the participants in the study. But, looking at textbooks written in other countries does show us whether the origins of the social psychological studies put before students are or are not the same ones around the world (Smith and Bond, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

Secondary research is finding out what others have discovered through original research and trying to reconcile conflicting viewpoints or conclusions, find new relationships between normally non-related research, and arrive at your own conclusion based on others’ work (Shastri, 2008). This paper is based on a desk research through document analysis of what is recorded in books and the internet. Some of the findings correspond with the researcher’s own experience of youth culture in Zimbabwe. Born-free is a term that was used in Zimbabwe to refer to
children that were born after the country’s independence in 1980. It was used to imply that they did not have the liberation war ideology hence did not know the country’s values and where it was going. As a result the youth in question are aged up to 35 years in the Zimbabwean context. It has been observed that their culture is exactly the same as that of most youths worldwide.

Therefore, the popular and youth culture discussed applies to the born-free citizens of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean youths in the urban Midlands Region have been studied in comparison with youths world over cited in textbooks and the internet.

**Compression of the world through globalization**

Globalization has been defined as referring to the trans-national circulation of ideas, languages and popular culture or the increasingly global relationships of culture, people and economic activity. The term globalization was first employed to denote a holistic view of human experience in education. Information and technology exchange through mobile phones, internet and television is an integral aspect of globalization. English is the dominant language on the internet and is the lingua franca of globalization. It is indicated that about 40% of the world’s programmes are in English. Globalization has alienated individuals from their cultures as it has spread pop culture particularly via the internet and satellite television. Religion through evangelists, imperialists and traders brought Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and many sects that have influenced endemic cultures in places far from their origins. Japanese McDonald’s fast food is evidence of corporate globalization and integration of the same food into different cultures. Recreation spread popular culture.

**Popular Culture**

Alan Suinge Wood (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia) claims that the myth of mass culture stems from a moral crisis caused by the weakening of traditional centers of authority like family and religion. Capitalist economy is said to create opportunities for every individual to participate in democratic culture through mass education and expansion of leisure time. Pop culture and mass media have a symbiotic relationship in an intimate collaboration in media coverage, internet, facebook, skype, bluetooth and memory cards. Zimbabwean youths actively participate in all these.

Wikipedia the free encyclopedia defines popular culture commonly known as Pop culture, as the totality of ideas, perspectives, attitudes, memes, images and other phenomena that are deemed preferred per an informal consensus within the mainstream of a given culture, especially western culture of the mid twentieth century and the emerging global mainstream of the last twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

From internet we learn that pop culture is dynamic as it occurs uniquely in place and time. It encompasses media like comic books, television and internet. This collection of ideas permeates the everyday lives of the society being largely influenced by mass media. Television has replaced high quality drama with movies, sport and other lifestyle programmes, soaps, foreign news, pictures of scantily dressed young ladies produce celebrity culture. Pop culture represents a complex of mutually interdependent perspectives and values that influence society and its institutions.

**Music**

Traditional music has been lost; performers discard traditional instruments and fuse genres. Globalization has produced world music to reach western audience searching for new ideas and sounds. Local musical identity has been lost. Marshal McLuhan (Wikipedia the free encyclopedia) suggested a global village whereby globalization would lead to a world where people from all countries will become more integrated and aware of common interests and shared humanity.

**Presentation of participants**

On clothing, born-free girls appear half-dressed with half the part naked like the back top, stomach or thighs exposed, and wearing hipsters, leg insulins, tight slacks, large belts, ornaments on ears, finger rings, nose rings, bangles, necklaces and beads as the order of the day. You find them with long finger nails and artificial coloured hairstyles, weaves, hair plaing, bald head or very short hair blonde in various colours, cutex and make-up applied. They wear shoes of various types ranging from high heeled, flat heeled and sandals. Born-free boys are seen with trousers hanging, three-quarter shorts and various kinds of shoes. They are also seen with plainged hair, bald head and Mohawk haircut as well, leaving some hair in between and other haircuts of various styles.
Other practices

Popular food eaten is junky food like hot dogs, pies, samosa, chips, chicken pieces, ice-cream, salad and sushi. In education they are academics pursuing degrees, practical, technical, vocational and Information Technology courses.

Subversive popular culture

When it comes to sex, they take premarital sex as the order of the day, either side proposes love and is instant agreement, they practice public show of love through hugging, kissing and holding of hands. They use contraceptives, condoms, exchange valentine gifts and double-crossing is not an issue. Their entertainment includes pornography, horror, comedy, thriller and fiction.

Youth culture

Youth culture is defined as the sum of ways of living of adolescents, referring to the body of norms, values and practices recognized and shared by members of the adolescent society as appropriate guides to actions. Youth culture is only for adolescents and not adults. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia presents elements of culture as beliefs, behaviours, styles, interests in relation to choice of clothes, popular music, sports, vocabulary, dating in order to make a distinct culture of their own. Their language is mainly slang. It has also been observed that there exist youth sub-cultures which are constantly changing with norms, values, behaviours and styles which vary from the general youth culture. A present youth culture does not necessarily extend to all generations of young people. Peer influence varies greatly between contexts, sex, age and social status. When these youths face a certain context they have a similar perspective on it, girls may differ from the boys in the way that they influence each other or on issues different from those of the boys. Teenagers influence each other in a way different from older youths. Those that come from well-brought-up families may have a different influence from those that come from indecent families. As they spend time together, they share norms developing their own culture. Psychological theories noted the role of youth culture in identity development. They have a sense of belonging so they always want to be identified with their peers. This is the time when they want to break free from relying on parents in order to be dependent on peer group. They face contradictions as society expects them to go through their schooling as they remain economically dependent on parents, while they need to achieve autonomy as they spend their leisure activities with peers. Parents are worried that youth culture is responsible for moral degradation and loss of societal values. Their values are in conflict with those of adults like when adolescents lack interest in education which parents highly value, involvement in risky behaviour such as substance use and sexual activity. Results of such risky behaviours can be suicidal in nature; leading to delinquency, pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections. Values of adults and adolescents usually clash on dress, music, language, dating and sports.

Effect on oral performance

Storytelling

Storytelling is a way of conveying events in words, images and sounds often by improvisation to provide entertainment, education cultural preservation and to instill moral values. Oral is combined with gestures and expressions, music and dance. With the advent of writing and use of stable portable media, stories were recorded, transcribed and shared worldwide. Storytelling is used to teach ethics, values and cultural norms in a social context. The youth can still read stories from books and not necessarily get them from performers.

Proverbs

Proverbs are said to be old sayings, a collection of teachings that give good advice or express supposed truth. They are owned and used extensively and are a useful means of studying what people adore, hate, respect or despise (Krapp 1930 in Nyembesi 1990). They are meant to instill societal values of people who live in a harmonized society. Adolescents now find themselves scattered all over the world and pursuing education to degrees and do not get the chance to have values imparted to them by adults. Adults now find themselves faced with a situation where they have knowledge but having no recipients of that knowledge.
Oral performance in this case has no clients.

Some of the proverbs originated from myth belief of the dead (ancestors) believed to be directly involved in people’s lives like ‘Idlozi liyaphakelwa’ (An ancestral spirit is dished for) (Ndhlukula, 1980).

African Traditional Religion (ATR) believes that ancestors act as mediators between God and men. Many people have digressed from ATR making a mention of proverbs related to ancestral worship unappreciated. Even though proverbs are no longer taught to the youth as much as they used to be, there still are universal values instilled in them from other sources of education.

They still realise that they are good and bad people, craft and cunning, truthful and honest, vengeful and peaceful, rich and poor, brave and coward, prudent and imprudent, cautious and indiscreet (Nyembesi, 1990) all portrayed by proverbs.

Folktales

The Xhosa Ntsomi (folktale) is a performing art which has a core-cliché (song, chant saying) which is, during a performance, developed, expanded, detailed and dramatized before an audience (Scheub, 1975). The main reason for performance is entertainment, followed by moralising and lastly enrichment of language which is poetic.

Repetition is a structural and aesthetic characteristic of the ntsomi performance. No materials are required in the performance except the performer’s own body and voice through mime, music, vocal dramatics combining imagination and intellectual insight (Scheub, 1975). At times the audience joins in song or gestures.

Idiophones and humour are employed to make the delivery exciting. The general theme in folktales centres on the need for order in the human community.

Oral performance for entertaining the youth in folktale delivery has been replaced by television, internet and sport.

Moral values find their way to the youth from the societies they find themselves in. They are able to identify that conflicts disrupt social harmony being caused by human vices like jealousy, anger, disobedience or robbery.

There are always lessons got from folktales like, you should not laugh at or despise someone due to his disability or stature because he may be wiser than you, beware of conmen and obedience is rewarding.

Praise poems

Praise poems relate national history on a king’s achievements and wars fought by his soldiers. ‘Imbongi’ would recite all these before the public on special occasions for people to know for example, some lines in ‘Izibongo zikaShaka’ (uNodum’ehezi kaMenzi) meaning he was popular. Ilemb e eleqe amanye ngokukhalipha meaning he was wise. Inyon’edle ezinye meaning he conquered other kings (Nyembesi, 1958).

Such kind of performance has no place in popular or youth culture.

Poems

A poem is performed for entertainment and is recited to the audience that needs to analyse it by figuring out its sense, form and interpret figurative language.

Poems address various themes and talk about all forms of nature, situations and services such as death, love, food, creatures, flora or work.

It is rare to find the youth appreciating nature as they are found busy seeking for new knowledge through technology.

CONCLUSION

Gone are the days whereby people gathered around an elderly person teaching them through folklore. The families that used to be extended have become nuclear making it difficult to accommodate other members of the tribe as what used to be in the past. The only form of entertainment was through folklore that includes folktales, storytelling, proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs, poems and other figurative language which carried along with them homely truths on how people ought to live and relate. The main objective of this form of education was to instill moral values and to preserve culture.
Folklore is now considered as an outdated method of teaching as the youth spend most of their time at school and on the internet where they get their knowledge from. Today adolescents have generated their own proverbs, idioms and songs in their popular English language which they rarely use in their interpersonal interaction. This has impacted negatively on oral performance which has suffered a potential erosion by modern technology.

REFERENCES

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (Alan Suinge Wood and Marshal Mc Luhan)