

# PEOPLES & CULTURES OF NIGERIA

Edited by:

**A. S. Jegede, O. A. Olutayo, O. O. Omololu & B. E. Owumi**

Published by  
**Department of Sociology**  
Faculty of the Social Sciences  
University of Ibadan  
Ibadan, Nigeria

Printed by  
SAMLAD Press  
Ibadan, Nigeria

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any language or computer language, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, magnetic, chemical, photocopy, recording, manual or otherwise, without the prior permission of the **Department of Sociology**, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the Publisher's prior consent, in writing, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

© Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan 2012

First published 2012

ISBN  
978-978-929-644-6

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Introduction	2
Chapter 2: Theorizing Peoples and Culture	11
Chapter 3: The Nigerian State	21

### SECTION TWO: PEOPLES OF NIGERIA

Chapter 4: The Peoples of the Mangroves	35
Chapter 5: The Peoples of the Forest Region in Nigeria	51
Chapter 6: The Peoples of the Savannah: Hausas and Hausanization of Northern Nigeria	65
Chapter 7: Pastoralism, Nomadism and Transhumance: An Explanation of the Socio-Economic Organization of Fulani/Ful'be of Northern Nigeria	78

### SECTION THREE: KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ISSUES

Chapter 8: Kinship Systems in Nigeria	97
Chapter 9: Marriage System in Nigeria	111
Chapter 10: The Family	122

### SECTION FOUR: POPULATION ISSUES

Chapter 11: Population Issues in Nigeria	137
Chapter 12: Continuity and Change in Nigeria's Fertility Regime	152

### SECTION FIVE: IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Chapter 13: Identity and Social Structure	171
Chapter 14: The Role of Cultural Diversity in Sustainable National Development in Nigeria	180

### SECTION SIX: ECONOMY ISSUES

Chapter 15: The Nigerian Economy	192
Chapter 16: The Cultural Domains of Nigerians' Work Ethics	208
Chapter 17: Culture and Work Values in Traditional Igbo and Yoruba Societies	219

### SECTION SEVEN: HEALTH ISSUES

Chapter 18: Culture and Health of People of Nigeria	229
Chapter 19: Traditional Healing Practices and Health Reforms in Nigeria	241
Chapter 20: Peoples, Culture and Health	255

### SECTION EIGHT: THE MASS MEDIA

Chapter 21: Peoples, Culture and the Mass Media	269
Chapter 22: The Development and Influence of the Mass Media in the Nigerian Society	288

### SECTION NINE: BELIEF SYSTEM

Chapter 23: Religion and Acts of Worship Amongst the Nigerian people	309
Chapter 24: The Meaning and Essence of African Traditional Religion	326

**SECTION TEN: LAW AND SOCIAL CONTROL**

<b>Chapter 25: Religion and the Nigerian Culture</b>	337
<b>Chapter 26: Culture, Deviance and Social Control in Nigeria</b>	344
<b>Chapter 27: The Nigerian Customary Law, Rules and the Challenges of Human Rights Laws</b>	357

**SECTION ELEVEN: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE**

<b>Chapter 28: Peoples and Culture of Nigeria in a Globalized World</b>	374
<b>Chapter 29: Socialization and Social Change</b>	385
<b>Chapter 30: Youth Culture and change in Mores and Behaviour in Nigeria</b>	394

IBADAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE CULTURAL DOMAINS OF NIGERIANS' WORK ETHICS

Akanle, Olayinka, Olutayo, Seun and Adebayo Kudus

#### Introduction and Background

Every society has its bounds and specificities yet limitless in its potentialities for development depending on the nature, conception, disposition, attitude and practice of work. The limit and limitlessness of any society is thus embodied, codified and bound by culture as displayed in dominant ethos, values and behavioural practices of the people. Culture determines what work is, how work is to be undertaken and what would be the acceptable attitude to work. These are defined and determined in ethics that are usually determined from within culture. The trajectories of culture and work ethics are central to ultimate sustainable development of any people and society. This is important for Nigerian and African development today going forward (Akanle, 2011a). Although culture has a twin characteristics of universality and relativity and critical for construction of work and associated forces, unique cultural elements that must of necessity resonate ethics that guide work. Culture is a defining characteristic of all human societies, such that without it no human aggregate may be said to inhabit a society especially as it affects the work life of a people. As already implied above, culture is relative, largely and varies from place to place, in time, and from one human group to another. This could be termed *cultural variability* relative to time, place and groups. This is very crucial especially the age of globalization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Summarily, the social institutions of a society, as well as its practices, are nothing but reflections of its culture within the prism of work. Thus, the ideas, acts, beliefs, attitude, law, politics, economy, leisure, work, and work ethics are all cultural constructions and expressions regardless of the state of development of a people (see also Akanle, 2012).

In the present chapter, our focus is on the analysis of work ethics within the domains of culture. We examined the role of culture on people's attitude and their orientation towards work. Following this introduction and background, ethnographic examinations of work ethics in Nigeria are trans-epochally attempted. These are followed by another section on the culture of work in the contemporary Nigerian society, with emphasis on some of the contradictions which make it difficult for people to maintain a good and healthy work ethics. In the last section, we highlighted the implications of good work ethics for societal development and offer some suggestions for the future through reflexive conclusions.

The word culture has been defined differently by sociologists, and the debate is still on-going. Attempts will however be made to excuse the intellectual definitional terrains of important concepts. According to Bruce & Yearly (2006, p. 58), culture refers to the "shared beliefs, norms, values, rituals, language, history, knowledge and social character" of a society. This definition captures the aspect of culture commonly known as the non-material, as against the material aspects which may include food, music, dance, dress, greeting patterns and the like. Culture has also been defined as the expected and accepted ways of behaving. This is what is usually meant when we say that someone is "cultured" (Aderinto, 2001). The culture of a society is an important identifier of its members, and it separates them from all others who may share their geographic boundaries. In another effort, Joan Ferrante (2011, p. 60) conceives culture as "human-created strategies for adjusting to the environment

and to those creatures (including humans) that are part of that environment." This conception sees culture as a kind of design for living used by people to navigate existence, as well as social radar with which people see the world and define themselves. In simple terms, culture may be seen as the totality of the way of life of a people, their behaviour, ideas, acts, and artifacts (Isamah, 1993, p. 16).

Like culture, it is not easy to define or even conceptualize work. This impression is also shared by Grint (2005). Austin Isamah (1993) describes work as a phenomenon that is fundamental to human existence. Quoting Karl Marx, Isamah (1993) further explains that work is a human action that is focused on the production of value and the appropriation of natural substances for human needs. It is usually organised in terms of types of work to be done, the hours involved, and the rate of pay (Aderinto, Olutayo & Obemeata, 2001). For many, work is a means of earning income, but some people also engage in other types of work for which payment is not received. Introducing gender and age components at this juncture, it is possible to classify household house chores in the category of non-remunerated work. Yet household chores in traditional and even modern Africa are critical to societal order. A lot of women in traditional Nigeria and even in the modern era engage in household chores, yet they are not paid. Also, children are socialized to work life early especially in traditional Africa which Nigeria was part. Children were introduced into work early by following parents to farm and to market. This was to build their work ethics early in life so they do not depart from positive work character later in life.

Unfortunately, modern feminist theories and gender advocates condemn gender mainstreaming in house chores, while child rights movements consider children work socialization as child abuse. Such practices must be well located within the Nigeria cultural specificities and historical existences in manners that interconnect with the present for sufficient understanding and sociological appreciation that hold theoretical and pragmatic importance. While work could be put within the remit of payment and money especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy therefore, unpaid *work* and *employment* are equally important and must be catered for just as children socialization into work practices are equally important. This is not however to justify child abuse, but the conception and labeling of child abuse must be culturally and historically sensitive as they are cultural constructs, and their determinants and meaningfulness are in culture.

Examples of unpaid work will be household labour, child care or volunteering. In different societies, the importance accorded to work by individuals and groups varies significantly, and this is often a reflection of culture. As Shalom Schwartz (1999) observes, cultural values are important determinants of the way people perceive the significance of work in their lives (in comparison with leisure, family, religion and the like, and a great determinant of whether they will see work as an entitlement or a social obligation. Culture, continues Schwartz, may also influence what we consider to be the ultimate value of work, which may have values that are *intrinsic* (personal growth, autonomy, interest, and creativity); *extrinsic* (pay and security); *social* (contact with people and contribution to society), or *power* related (prestige, authority, influence). Consequently, the role of culture in shaping people's perception, their view of work, and their overall attitude towards it, cannot be overemphasised. In other words, culture determines the work ethics of a people. But what do we mean by work ethics?

Work ethics connotes a set of principled values, norms, ethos and ideals that are based on hard work and a strong dedication to duty. It is conviction that work is valuable and characters are built around this to determine humans' orientation to work. People may be said to have a good work ethics or a bad one, and the assessment of people based on what are considered to be elements of "good work ethics" can be used for evaluating their suitability for societal benefits. These elements can include being reliable, diligent, skilled, driven, resilient, or being passionate, enthusiastic and motivated. At the level of individuals and small groups, good work ethics can make difficult tasks appear easy, and can accelerate the achievement of personal and organisational goals. At the level of the society, the work ethics of a people can go a long way in determining the pace of their socio-economic development (Isamah, 1993). Being a product of culture in itself, work ethics is said to have contributed to rise of industries and economic capitalism, both of which Isamah (1993, p.18) believes to be "the basis of much of today's wealth and economic development." In his now classic text titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Max Weber attributes the rise of industry to the religious doctrine of Calvinism (aptly named after John Calvin) which exalts the value of work and encourages people to engage in work as an existential task. Without work, investment and re-investment, preached Calvinism, the goal of life would have been unfulfilled. Weber argues that it was on the basis of these religious precepts that people in Western Europe began to change their attitude toward work, and it is from thereon that capitalism began to take shape.

### **Nigerian Ethnic Groups and the Tradition of Diligence: Different Cultures, Many Work Ethics**

Although the exact number is not known, Osaghae & Suberu (2005) note that scholars have estimated between 62 and 500 ethnic groups, making Nigeria one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. From the number of languages to beliefs systems, rituals, and myths of origin, the expectation should be that Nigeria will have as many work ethics as well. As we shall find out soon enough, there are grounds to support this expectation since different ethno-cultural groups are known to have distinct views of reality. At this point, we must make a quick clarification of two separate, but related, ideas, namely: work ethics and cultural norm about the value of work. While the former talks about whether hard work is valued in a particular culture or not, the latter describes people's perception of the centrality of work to their lives based on their respective histories. This distinction is important because it makes it easy for us to identify where the ethnic groups of Nigeria differ from one another, and also help us identify what they have in common. To further demonstrate the significance of this point, let us look at how both ideas played out in traditional Nigerian cultures with focus on the Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa ethnic groups.

In traditional Nigerian society, hard work is generally considered a virtue. Members of the society were socialised to imbibe the values of diligence and responsibility from childhood, beginning as soon as a child was able to run little errands around the household. Laziness was not condoned at all and slackers were thoroughly checked through direct and indirect means, checks that were sometimes packaged as songs, idioms, adages, or other forms of code. Except those that were ready to endure a life time of endless ridicule, which was very rare, no one dares to choose indolence over industriousness. In traditional Yoruba communities, to be lazy, says Aluko (2000), was an aberration, and those who took pride in idleness were

looked down upon with contempt. Hardworking people whether male or female were respected in society. Good opportunities and values as well as benefits were reserved for people with track records of hard-work and positive work ethics. For example, beautiful women were reserved for those with proven track record of industry. For the family of the bride, it was a guarantee that the wife and her children will be well catered for. In the public sphere, songs, proverbs and sayings were in frequent use as means of checking idleness and reinforcing hard work and positive work ethics among the people. They are all to demonstrate that hard work and positive work ethics is beneficial to the person, group and nation. From past and even till date, proverbial songs and sayings like the following are definitive across cultures and particularly among the Yoruba:

*Ise loogun ise* (Work is the antidote of poverty)  
*Mura sise ore mi* (Be hard working my friend)  
*Bi a ko ba ri eni feyinti* (if we do not have a helper)  
*Bi ole laari* (we would be as though a lazy person)  
*Bi a ko ba ri eni gbekele* (if we do not have someone to rely on)  
*A n tera mose eni* (we increase hard work)  
*Mama re le l'owo l'owo* (your mother may be rich)  
*Ki baba re lesin lekan* (and your father may be prosperous)  
*Ti o ba gboju le won* (if you rely on them)  
*O te tan ni mo so fun o* (you will be put to shame)  
*Agbojulogun f'ira re fosi ta* (anyone that relies on inheritance will come to poverty)  
*Iya mbe f'omo ti ko gbon* (suffering is certain for a stupid person)  
*Ekun mbe f'omo t'o n sa kiri* (a truant will weep at last)  
*Ma fowuro sere ore mi* (do not waste away your early life my friend)  
*Ise la fi ndi eni giga* (it is work that makes one great).

The traditional song below also shows the culture, value, work ethics and traditional economy of the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria and Nigeria in particular:

*Ise Agbe ni se ile wa* (farming is our traditional occupation)  
*Eni ko sise a ma jale* (anyone that does not work will be a thief)  
*Iwe kiko lai si oko ati ada koi pe o koi pe o* (education without hoe and cutlass is incomplete)  
*Iyan ati eba lounje ile wa* (yam flour and cassava flour are our traditional foods)  
*Eni ko jiyani a je eba to tutu* (anyone that does not eat hot pounded yam will eat cold cassava flour)  
*Isapa lai si iyan ati egusi koi pe o koi pe o* (isapa soup without pounded yam and egusi soup is incomplete)  
*Ise agbe ni ise ile wa eni ko sise a ma jale* (farming is our traditional occupation, anyone that does not work will be a thief)

Also:

*Ole alapa ma sise* (a lazy one with hands yet refused to work)  
*ole faso iya bora sun* (a lazy person covers himself with cloth of poverty)  
*iya ole koro mo bi* (a mother of a lazy person is childless)  
*e wa wa aiye ole lode o* (come and look at the life of a lazy person; it is a shame/pity)



For the Ibo people, meaningful existence was akin to success, and it was generally acknowledged that work plays a great role in its achievement. From the earliest period of their history, the Ibo persona was identified with doggedness and individual ambitiousness. This character was built over centuries of coping with harsh environmental conditions; landlessness, and continuous struggle for survival. Writing about this ethnic group, Imoagene (1990) observe that land, which every traditional society depended on, was not really enough to support the Ibo, so members were constantly on the move to occupy new lands. Coupled with high population density, Ibo families dispersed outwards in their numbers to secure habitable and farmable territories. This expansionist tendency of the *Ibo man* also defined him as a worker who is always in search of new and efficient ways to earn a living. It is extremely difficult to miss this aspect of the Ibo ethnic group in modern Nigeria as people now assume that an area must be underdeveloped if an Ibo person is not there conducting business. The Hausa people are similar to other groups regarding hard work. However, it must be mentioned that the traditional Hausa culture as we know it today was greatly influenced by Islamic religion. The Hausa people maintained a gendered labour practice in which husbands were expected to do all the work, both in the house and on the farm. Unlike their Fulani neighbours who allowed their women to earn some money, Hausa women were culturally barred from doing serious work except during the harvesting of certain crops. Notwithstanding, those who formed the workforce were expected to give optimally to the work process. Because of the strict nature of the climatic condition of the Hausa, there was little room for slow motion.

What will be noticed from our discussion so far is that hard work is admired in traditional Nigerian society. Except those who were handicapped by age or some forms of physical disabilities, everyone was expected to earn a living through work. What makes hard work (expressed as physical labour) an important asset was the fact that most of these traditional societies were dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. People married many wives, bore dozens of children, and lived in large extended households because of the need to maintain a steady supply of "quality" labour to farm the land. It was therefore from this foundation of diligence that the traditional societies of Nigeria evolved. The value was shared, learned and transmitted from one generation to the next. But this common background does not guarantee that the three ethnic groups will share the same norm about the proper place of work in their lives. Put in another way, while the Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa groups can be said to have good work ethics, to the extent that they all show great admiration for hard work and diligence, there may not be strong grounds to believe each culture will perceive work in the same way nor accord work the same priority in the general scheme of things. Using the three ethnic groups that we have been considering so far, Aluko (2003, p. 170-171) explains thus:

*With regard to the culture of work, the Yoruba tend to strike a balance between the opposite extremes represented by the Ibo and Hausa typologies. While that of the Ibo is extremely individualistic, that of the Yoruba remains largely collective. The Yoruba work according to the need and dictates of the situation. However, there is a tradition of hard work and excellence...*

*...the Hausa places a high premium on deference to authority, loyalty, obedience and sensitivity to the interests, opinions, views and demands of one's superiors. Their custom strongly favours*

*qualities of servility, respect for authority, allegiance to management or whoever is powerful, and submissiveness...*

*...Ibo culture as a whole is receptive to change and is achievement oriented. The work ethos idealizes egalitarian, individualistic and anarchic pursuits, with due respect to age and tradition [al]. The struggle for survival was characterized by fierce individualistic struggles and ruthless determination to succeed...Culturally, the Ibo value hard work, discipline, thrift and excellence in all its ramifications.*

The long quotation above serves to direct our attention to the point that we have been making that even though there was a tradition of hard work in those societies, they each developed according to the dictates of their respective histories.

### **Nigerian Worker of the 21st Century: The Clogs**

The Nigerian society that we have discussed up to this point existed mainly in the pre-colonial era. Colonialism marked a watershed in the history of the societies that will later make up the Nigerian state. While it has been more than two centuries since the British explorers stepped on the shores of Nigeria, and more than five decades since their departure, the encounter brought many changes to the entire social structure of existing communities and also brought hitherto autonomous cultures under one system of governance. As almost all the social structures were transformed, work was not spared because Europeans felt that their own view of what constituted “meaningful work life” was superior to what they met. These transmogrifications in the social structure of Africa affected values and norms right from the family to work (Olutayo and Akanle, 2007). Besides, in order to manage the new territory successfully, there was that urgent need to create western-style modern institutions and industries. Although they also endeavoured to train some Nigerians over the course of their unholy rule, the available human capital at independence was not enough to manage the new society that the Europeans were leaving behind. In respect of work, what the members of the new society shared in common was a tradition of hard work, but more was required to sustain Nigeria, with new knowledge and rededication to work being the most crucial. And while the old cultures were interacting within new social structures, the old work ethics was also giving way for new culture of work especially with the corrosive influence of globalization, westernization and modernization on the original cultural systems of Nigeria and Africa (Akanle, 2011b; Akanle and Olatayo, 2010). Unfortunately, the attitude that was emerging did more harm than good. Again, Aluko (2003) gives us a hint of what he identifies as the points of convergence about the “new work” ethics of three ethnic groups:

1. Collective tradition is in place in all Nigerian cultures.
2. Nigeria is a fatalistic society where people believe in divine intervention rather than hard work.
3. Workers on the average, “moonlight,” that is, they engage in some form of private practice.
4. The level of commitment to materialism; that is, the craze for wealth is high, and workers are extrinsically oriented, that they are largely motivated by monetary rewards.

5. The culture of corruption has been institutionalised in most of the workplaces.
6. Workers in general are not time-conscious.

Besides the first item, the rest are unarguably anathema to work ethics. While some of the items above are debris of the old tradition (1 & 2), the rest are mostly products of the new social structures and institutions. But what are the factors responsible for this change in the culture of work and how pervasive were they? The subsequent of this section will, in brief, explain just four out of the many possible factors that may be identified.

### **Tradition vs. Modernity**

In his popular theory of "Two Publics," Peter Ekeh (1975) remarks that most countries of Africa were divided between the primordial and the civic publics whereby people were caught in-between two life worlds, both begging for commitment. The problem started when the primordial public, which has to do with sentiments of tradition or traditional culture of work, was imported into the structures of the civic public, which was made of impersonal, ordered, strictly compartmentalised system. As Isamah (1993, p. 21) emphasizes, "the influence of continuing co-existence of traditional culture within the modern industrial culture is the explanation for the seeming inability of workers to achieve high levels of productivity..." In the new modern system, there is no respect for age at the workplace; paternalism was discouraged, and meritocracy replaced spiritism. Regarding the last especially, the individual carries the blame for her failure at work, and no one was expected to identify his/her failure with transcendental beings – as it was in the past when the spirits might "reasonably" be the cause of poor harvest and famine.

For those working in the informal sector of the economy, the society was making new demands that they could not meet. This was a result of the lack of expertise to manufacture products that can compete favourably and effectively with foreign goods that were finding their way into Nigeria. Furthermore, the value placed on agriculture was also diminishing rapidly, caused in part by the "false consciousness" of the people, particularly the youth, about the wealth waiting to be grabbed in the emerging cities. This encounter of the old and the new led to serious mental re-adjustment, or mental confusion if you like, that changed the work ethics of the Nigerian. The hard work of the past, which was basically oriented to physical work, will not be useful in the modern society if it is not augmented with abstract and more innovative thinking. Suffice it to say that the problem was not whether the Nigerian worker can adjust to the new system. Rather, it was about the cultural, political, social, and psychological confusions that characterised the transformation process.

### **Oil Wealth**

After the new society was created, regional focus on agriculture did a lot to sustain the feeling that maybe the old work ethics was still relevant. This changed, however, when Nigeria started producing oil in exportable quantity. Gradually, agriculture was sidelined, and within a matter of a decade or two, millions of people have flocked to the cities to benefit from the new found wealth. While this was going on, national economic/development planners were busy acquiring industries through the indigenisation policy, all of which were meant to be occupied by the newly educated

workers of Nigeria based on the principles of federal character. With the oil wealth, government created a society that relegated agriculture, discouraged meritocracy as a matter of principle, and encouraged favoritism and nepotism in the public sphere. All over, people were changing their work ethics from “working hard” to “working smart.” Working smart was fundamentally about “who you know and who you are” and never about “what you know.” As expected, it was only a matter of time before “short cut” became the correct way of doing things.

### Misconception about the Goal of Education

Under normal circumstances, education was supposed to develop skills, innovative thinking, and build individual character. It should prepare those who benefit from it for the task of nation building, and all literate persons ought to agree that education was only a stepping stone to other important societal tasks. Contrary to these expectations, however, the goal of education was defined too thinly by the society and those in charge of it. According to Ekeh (1975), the new rulers of Nigeria misconceived education as follows:

*Most colonized Africans had the perception of the European as a man blessed with much, who did nothing much more than acquire literary education to earn such luxury. To become a Western educated African in the colonial situation was for many an avenue for escaping hard work. Hard work was meant for the 'natives'. At least it was believed that the European, having acquired an adequate education, could not work with his hands. (1975, p. 99)*

This definition of the goal of education was thought to many in the years following independence. As regional governments were vigorously pursuing the goal of mass education, the use for which the knowledge will be put was not clearly defined. Then, school leavers were expected to secure employment, get married, and live large immediately after their education. This orientation, though reasonable for a while, had negative implications on the long run because it encouraged mental laziness. In places where the goal of education was being defined, agriculture was still considered a priority even though the newly emerging society will depend more on technical knowledge to truly “modernize.” This disorientation is captured in a very popular primary rhyme in southwestern Nigeria, as already demonstrated in full:

*Iwe ki ko, lai si oko ati ada,*

*Koi pe o, koi pe o!*

(Formal education without hoe and cutlass is incomplete)

*Ise aagbe nise ile wa*

*Eni ko sise, a ma jale!*

(Farming is our traditional occupation and he who refuses to work will surely steal)

### Poverty and Corruption

This point will not delay us here since it is easy to imagine how widespread poverty in the midst of plenty can cause change in the attitude of people to work. In traditional societies, hardly will a hardworking person go hungry or live in abject poverty. Those who were handicapped by age or other forms of physical or mental disabilities were cared for by the community. Collective responsibility was the watchword. However,

the modern system, with its attendant abstract state, changed this by creating a system that allowed a few to become wealthy, while majority wallow in chronic poverty. This persisted in spite of the fact that the Nigerian working class was still adjudged to be industrious. It was a case of “working and suffering.” Only those with access to politicians or political offices were escaping poverty, a situation that led to what Richard Joseph (1987) called “prebendalism.” For many, politics was the only path worth taking, but with it came clientelism, embezzlement, godfatherism, and other negative values that killed the spirit of traditional culture of hard work among Nigerians.

All the factors enumerated above, as well as issues relating to widespread material culture, are some of the factors that caused changes in the work ethics of Nigerians. In contemporary Nigeria, it is no longer uncommon to find industrial sociologists reporting low productivity among workers. Most people are not motivated to give their best, and paid employments are now seen as other people’s work, needing little commitment – that is, just enough to get by. Given the situation that existed in traditional cultures, what can be said of the culture of work of Nigerian workers today is that the situation has changed almost completely for the worst. Under this circumstance, positive and progressive changes, in terms of socioeconomic and human development, will be hard to achieve. Isamah (1993) makes the same point when he noted that at the core of Africa’s underdevelopment is the attitude and orientation that Africans hold towards work. The problem is now more pronounced among the youths who generally believe in the possibility of sudden wealth which they continue to chase through socially proscribed means.

### **Promoting Culture of Work and Work Ethics: Concluding Reflections**

Culture is human, and human is culture. There can never be society without culture, and there can never be culture without society. The past of humans, the present of human and the future of humans relative to their developments are strongly located in culture and propelled through hard work and work ethics for sustainable development. Locating hard work within cultural and historical specificities of the society is thus critical. Hence, culture is central to how people perceive work, shape their attitude towards to work and how they work. It is within our respective of cultures that we come to internalise the value of work, and it is within that framework that a society ought to evolve its social institutions, and it is from it that mechanisms for adaptation to new realities must derive. But we also know, as has been demonstrated above, that unanticipated interruptions may occur and bring radical changes for which a society may be unprepared. This was what happened to most countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The difference between the countries in these continents, however, is how they each adjusted to the changes. For Nigeria specifically, adjustment was both slow and confusing. With regards to work, the traditional met the modern, and new social structure created conditions that rendered hard work almost useless. This is why the youths in Nigeria today are seen as mostly atavistic, rebellious and fast. The values of the youths today have changed. This gave resonance to the principles of *old school* and *new school*. This is why the practice of *yahoo yahoo* is very common and acceptable among many urban youths today, while it seen as dangerous and lazy by the elders. The question then is: what can be done?

One way to begin is to revive those aspects of our traditional cultures of work that can be re-adapted for the socialisation of the upcoming generation. Children must

be thought to appreciate the value of diligence right from their formative years. This may be backed by country-wide, and targeted, advocacy programmes that are strategically designed to get out the appropriate messages. Second, effort must be directed at ensuring that the sense of insecurity is reduced in modern industries. The impersonal nature, and the uncertainties, of new industries are causes of low or lack of commitment to work. People generally tend to have no motivation to perform in the atmosphere of fear, and even when they contribute effectively to the work process it is usually because they were afraid of what might happen – not because they love what they do. Third, modern establishments must endeavour to ensure that their management styles reflect an awareness of the prevailing cultural norms of work. Many multinational corporations have realised the importance of the local culture of work for overall organisational success, and researchers have been busy studying the national culture of work in different countries across the world (Miller, 2010; Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997). While industries must look out for extremely harmful traditional work-related practices, such as extreme paternalism, ways must be sought to integrate undisruptive elements.

Fourth, the “get-rich-quick syndrome” must be tackled decisively. In this wise, the media has a lot of role to play as it remains the strongest medium through which surrealistic ideas are being promoted. From the movies to the so-called “reality shows” and “corporate promos,” society must require everyone to act responsibly, with a set of accompanying policies in place to ensure conformity. This is necessary because everything seems to start and end with the human mind – and it is the mind that the media is freely manipulating and unchecked. Finally, government at all levels must begin to treat positive culture of work as a development priority. This includes, amongst other things, a re-definition of the goal of education. Our educational institutions must develop curriculum that would teach usable skills which can meet the demand of the society in manners that interconnect the past with the present for the future development of Nigeria and Africa. This must place strong premium on positive work ethics, especially among the youths who today are significantly disoriented and disconnected from original Nigerian and African values, norms, ethos and ideals as they affect work ethics.

### References

- Aderinto, A.A. 2001. “Concepts and Perspectives in Sociology”. In C. O. Ikporukpo (Ed.), *Government, Society and Economy*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd. Pp. 150-166.
- ; Olutayo, A.O. & Obemeata, A.A. 2001. “The Nigerian Society. In *Government, Society and Economy*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd. Pp. 167-180.
- Akanle, O. 2011a. “Post-Colonial Nation Building, Global Governance, Globalization and Development in Nigeria and Africa”. *Africa Insight*. 41.3, 1-15.
- , 2011b. “Towards Effective and Sustainable Pan-Africanism: Pedagogical Concerns and Implications for Inclusive Participation. In Babawale, T. A, Alao, A., Onwumah, T. Eds. *Pan-Africanism and Integration of Continental Africa and Diaspora Africa*. Lagos: Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), 2. 121-142.

- , 2012. The Ligaments of Culture and Development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Sociology*. 2. 3. Pp. 16-21.
- and Olutayo, A.O. 2010. "Globalization and Development Nexus: Nigeria Entangled". *Mambayya House Journal of Democratic Studies*. 2. 18-39.
- Aluko, M.A. 2000. "Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Motivation and Management in Nigeria". In O.A. Ogunbameru, & P. E. Oribabor (Eds.), *Introduction to Industrial Sociology*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press., 168-186.
- , 2003. "The Impact of Culture on Organisational Performance in Selected Textile Firms in Nigeria." *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 12 2, 164-179.
- Bruce, S. & Yearley, S. 2006. *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ekeh, P.E. 1975. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17.1, 91-112.
- Fernandez, D.R.; Carlson, D.S.; Stepina, L.P. & Nicholson, J.D. 1997. "Hofstede's Country Classification 25 Years Later." *Journal of Social Psychology*. 13.71. 43-54.
- Ferrante, J. 2011. *Sociology: A Global Perspective* 7th ed. New York: Wadsworth.
- Grint. K. 2005. *The Sociology of Work*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Polity.
- Imoagene, O. 1990. *Know Your Country Series: Handbook of Nigeria's Major Cultural Areas*. 1-6, Ibadan: New-Era Publisher.
- Isamah, A. 1993. "Culture, Work, and the Development Process." *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies* (6), 16-23.
- Joseph, R. 1987. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, H. 2010. Culture and Work Styles in the BRIC Countries. *Research Summary* .[http://www.hermanniler.com/marketfacingtech/hmc/research\\_summaries/assets/wp\\_BRIC\\_countries/pdf](http://www.hermanniler.com/marketfacingtech/hmc/research_summaries/assets/wp_BRIC_countries/pdf). Accessed 20/06/2012, 14.05GMT.
- Olutayo, A.O. and Akanle, O. 2007. "Modernity, MacDonaldisation and Family Values in Nigeria." *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 5, 53-72.
- Osaghae, E.E. & Suberu, R.T. 2005. *A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria*. Oxford: CRISE, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford.
- Schwartz, S.H. 1999. "A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work". *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 48.1, 23-47.