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INDIGENOUS PROVERBS: A SEEMINGLY NEGLECTED PEDAGOGIC TOOL FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND ADOLESCENTS DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

Lately, there have been calls for the decolonisation of education in Africa to promote a culturally relevant, inclusive and appealing education system. African proverbs, as a component of indigenous knowledge system (IKS), are a cultural template and framework through which African societies leave an indelible mark. The beauty of proverbs lies in their relevance, which includes being a way of impacting wisdom, education and morality. Hence, considering the experiences of colonisation by African countries, displaced and consequently replaced African identity and the call for decolonisation across the education system, this study aims to explore and appraise the relevance of indigenous proverbs in education. The objective for this study was to ascertain the influence of proverbs generated knowledge on the development of cognitive skills of adolescents. The study was anchored on the Eco-Cultural Theory of BameNsamenang (2015) which explains the eco-cultural theories of development in what is known as Social ontogenesis. This study utilized a mixed method approach. For the qualitative aspect, the ethnographic research design was used and for the quantitative aspect, the correlational survey research design was used. The two were then triangulated with the aid of the convergent parallel mixed method design. Among other things, it is observed that the content and instructional component of these proverbs can reorient learners on the importance of education, provide a moral and culturally inclusive education and aid reflective learning and easy understanding of abstract ideas. This study concludes that the application of proverbs by educators can be a useful tool in enhancing the teaching and learning process and cultivating good character.

Keywords

Indigenous Proverbs, Neglected Pedagogic Tool, Teaching, Learning and Adolescents Cognitive Development in Cameroon.

Introduction

In sub-Saharan Africa (especially among the Kom ethnic group in the North West Region of Cameroon) one of the elements of indigenous education is the use of such cultural resources as taboos, riddles, proverbs, myths and folktales to provide a symbolic explanation of the environment. The Kom elders use proverbs in such important issues as the choice of marriage partners, entry into business partnership, individuals' attitudes and conduct in the public and many others. This cultural resource is used to admonish young people seeking, for instance, to choose a marriage partner or to enter into a business partnership to be wary of their actions; hence, it is a call for precaution on choice making. The choice of marriage partner, among the Kom, is one of the complex social experiences that require the intervention of the elders, at least to forestall any misadventure. Proverbs are used to impress on the young adults the virtue of patience, rational choice, perseverance and prudence when they make decisions on issues that relate to their personal affairs. It is a common practice among Africans to engage proverbs when significant issues relating to the life of communal members are discussed. Proverbs are sometimes used to caution parents on how they bring up their children, serve as a cultural resource to resolve crises, at times, among couples and strengthening the bond among members of the various African communities. This paper, claim to the pedagogic usefulness of African proverbs as cultural resource is stressed and this is defined specifically from the socio-cultural perspective. The paper attempts to show that proverbs can be used to appeal to the sensibilities of some individuals who sometimes make important decisions that affect them in life. It is concluded that parents may use proverbs to educate their children often in order to extol the virtues of patience, reasonableness, and prudence.

Indigenous Proverbs and Cognitive Development

Adamo (2015) in "Ancient Israelite and African proverbs as advice, reproach, warning, encouragement and explanation", from his research confirmed that both proverbs in ancient Israel and Yoruba traditions are mainly for advice, encouragement, discipline or reproach, warning and explanations. Despite the problems in comparing two different cultures (location, different people and traditions, amongst others), Adamo, (2015) compared proverbs in ancient Israel and Yoruba traditions. This is because the problems do not cloud their similarities. Proverbs in both cultures are a mark of a rich heritage. Amongst the Yoruba people of Nigeria, proverbs are markers of culture because they tell us, 'in brief and intense terms about so much the history and psychology of the peoples and communities from which they emanate' (Soneye 2009:80–86). Proverbs have inseparable links to culture and language. It is also evident that they are markers of people's identity because they are 'the shortest forms of traditional expression that call attention to themselves as formal artistic entities' (Abrahams 1972:117–127; cf. Soneye 2003).

Further implications are that by using proverbs, Christianity is at home amongst the Yoruba people of Nigeria, as proverbs in both cultures appeal to our emotions, and make us think more deeply and help our understanding of ourselves through advice, encouragement, reproach, warning, and explanation or elucidation. This is certainly evident in the comparison of both proverbs in the book of Proverbs and Yoruba Proverbs. Other important benefits of proverbs include a 'sense of the community', a sense of good human relations, a sense of sacredness of life, a sense of hospitality, a sense of sacredness of everything and religion, and a sense of respect for authority and elders who are in possession of wisdom by the virtue of their experiences.

Proverbs therefore, aid in the cognitive development of the adolescents since the messages found in them are philosophical, needing interpretation and understanding in all languages. The ability to retain, understand and reproduce proverbs aids cognitive development.

In a study by Leila and Morteza (2016) of Iran in a work titled “Cognitive Dimension of Proverbs in English and Persian” came to the realization that Proverbs are a rich and mentally economical resource to process different real world experiences and conceptualize them. Their research was a qualitative study aimed at contrasting cognitive and sociolinguistic analysis between English and Persian animal proverbs. This study tries to investigate the role of cognitive mechanism in English and Persian structures in relations to metaphors within a categorization and classification framework. This analysis reveals how proverbs share a similar underlying schema of cognition, while they reflect different cultural believes. The results of the study revealed that there is a certain degree of similarity between the two languages, but several aspects of such metaphors are culture-specific. This underlines the importance of intercultural studies for foreign language teachers.

Another study carried out by Ruffin et al. (2016) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa on ‘African Indigenous Languages and Environmental Communication’ shows the place of proverbs in the African languages. The study shows that the desired change in environmental conservation can only be achieved if the information appeals to the cultural values of the recipients. In the context of Africa, African indigenous languages are the best vehicles of communicating environmental information as they are culturally specific. It is therefore recommended that African indigenous knowledge stakeholders including researchers and academics apply them to correct dominant Eurocentric values and ‘misrepresentation’ of Africa’s environmental realities. This is important if they are to mobilize African communities for sustainable environmental conservation. From their study, communication in the African set up is done mainly through the familiar tools.

Culturally based knowledge and value systems are communicated through language tools such as folklores, proverbs, drama, myths, legends, initiation ceremonies, etc. The researchers employed for methodological purposes secondary sources to discuss the importance of African indigenous languages in communicating environmental issues. According to Black (1996), secondary data refers to information collected by someone other than the researcher conducting the current study. Such data can be internal or external to the organization and accessed through the internet or perusal of recorded or published information (Berg, 1995). Secondary sources employed in this work include relevant journal articles, books, internet sources and past research documents. It contrasts with a primary source which is an original source of the information being discussed; a primary source can be a person with direct knowledge of a situation, or a document created by such a person (Girden, 1996).

Therefore, it was clear that African Ubuntu philosophy is articulated in various folk media such as songs, proverbs, myths, etc. of the respective African cultures. It is through this bond and interaction among the various forms of creation that humans discover their own human qualities. These values and principles are communicated through indigenous languages. For example, one of the South African indigenous languages, IsiZulu, has a saying: “UmuntuNgumuntuNgabantu”, which means that a person is a person through other persons, that is, we, as human beings, affirm our humanity when we acknowledge that of others including other forms of creation (Muya 2006).

The various studies on proverbs cited above reveal that language and language tools have a huge role to play in communication. The persian and English proverbs and their relationship to animals show a great similarity and ability to enhance thought and reason. The study of the ancient Jewish and African proverbs too show their similarities and how proverbs aid interaction in human community.

The present study however, focuses on how proverbs enhance cognitive development among late adolescents in Oku Sub-Division.

Indigenous Proverbs as an Indigenous Practice

Proverbs are a conceptual universal phenomenon, with high communicative and instructive power (Corbonnel, 1996; Flavell, 1997; Junceda, 1998 & Canalleda, 2001). They are a conceptual universal phenomenon with similar mental mechanism in all languages. Even more, animal proverbs constitute an interesting and informative source of folk knowledge. Universally, all of the speakers around the world use the same cognitive mechanisms in order to produce, understand and transmit proverbs. Culture, religion, age, gender, etc. may have different important roles such as fortune or misfortune, good luck or bad luck in the formation of idioms and proverbs of the other languages. Because of these differences, the cultural beliefs carried by the animal proverbs in societies and the symbols of good luck or bad luck may be reflected in the name of special animals in idioms and proverbs of each society.

Each animal has its typical instinctive behaviour. However, folk culture and knowledge might differ among cultures depending on their experience in interacting with the various animals which are reflected in the proverbs of their language. Clearly to understand the structure of proverbs, understanding of the structure of metaphor is necessary (Balogun 2006).

From the cognitive point of view, metaphor means understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because metaphors are in conceptual system of humans. In another definition from Lynne Cameron (1999) ...thought is itself structured metaphorically, and... systematicity of metaphor on the surface of the language merely reflects underlying conceptual structure in which something is understood ...

There are a large number of animal proverbs in Persian and English languages whose cultural connotations and the range of usage are the same or similar, and some are different. Accordingly, human beings have similar capabilities of thought, similar laws of cognition, and some animals have the same important role in people's lives and the same attributes and features (Panther, 2003).

Generally the domain of animal life is often used to understand the human domain. In animal proverbs a smart animal deceives a foolish one; a weaker animal receives advantage from a stronger one, weaker animals eat the leftovers of stronger animals; a stronger animal takes the food of a weaker. Also, the use of different parts of animals from head to tail; the teeth of a dog, the skin of a pig, the tail of a fox, the eyes of a wolf, the stomach of an ox, the mouth of a bird, the head of a rabbit. Some common propositions that take place in schemas for animals in most of the world are as follows: Pigs are dirty, messy and rude. Lions are courageous and noble. Foxes are clever. Dogs are loyal, dependable and dependent. Cats are independent. Wolves are cruel and murderous. Gorillas are aggressive and violent... However there are some similar animal proverbs both in Persian and English that display and demonstrate the same quality in human perception, human emotion and the human condition of existence; (1) To cry crocodile tears, (2) To kill two birds with one stone, (3) The blind leading the blind. Some animal proverbs in English and Persian share the same root idea but differ in figurative ways of expression. That is, they are close in meaning but different in expression. They contain the same advice, counsel, wisdom or warning, and they can perform the same functions in life. In all of these proverbs, context is essential for their correct interpretation, because it provides the correct message in an indirect way (Kövecses, 2002).

In general proverbs are used for communication and according to communicative principles in all languages every communicator needs pragmatic reasoning in order to understand them. Lakoff (1989) defines proverbs as metaphoric in nature. Figuration and metaphor are so related to each other. They both are from the most basic processes of human mind in comprehension. Generally, human thought and conceptual processes are metaphorical. Figurative meaning tends to make people in different cultures think in terms of the connotations of their first culture. Nesi (1995) discussed the figurative meanings to the names of different animals in different cultures, and highlights some of the problems language learners and translators face when dealing with single word conventional metaphor.

Conceptual theory of metaphor was first introduced in detail by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). This theory has questioned and challenged the traditional linguistic views in which metaphor is viewed as a matter of words rather than thought or action. People believe that the function of metaphor is only a device of the poetic imagination (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Halupka (2003) dealt with combined metaphorical or vocative uses of animal names in Serbian in addressing people, both abusively and affectionately, to express the speaker's attitude towards their addressee. Nadim (2000) examines animal roles in Shirazi proverbs with an approach to sociolinguistics. After analysing about 100 animal expressions, he concludes that donkey expressions metaphorically are the most frequent ones and have some salient semantic molecules such as crazy, worthless, and absurd.

Furthermore, we could identify the Conceptual interaction patterns in proverbs. Proverbs often consist of specific-level concepts, which help to interpret proverbs. In the proverb 'The early bird catches the worm,' the bird, catch, and worm are specific-level concepts. The early bird is anyone who does something first, catching is obtaining something, and the worm is anything obtained before others. The interpretation is facilitated by the metaphor generic or specific. The generic meaning of the proverb is that if you do something first, you will get what you want before others. Given this generic-level interpretation, the proverb can apply to a wide range of cases that have this generic structure. This kind of metaphor can give us a generic-level interpretation of specific level proverbs and also allows us to apply the generic interpretation to a specific case that has the appropriate underlying generic structure (Kovecses, 2002).

At the level of culture with regard to proverbs one is wont to say Culture is people's everyday experiences. What role does culture play in making proverbs? Human experience consists of a large range of conventional models. Some parts of these models are cultural patterns that both help people to make indirect speeches such as proverbs and to interpret the proverbs. As these experiences make culture and proverbs are made based on cultures and the patterns of making culture differ from one country to another, so the processes of making proverbs by cultural notes, as their raw materials, are different. Boers (2003) suggested that in different cultures, metaphor may have different source domains that map onto the same target domain. Many complex conceptual metaphors reflect the various cultural models in that way.

Sometimes, humans are not the best selection for conveying these cultural and religious notes because of ethics. In this regard, Kovecses (2002) states, 'the only way these meanings can have emerged is that humans attributed human characteristics to animals and then reapplied these characteristics to humans. It means that animals were personified first, and then the human-based animal characteristics were used to understand human behaviour. That is why in some cases animals have similar images across cultures, but in many other metaphorical expressions of this type they represent culture-specific concepts.

The area of cross-cultural variation in metaphor has raised great interest among metaphor researchers. A number of studies are based on the comparison of different metaphorical concepts and expressions in cultures, as well as in different languages. Such cross-cultural variation, specially of the first type, can be seen in the way people interpret the relationship between things in the world. In fact, Lakoff and Turner (1989) described this relationship in the form of the great chain of being metaphor. They see a hierarchy of concepts as related to the things in the world.

Cognitive Development and Cognitive Skills

Cognitive development goes alongside the development of cognitive skills. In this light the development of cognitive skills also known as cognitive functions, cognitive abilities or cognitive capacities, are brain-based skills which are needed in acquisition of knowledge, manipulation of information, and reasoning. It is to be noted that these skills have more to do with the mechanisms of how people learn, remember, problem-solve, and pay attention, rather than with actual knowledge. Cognitive skills or functions encompass the domains of perception, attention, memory, learning, decision making, language abilities, etc. An understanding of Cognitive development can help in a better understanding of the development of cognitive skills.

Schacter (2009) discusses the concept of cognitive development as a field of study in neuroscience and psychology focusing on a child's development in terms of information processing, conceptual resources, perceptual skill, language learning, and other aspects of the development of the adult brain and cognitive psychology. It could be defined as 'the emergence of the ability to consciously cognize, understand, and articulate their understanding in adult terms. Cognitive development can also be called intellectual development. Cognitive development is how a person perceives, thinks, and gains understanding of their world through the relations of genetic and learning factors. There are four stages to Cognitive development information development, reasoning, intelligence, language, and memory. These stages start when the baby is about 18 months old, they play with toys, listen to their parents speak, they watch television, anything that catches their attention helps build their Cognitive development.

There are two cognitive developmental traditions: structuralist and functionalist traditions. Based on the two traditions, there are two fundamental questions to be posed. In the structuralist tradition, influenced strongly by the work of Jean Piaget, Heinz Werner, and others, the questions are: How is behaviour organized, and how does the organization change with development? In the functionalist tradition, influenced strongly by behaviourism and information processing, the question is: What are the processes that produce or underlie behavioural change?

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) argued that there were four levels of cognitive development of mental actions classified into mental structures. These levels of cognitive development included the sensory-motor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operations. These levels were not a designation of the ages of children, but were representative of the different levels of understanding and ability as a result of the development of cognitive structures into operational ability. There were two cognitive levels of development that were pertinent to this study. The preoperational and concrete operational levels of cognitive development were examined to identify operational characteristics and abilities of children at each of these levels.

Ojose (2008) stated that the development of children continues through a series of continuous transformation that were attributed to different levels of cognitive functioning. Children remained in each of these levels for an amount of time that varied. As a result of changes in cognitive structure, children progress in their cognitive ability with the preceding cognitive structure serving as the foundation for the new level of cognitive development. However, the transition of children through these levels was not predetermined or a result of chronological age. It was rather a designation of maturity, experiences, culture, and ability. All children, however, do transition through these levels chronologically or in the same order without skipping a level.

Lemlech (2010) explained that if age is to be designated around the levels of development then children who are between the ages of two to seven can be represented by preoperational ability and children between the ages of seven to eleven can be represented by concrete operational ability. Children are most likely to transition from the preoperational level to the concrete operational level around six and seven years old.

Crain (2005) explained that children progress from the preoperational to the concrete operational level of cognitive development in an invariant sequence. The developed frameworks of the cognitive structures were fixed and there were particular abilities that were represented at each level. As a means of progressing to the next level, children undergo developmental change in their cognitive structures. This change was influenced through exploration, manipulation, and interaction with the external environment. This is explained through the characterization of common biological tendencies that include assimilation, accommodation, and organization. As mentioned by Piaget and Inhelder (1969) children maintain cognitive structures that represent their level of functioning through the invariant sequence of development.

The process of assimilation occurs as children integrate external elements into their already existing internal cognitive structure. However, as the integration of external elements occurs through assimilation there becomes a point where the internal cognitive structures must accommodate new external elements. The accommodation of new external elements occurs when a change in the existing cognitive structure is required to continue the process of assimilation. The process of accommodating new external elements creates efficiency in the assimilation process. The integration between assimilation and accommodation occurs through the organization of newly formed cognitive structures that work in cooperation. These newly formed cognitive structures become realized through the different levels of cognitive development as represented by the ability of children.

Copeland (1974) discusses children in the preoperational level of cognitive development as being characterized by cognitive structures that were semi-logical and one-dimensional. This semi-logical and one-dimensional thought was indicated through the lack of understanding the reversibility of action. That is, one action aimed at obtaining a result can also be reversed to its original position. The mind builds up reversible sequences underneath perception, which eventually leads children to perform logical reversibility. The characteristics of preoperational thought can be observed through conservation tasks in which children in different levels respond differently to the occurrence of perceived actions. These perceived actions represent the development of the internal structure of cognitive functioning.

The study of cognitive development, especially in school-age children, has been one of the central focuses of developmental research over the last 25 years. There is an enormous research literature, with thousands of studies investigating cognitive change from scores of specific perspectives. Despite

this diversity, there does seem to be a consensus emerging about (1) the conclusions to be reached from research to date and (2) the directions new research and theory should take. A major part of this consensus grows from an orientation that seems to be pervading the field: It is time to move beyond the opposition of structuralism and functionalism and begin to build a broader, more integrated approach to cognitive development (Case, 1980; Catania, 1973; Fischer, 1980; Flavell, 1982a). Indeed, we argue that without such an integration attempts to explain the development of behaviour are doomed.

The general orientations or investigations of cognitive development are similar for all age groups, infancy, childhood, and adulthood. The vast majority of investigations, however, involve children of school age and for those children a number of specific issues arise, including in particular the relationship between schooling and cognitive development.

Various patterns have arisen in the research on cognitive development. One of the central focuses in the controversies between structuralist and functionalist approaches has been whether children develop through stages. Much of this controversy has been obscured by fuzzy criteria for what counts as a stage, but significant advances have been made in pinning down criteria (Fischer and Bullock, 1981; Flavell, 1971; McCall, 1983; Wohlwill, 1973). In addition, developmentalists seem to be moving away from pitting structuralism and functionalism against each other toward viewing them as complementary; psychological development can at the same time be stage-like in some ways and not at all stage-like in other ways. As a result of these recent advances in the field, it is now possible to sketch a general portrait of the status of stages in the development of children.

It is important then to state with regard to the general status on development that Children do not develop in stages as traditionally defined. That is, (1) their behaviour changes gradually not abruptly, (2) they develop at different rates in different domains rather than showing synchronous change across domains, and (3) different children develop in different ways (Feldman, 1980; Flavell, 1982b). Cognitive development does show, however, a number of weaker stage-like characteristics. First, within a domain, development occurs in orderly sequences of steps for relatively homogeneous populations of children (Flavell, 1972). That is, for a given population of children, development in a domain can be described in terms of a specific sequence, in which behaviour *a* develops first, then behaviour *b*, and so forth.

Second, these steps often mark major qualitative changes in behaviour—changes in behavioural organization. That is, in addition to developing more of the abilities they already have, children also seem to develop new types of abilities. This fact is reflected in the appearance of behaviours that were not previously present for some particular context or task. For example, in pretend play the understanding of concrete social roles, such as that of a doctor interacting with a patient, emerges at a certain point in a developmental sequence for social categories and is usually present by the age at which children begin school (Watson, 1981).

More generally, there appear to be times of large-scale reorganization of behaviours across many (but not all) domains. At these times, children show more than the ordinary small qualitative changes that occur every day. They demonstrate major qualitative changes, and these changes seem to be characterized by large, rapid change across a number of domains (Case, 1980; Fischer *et al.*, in press; Kenny, 1983; McCall, 1983).

Third, there seem to be some universal steps in cognitive development, but their universality appears to depend on the way they are defined. When steps are defined abstractly and in broad terms or when large groups of skills are considered, developmental sequences seem to show universality across domains and across children in different social groups. When skills of any specificity are considered, however, the numbers and types of developmental steps seem to change as a function of both the context and the individual child (Bullock, 1981; Feldman and Toulmin, 1975; Fischer and Corrigan, 1981; Roberts, 1981; Silvern, 1984). For large-scale (macrodevelopmental) changes, then, there seem to be some universals, but for small-scale (microdevelopmental) changes, individual differences appear to be the norm. The nature of individual differences seems to be especially important for school-age children. Some markers of cognitive skills are the following: decision making, problem solving and social competence.

The Eco-Cultural Theory of BameNsamenang (2015)

Nsamenang (2015) explains the eco-cultural theories of development in what is known as Social ontogenesis. Nsamenang (1992) developed a theoretical position termed social ontogenesis, based on an indigenous West African conception that is phrased within an eco-cultural perspective. His ideas are inspired by the writings of various Africans trained in philosophy and humanities (Mbiti 1990; Moumouni, 1968) and grounded in a combination of systematic observational research and his own experience of the socialization practices of the rural versus urban Nso communities in Western Cameroon (Nsamenang and Lamb, 1993, 1995). His formulation of social ontogenesis is rooted in a widely shared West African worldview. It posits the growth of social selfhood through a series of phases, each characterized by a distinctive developmental task defined within the framework of the culture's primarily socio-affective, developmental agenda.

The theory of social ontogenesis (Nsamenang, 1992, 2004, 2012) points out how, beginning early in life and through developmental stages, African children are active in the life of their families and societies as well as in self-care and self-learning. This theory presents human development as partly determined by the social ecology in which the development occurs and by how African children, especially in sibling and peer settings, learn from each other in peer cultures. The seminal concept of this theory is sociogenesis, defined as individual development that is explained more in terms of socially observed markers and culturally perceived tasks but less on biological unfolding, although social ontogenetic thinking does not preclude nature; it assumes that biology underpins social ontogenesis (Nsamenang, 2006). Ngaujah (2003) has interpreted Nsamenang's theoretical approach as revealing social and affective nature of the environment on the child's cognitive and social learning.

The aspect of Nsamenang's stages necessary for this study begin from the third social stage which corresponds to social apprenticeship. This phase roughly corresponding with childhood, is termed the period of apprenticing in which the principal developmental task is to recognize, cognize, and rehearse social roles that pertain to three hierarchical spheres of life: household, network and the public. Much of the responsibility for stimulation and guidance in this phase of early childhood development is assigned to pre-adolescence and adolescent children in the family and neighbourhood. The delegation of responsibility for care and socialization of younger children from adults to preadolescents and adolescents serves the function of priming the emergence of social responsibility. These priming strategies embed in traditional African childrearing practices have important implications for the design of culturally appropriate forms of intervention to optimize developmental opportunities for children in contemporary Africa (Nsamenang, 2009). Indeed, in many African communities with a subsistence economy, far from constituting a form of exploitation or abuse,

caregiving responsibilities assigned to preadolescents and adolescents are better understood as part of ‘an indigenous educational strategy that keeps children in contact with existential realities and the activities of daily life that represents the participatory component of social integration’ (Nsamenang, 1992: p. 157).

By positioning children as emerging into levels of selfhood, implying the unfolding of biological potentialities and social competencies, Africans tacitly acknowledge that self-concept and agency evolve with a maturing self-consciousness that accords a sense of self-direction and agentive search for or choice of the resources and exposures that increasingly differentiate and polish self-identity and goal directed behaviour toward desired or imagined personal status, either of sovereign individuality or relational individuality (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Nsamenang, 2004). African parents sensitize children from an early age to seek out others from whom to extract local knowledge and situated intelligences (Ogbu, 1992) and in so doing clarify who they are who they are, more so within sibling and peer spaces than with adults. Children extort the social, emotional, practical, cognitive, relational values and other norms ingrained in the activity settings of the home, society, and peer cultures more through their contextual embedment and active participation and less through explicit adult instruction or prodding. This social interaction is made more visible in the relation with peers and adults who initiate the adolescents into traditional medicine, traditional games, proverbs and other cultural aspects.

In so doing, they ‘graduate’ from one activity setting and participative sector of the peer culture to another, steadily maturing toward adult identity and roles (Nsamenang, 2012a). Zimba (2002) described one instance of self-definition with the Zulu community of South Africa, as nurturing *umuntuumuntungabantu*, which literally translates into ‘a person is only a person with other people.’ This relational view of identity development downplays lonesome individualism, implying that a sense of self cannot be attained or adequately understood without reference to the ‘community’ of others in which it is embedded. Concepts of place identity and place attachment accentuate the need to incorporate context into theory building and research agendas. The table below represents the various stages according to BameNsamenang. Worth noting is the fact that only the stages relevant to the present study are considered.

Table 1: The Various Developmental Stages According to BameNsamenang

Serial Stage	Social Ontogenetic Stage	Developmental Task(S)
4 Third social stage Childhood	Social apprentice notice	Recognize, cognize social roles. Acknowledge self in connectedness. Peer group interaction and ‘work.’
5 Fourth social stage Puberty	Social entrée	Recognize and adjust to changes. Perform domestic chores / duties. Participate in rite of passage, if any.
6 Fifth social stage Adolescence	Probation and ‘socialized’ internship	Visualize self; complete training. Poised for adult roles. Junior partner as proto-adult.
7 Sixth social stage Adulthood	Adulthood	Marriage. Responsible parenthood. Productivity/social reproduction.

Source: Nsamenang (1992).

The table above illustrates the various ontogenetic stages and the behaviours to be expected at various stages especially the stages relevant to our work. Nsamenang's theory shows clearly what happens at the various stages in the life of the individual within the ecocultural setting and with direct implication of the west Cameroonian people. From the stage theory, it is clear that the adolescent visualizes self, completes training, is poised for adult roles. Some of these include traditional medicine, games and of course the use of proverbs. The training process is a holistic process whereby morality, career orientation, and social life in the community are all wrapped up. The adolescent is introduced into every aspect of the life he has to live as an adult. Regarding the main variables of our study, the social apprentice level and the social entrée stages are the moments when the child begins gaining introduction into adult life. The adolescents are gradually introduced to traditional medicine and their processes. Traditional games too become common as the adolescent plays these games with peers and elders and equally the adolescent who is receiving initiation into adult life is introduced to proverbs which he/she has to attentively memorize, understand and reproduce. From these stages the adolescent is ready for adulthood and the life of the adult in the society.

African Proverbs as Learning Resource

Of what importance then is the study of this cultural resource to the education of African children? The education of African child usually begins from home, and it comes in terms of the interaction between the child and his/her environment. In this regard, education is not confined to the experience a child acquires in school. Such forms of education may take place at home. For instance, parents sometimes use proverbs, taboos and folklore to educate their children at home. These cultural resources are used to draw attention to the consequence(s) of bad conduct. African parents do not spare their children when they involve in misconduct. Corporal punishment is one of those measures often used to correct children's misconduct. However, it may sometimes turn out to be counter-productive when it is used very often. Instead of corporal punishment parents may remind their erring children of the consequences of their actions through such cultural resources as folktales, taboos and proverbs. There are lessons for them to learn from folklore, proverbs and taboos as elders often organize moonlight stories where folktales are told and interpreted by young children. Marah (2006:18) captures this form of education when he says that "stories are used not only to amuse and express feelings, but to also teach ideal form of behavior and morality."

In schools, a teacher may use proverbs to caution his/her pupils/students against bad conduct. When the need arises, a teacher may use the proverb for instance: *Bi a baso'kosarinojaaraileeniniiba*, which translates "If you throw a stone to the market place you may hit your own household." This proverb performs some cautionary roles: (a) by warning students of the consequences of wrongdoing, and (b) by deterring them from engaging in social vices. The moral values embodied in this proverb are expected to moderate the students' conduct and behaviour. Thus, proverbs are expected to provide a theoretical framework for championing (i) the virtue of patience, (ii) the notion of prudence in anything a person does, and (iii) the use of rational enquiry in conjunction with prudence where one is faced with choice-making. However, the epistemological import of proverbs lies in the predominant stress that is laid on the fact that: (i) behind every perceptual experience is the problems of perception (ii) the awareness of these problems may help to effect a cautionary role on how we perceive and interpret human behaviour (iii) facial expressions are much more complex, sometimes incongruent with intentional dispositions.

Projecting the Problem

Prior to the colonial period during which African indigenous educational systems were greatly westernized, Africans enjoyed an education peculiar to their environment. With the westernization of the African continent, many beliefs, customs, cultural practices are considered substandard. The various practices that are indigenous are often therefore considered primitive and to be relegated. On the other hand, there are sages in the indigenous communities who have never been to any classroom for formal education. These sages or wise people who have never had formal education manifest a wide range of cognitive skills like reasoning, thinking, decision making, problem solving and social competence. Could there be a relationship between the indigenous practices engaged in by these indigenes and the development of these cognitive skills? This is the question this work seeks to answer and of course the gap to be filled. Seeking to understand the relationship between the cognitive skills and the daily activities of adolescents as predicated by traditional proverbs which are the daily experience of indigenes. It is evident that Eurocentric researchers do not often pay attention to the strictly distinctive character of the contribution of African indigenous practices such as proverbs to the development of cognitive skills of Africans. The temptation is to judge knowledge and knowledge systems based on Eurocentric theories and paradigms which are quite divergent from an African perspective and experience. Very limited study has been carried out in this area of African indigenous practices and no documented study on the development of cognitive skills among the Oku People. Thus, the need to investigate the relationship between these concepts.

Research Question

To ascertain the influence of proverbs generated knowledge on the development of cognitive skills of adolescents.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed method approach. For the qualitative aspect, the ethnographic research design was used and for the quantitative aspect, the correlational survey research design was used. The two were then triangulated with the aid of the convergent parallel mixed method design.

This study used the Convergent Parallel Mixed method also termed concurrent triangulation design to gather data with the aim of finding out the influence of African indigenous practices on cognitive development. The schematic description of the convergent parallel mixed method design is presented in the figure below:

The convergent mixed method approach is probably the most familiar of the basic and advanced mixed methods strategies. According to Cresswell (2014), Researchers new to mixed methods typically first think of this approach because they feel that mixed methods only consists of combining the quantitative and qualitative data. In this approach, a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses them separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other. The key assumption of this approach is that both qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information often detailed views of participants qualitatively and scores on instruments quantitatively—and together they yield results that should be the same. It builds off the historic concept of the multi-method, multi-trait idea from Campbell and Fiske (1959), who felt that a psychological trait could best be understood by gathering different forms of data. Although

the Campbell and Fiske conceptualization included only quantitative data, the mixed methods researchers extended the idea to include the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data collection. The qualitative data can assume any of the following forms: interviews, observations, documents and records. The qualitative data can be instrument data, observational checklists, or numeric records, such as census data. The key idea with this design is to collect both forms of data using the same or parallel variables, constructs, or concepts. The Quantitative data is then collected and the two kinds of data are compared or related. It is assumed that the results should be the same.

Research Instruments

The instruments used for data collection in this study were an interview guide for the qualitative process and a questionnaire for the quantitative process. The interview guide and the questionnaire were designed by the researcher, scrutinized and approved by the research supervisor. The main objective of the interview guide and the questionnaire was to find out the influence of African indigenous practices on the cognitive development of adolescents. The interview guide was divided into four sections of A, and B. Section B on indigenous proverbs dealt with the relevance of proverbs among the Oku people. The mode of transmission of the proverbs and the impact of proverbs on the adolescents.

FINDINGS

Table 2: Adolescents Characterization of their Knowledge of Indigenous Proverbs

Items	Stretched			Collapsed		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree
Indigenous proverbs help in language development	0.6% (1)	8.3% (13)	50.0% (78)	41.0% (64)	9.0% (14)	91.0% (142)
Indigenous proverbs assist in the expression of concepts	1.9% (3)	6.4% (10)	45.5% (71)	46.2% (72)	9.0% (14)	91.0% (142)
The use of indigenous proverbs fosters reflection	3.8% (6)	5.1% (8)	46.2% (72)	44.9% (70)	8.3% (13)	91.7% (143)
The use of indigenous proverbs enhances imagination and thinking	3.8% (6)	5.1% (8)	46.2% (72)	44.9% (70)	9.0% (14)	91.0% (142)
I understand and master particular Oku proverbs	2.6% (4)	7.7% (12)	44.9% (70)	44.9% (70)	10.3% (16)	89.7% (140)
My understanding of proverbs have helped me to socialize more with Oku culture	3.2% (5)	9.0% (14)	52.6% (82)	35.3% (55)	12.2% (19)	87.8% (137)
My understanding and practice of proverbs help in promoting cultural values among the Oku youths	1.9% (3)	12.8% (20)	45.5% (71)	39.7% (62)	14.7% (23)	85.3% (133)
Every child in Oku is influenced by proverbs	6.4% (10)	10.3% (16)	53.2% (83)	30.1% (47)	16.7% (26)	83.3% (130)
I can distinguish between proverbs and similes or statements	5.1% (8)	14.7% (23)	39.1% (61)	41.0% (64)	19.9% (31)	80.1% (125)
I can formulate my own proverbs	3.8% (6)	10.9% (17)	48.7% (76)	36.5% (57)	14.7% (23)	85.3% (133)
MRS	3.3% (52)	9.0% (141)	47.4% (740)	40.2% (627)	12.4% (193)	87.6% (1367)

Adolescents generally perceived that indigenous proverb impact on the development of their cognitive skills with weight of 87.6%. The adolescents mostly agreed to the fact the use of indigenous proverbs foster reflection 91.7% (143). 3 groups of 91.0% (142) were agreed on the fact that Indigenous proverbs help in language development, Indigenous proverbs assist in the expression of concepts and the use of indigenous proverbs enhance imagination and thinking. 89.7% (140) were for the fact that they understand and master particular Oku proverbs. 87.8 % (137) were of the opinion that understanding of proverbs have helped them to socialize more with Oku culture. 85.3% (133) could formulate their own proverbs. 85.3% (133) showed that understanding and practice of proverbs help in promoting cultural values among the Oku youths. 83.3% (130) children in Oku are influenced by proverbs. 80.1% (125) can distinguish between proverbs and similes or statements.

Have Been Taught or Exposed to Proverbs

Table 3: Adolescents have Been Taught or Exposed to Proverbs

Adolescents have been taught or exposed to proverbs	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	7	4.5	4.5
Rarely	15	9.6	14.1
Often	63	40.4	54.5
Very often	71	45.5	100.0
Total	156	100.0	

Most adolescents stated that they have been very often taught traditional proverbs with proportion of 45.5% (71), 40.4% (63) were often taught, 9.6% (15) rarely while 4.5% (7) were never taught. Cumulatively, just 14.1% were never or rarely taught traditional proverbs.

Research Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between adolescents’ exposure to indigenous proverbs and the development of cognitive skills.

Table 4: Traditional Proverbs on the Development of Cognitive Skills of Adolescents

	Spearman's Rho	Development of Cognitive Skills from Traditional Medicine
	Correlation Coefficient	0.391**
Have been taught or exposed to proverbs	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	156

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was statistical enough evidence that youth exposure to the teaching and practice of traditional proverbs significantly and positively impact their cognitive development (R=0.391; P=0.000). The null hypothesis here stated is then rejected.

Elders’ Perspectives of Indigenous Proverbs and the Development of Cognitive Skills

Table 5: Oku Proverbs and their Relevance

Proverbs in Oku	English Translation	Relevance
<i>Ghaàtikjio ë læféwehbaà se kifetem</i>	‘Do not dirty the water if you have no calabash’	Meaning if you are a poor person, do not be envious of the person who is rich.
<i>Njiesehdzeneiyyehnyonghe wan</i>	‘When a sheep is old, it feeds on its offspring’	At old age, the elderly depend on their children.
<i>Ë sèhjaà sol ebfonyioseeghò ë ntieh</i>	‘You do not oil the Fon and wipe your hands on the ground’	Anything you do for others, you gain from it yourself.
<i>Keghòokemoklòokejàakuleyfiu</i>	‘One hand can’t tie a bundle’	Communal work is always better than individual work.
<i>Welkifeffiakkokomtèhebwunewhæn ne ketiéh</i>	‘Somebody has a knife and yet scrapes his body with a stick’	One has opportunities or plenty yet is starving.
<i>Wehshikyiolese ë wehkiilèheyfingheletéhn</i>	‘If you provoke bees in a hive, you will receive their rage’	Let sleeping dogs lie. Avoid looking for trouble.
<i>Eyjeleyumejofe chia keyæselòlò</i>	‘A pointless journey is better than idleness’	Staying at home in idleness is not a good thing to do.
<i>Keghòlòoyiosekebiy, kebiyyioseseykeghò</i>	‘When the hand is rubbing the lap, the lap also rubs the hand’	Reciprocating good deeds is the way to go in life. One good turn deserves another.
<i>Ebfiefeseh chia dunèhngvèeyensen</i>	‘It is when the wind blows that the anus of the chicken can be seen’	There are always storms or events or happenings that reveal the truth or reality about things.
<i>Fenrenebchuo ë sèjabaklè</i>	‘The noisy bird never builds a nest’	A talkative hardly ever accomplishes anything in life

Youth were relatively vested with proverbs. They could identify almost 10 of them.

These proverbs portray values such as humility as it the case with ‘Do not dirty the water if you have no calabash’ which means if you are a poor person, do not be envious of the person who is rich; predictability as it is the case with ‘When a sheep is old, it feeds on its offspring’ meaning at old age, the elderly depend on their children; sense of community or common interest/selflessness/team spirit as perceived in ‘One hand can’t tie a bundle’ meaning communal work is always better than individual work and this value is also found in this proverb ‘When the hand is rubbing the lap, the lap also rubs the hand’ meaning reciprocating good deeds is the way to go in life. One good turn deserves another.; lack of pragmatism as it the case with this proverb ‘Somebody has a knife and yet scrapes his body with a stick’ meaning One has opportunities or plenty yet is starving; peaceful attitude portrayed by ‘If you provoke bees in a hive, you will receive their rage’ meaning let sleeping dogs lie or avoid looking for trouble; hard work instils by ‘A pointless journey is better than idleness’ meaning; the sense of caution and vigilance perceived in ‘It is when the wind blows that the anus of the chicken can be seen’ meaning There are always storms or events or happenings that reveal the truth or reality about things; and the sense of calm, focus and concentration found in ‘The noisy bird never builds a nest’ meaning A talkative hardly ever accomplishes anything in life.

Table 6: Elders Transmitting Knowledge from Proverbs to the Youth

Code	Code Description	Grounding	Quotation
Repeated use	Knowledge of proverbs is transmitted from elders to the youths through repeated use.	2	'Knowledge is transmitted through repeated use of the proverbs'
Explanations	Through explanation of the proverbs, understanding of the proverbs is promoted in the youths.	1	'Explaining the proverbs promotes understanding'
Story telling	Through storytelling, at home, in groups, at school, etc., proverbs naturally find their way into the life of the adolescents.	3	'Proverbs are transmitted through story telling in the homes/groups, relaxation moments'
Instructive learning	Some commands are given by the elder through the use of proverbs. This enables the transmission of proverbs.	1	'Proverbs are also transmitted through commands'
Advice	Through advice given to the youths, proverbs are transmitted, understood and lived out.	1	'Some pieces of advice are given through proverbs, this helps to propagate proverbs.'

Knowledge from proverbs was mostly transmitted to the youths through repeated use, by explaining of the proverbs for understanding, through storytelling, at home, in groups, at school, etc., proverbs naturally find their way into the life of the adolescents as explained by this elder 'Proverbs are transmitted through story telling in the homes/groups, relaxation moments', instructive learning as proverbs are used to instruct and guide children on what to do, and to advice as through advice given to the youthful, proverbs are transmitted, understood and lived out.

Table 7: What it takes for Children to Understand, Retain and Practice Values from Proverbs

Code	Code Description	Grounding	Quotation
Practice	The practice of using proverbs in speech helps to propagate and equally show the value in them.	5	'Continuous use of the proverbs in spoken language is a way of revealing the values in them.'
Listening	Through listening to the elders, the adolescents are able to hear and begin to practice the proverbs.	5	'Listening to the elders and listening to them explain the proverbs gives them a good understanding of the proverbs'
Understanding	Through understanding various proverbs, the adolescents are able to deduce the values inherent in them.	2	'The adolescents through listening and understanding proverbs are able to learn the values in them'

Repetition	Through repeating the proverbs the value in them is easily encoded and lived out or practiced by the adolescents.	2	‘Proverbs are used in warnings, advice, caution, kept, repeated and practiced’
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Elders perceived that students’ understanding, retention and practice of values from proverbs can be enhanced through practice, as using proverbs in speech helps to propagate and equally show the value in them as explained here ‘*Continuous use of the proverbs in spoken language is a way of revealing the values in them*’. They equally perceived that just by listening to the elders as they use proverbs, the adolescents would be able to hear and begin to practice the proverbs, which is related to practical intelligence. Also, as they struggle to understand, this enhances their acquaintance with proverbs. Repetition or consistent use of proverbs in various occasions could foster acquaintance with proverbs as explained by this elder ‘*Proverbs are used in warnings, advice, caution, kept, repeated and practiced*’.

Table 8: Suggestions to Promote the Practice of Proverbs among Oku Youths

Code	Code Description	Grounding	Quotation
Explanations	Meanings of proverbs used should be explained to the adolescents who are the hearers of these proverbs.	4	‘The meaning of used proverbs should be explained to the youths’
Write books	The writing of books and anthologies which are compilations of proverbs will go a long way to bring the proverbs to the future. Children should also be taught to write rhymes and proverbs thereby having the ability to develop their own.	3	‘Books should be written and a collection of proverbs put together with their meanings for posterity’ ‘Children should be encouraged to write rhymes and proverbs’
Story telling	The art of storytelling will help to preserve and promote the use of proverbs.	3	‘Story telling the vehicle of proverbs needs to be promoted’
Constant use	The constant use of proverbs will promote its practice.	2	‘Constant use of proverbs by the elders can promote its practice’
Teach language	Teaching the Oku language in school will help to make it more scientific and the cultural values in the language will be propagated.	2	‘The Oku language should be taught in school’
Included in curriculum	Including African culture in the curriculum will help to preserve the proverbs in the face of globalization.	1	‘African culture should be taught in the curriculum’

Elders perceived that the practice of proverbs among Oku youths could be promoted through explanations by explaining their meaning ‘*The meaning of used proverbs should be explained to the youths*’, the writing of books and anthologies which are compilations of proverbs will go a long way to bring the proverbs to the future. Children should also be taught to write rhymes and proverbs thereby having the ability to develop their own.

Others emphasized storytelling as this elder who perceived storytelling as a fundamental traditional way to enhance knowledge and curiosity ‘*Story telling the vehicle of proverbs needs to be promoted*’. Others emphasized repetitive or constant use, the teaching of language as the indigenous language is the bearer of the authentic version of those proverbs and the custodian, generally elders can only transmit them through the indigenous language. The need for proverbs to be included in the curriculum was also put forward ‘*African culture should be taught in the curriculum*’. This once more raises the question of contextualization of educational programmes in Africa.

Table 9: Some of the Values that Proverbs Enhance in the Oku Culture

Code	Code Description	Grounding	Quotation
Alertness	Attentiveness and alertness are fostered through the use of the proverbs. Adolescents have to be alert when listening to their elders.	4	‘The spirit of being alert in communal life.’ ‘Attentiveness and ability to listen critically’
Respect	The elders serve as teachers and dispensers of wisdom and knowledge. The adolescents are therefore bound to respect them.	3	‘Respect for elders who are teachers.’
Critical thinking	The philosophy of the people is passed on through proverbs and wisdom sayings. This triggers critical thinking and reasoning among the people. Proverbs therefore also help in developing the psyche of the people and testing their mental abilities to interpret and understand.	3	‘Fosters the philosophy of the people through critical thinking’ ‘Reasoning and easily reveal the psychology of the people.’
Imagination	The use of proverbs rich in imagery enhances imagination.	2	‘Proverbs help people to use their imagination through reference to supernatural things through the use of natural things’
Language learning	The use of proverbs fosters the learning of language and the expressions in the language.	1	‘Fosters language learning’
Speculation	Speculative thinking is enhanced through the use of proverbs which refer to things not directly but most often indirectly.	1	‘The people are speculative thinkers and so proverbs help in speculation.’
Morality	Morality is enhanced through proverbs which are vehicles for admonitions and moral instructions.	1	‘We instruct the young on how to live their lives through proverbs. We don’t have to explain everything to them. They should be able to understand us when we speak to them.’

Elders highlighted several values that proverbs enhance ranging from alertness whereby as attentiveness and alertness are fostered through the use of the proverbs. They therefore perceive that adolescents have to be alert when listening to their elders as explained by this elder ‘*Attentiveness and ability to listen critically*’. Proverbs were also perceived as promoters of a sense of respect for elders

on the part of adolescents, given that elders are the bearers of the knowledge and act here as teachers dispensing of wisdom and knowledge. The adolescents are therefore bound to respect them to acquire this knowledge and wisdom.

Another major value enhanced by proverbs is the development of the sense of critical thinking as emphasized by this elder 'Fosters the philosophy of the people through critical thinking'. In fact, the philosophy of the people is passed on through proverbs and wisdom sayings. This triggers critical thinking and reasoning among the people. Proverbs therefore also help in developing the psyche of the people and testing their mental abilities to interpret and understand through critical thinking. In line with critical thinking, this elder is right to perceive the development of the sense of imagination 'Proverbs help people to use their imagination through reference to supernatural things through the use of natural things'. The development of speculative thinking rimes with these two values, as speculative thinking is enhanced through the use of proverbs which refer to things not directly but most often indirectly 'The people are speculative thinkers and so proverbs help in speculation'.

Another important aspect is the learning of indigenous language is through proverbs. Moral education can also be passed through proverbs as explained by this elder who perceived proverbs as vehicles for admonitions and moral instructions 'We instruct the young on how to live their lives through proverbs. We don't have to explain everything to them. They should be able to understand us when we speak to them'.

DISCUSSIONS

Research Question Three: To what extent do proverbs influence the development of cognitive skills in late adolescents?

The findings of the study show that the use of proverbs has a significant relationship with the development of cognitive skills. These are seen from various perspectives. Firstly, they enhance mental alertness in adolescents. Adolescents are bound to be alert in order to understand the proverbs that are used in discourse, memorize them and reproduce them in their own speech. They develop respect for the elders who serve as teachers, impacting knowledge and wisdom on them, the disposition for acquiring knowledge. They develop the ability of critical thinking, imagination especially with the imagery used in proverbs. They develop their language power, the ability to speculate and learn principles of morality often embedded in the proverbs. All of these reveal the fact that proverbs play an important part in the development of the cognitive skills of late adolescents from our findings.

This is supported by the results of Adamo (2015) whose findings revealed that proverbs have inseparable links to culture and language and are markers of people's identity. Moreso, they enhance a sense of community, good relationships, sacredness of life, respect for authority, respect for adults who are in possession of wisdom and the promotion of the philosophy of a people.

Challenges of African Youths in the Contemporary Time

Those who have been following the world of the young people (especially youth within the ages of 18 and 25) in the last few decades will observe a glaring resemblance in their lifestyles. One needs to observe these lifestyles to be able to appreciate the strength of this development. Iyotani (1995:5) points out this resemblance when he says that "all over the world young people listen to the same media. Children play the same video game and women are wearing the same fashions without any time-lag." The corollary of the matter is that all over the world young people parade the same values.

This is apparent in their taste either to values or desires. These universalized values are contingent upon the effects of information and communication technology in the world. Today, almost every home, in urban areas, in the sub-Saharan Africa can boast of a television set and perhaps a video set. Where there are videos, such videos often parade numerous movies whether local or foreign. The results are obvious as children recount joyfully their experience of some of these movies, an opportunity it affords them to recount unceasingly the names of actors and actresses. To some parents it sounds a beautiful exploit to behold.

It would be wrong to argue that the effects of high technology alone are responsible for the strange behaviour often exhibited by young African children. Usually the media factor only lends its weight when other issues raise their head. Nevertheless, the impact of the media on the life of these young people is strong, as many of them often devote their time to watching video films and ping-pong on their mobile phones even when they are supposed to keep themselves in their study. Now that the digital television and chatting on facebook, skype etc. have become a mobile phone culture doing serious academic work has become a serious challenge. Ironically, young African children like their counterparts elsewhere have become part of this tradition. While they are often occupied with their mobile phone especially when they engaged chatting they have little or no time for children's literary series. Medved (1998:5) holds it to be a universal problem. According to him, young children in America too prefer to spend their time watching television than speaking to their father. In Medved's (1998:5) submission, "by the age of six, the average American child has spent more hours watching the tube than he will spend speaking to his father in his life time." Medved (1998:6) believes that this is a child abuse, a situation that will pass unnoticed in African homes. Incidentally, some parents, in the sub-Sahara Africa, see movie experience among their children as a necessity, since the children need such experience to be able to think westernly. It looks more of an opportunity for young African people to hide under this untidy experience to undermine their cultural values.

Discussions of African values are predicated on the acceptance of African culture; except that there may be no consensus among scholars on what may count as African culture (Makinde, 2007: 232). Primarily, this is due to the varied beliefs and traditions that exist among African people. However, this may not count as a major reason to deny African culture. Iyotani (1995:5) tends to reinforce this belief with the analysis of the Japanese culture vis-à-vis the western culture. According to him, 'western culture' is not the culture of any specific country or people; rather it is only an imaginary construct. In other words, for him "there is actually no such thing as 'the west' and so there cannot be any reality in the idea of 'western culture'." Ross (quoted in Giroux, (1988:17) holds a similar view, though held in relation to an attack on ethnocentricity which rests on the assumption that America and Europe represent universalized models of civilization and culture.

The implication is that the reference to African culture too rests on the assumption that we are dealing with a socially constructed term. Thus, the term 'African culture' may, therefore, be considered a 'construct' designed for the purpose of marking out 'African culture' from the rest of the world. In this respect, the particularity of certain cultural elements among African people does not invalidate any attempt to discuss the present issue under a general framework. The same view tends to be fundamental to any discussion on the youth culture and values, especially as it relates to young people in the sub-Saharan Africa. However, for the purpose of this work African culture and values depict the culture and values that are indigenous to African people. In this respect, African culture is defined in terms of a people's way of life-taste, fashion, marriage, customs and so forth. This paper appreciates the differences in the cultures and values of the people of the world; it however, focuses on the similarities within these differences especially as this relates to the sub-Saharan Africa. The

paper, therefore, places these differences within the purview of African proverbs (specifically Kom proverbs) to see how proverbs can be used to arrest the drift recently observed in young Africans' attitudes to indigenous Africans' ways of life.

The disposition of young people to their culture cannot be divorced totally from the seemingly influence of the foreign values they imbibe. Young people no longer follow the dictates of their elders on matters relating to their life, for instance, the choice of partners in marriage. A young person who despises an elder for not being part of the global cultural train is usually reminded of the experience of elders on issues concerning life. While he may claim to have acquired 'book learning' elders will possibly tell him/her that they have the wisdom and experience to discern the complexities that are inherent in life. Young people cash in on the opportunity afforded by the waves of cultural conflict which become part of the trends at the beginning of the 21st century to undermine their own culture. Zapf (2003:4) confesses that "the early modernization theory of the 1950/1960s one must remember that this theory was designed as a program explicitly directed to the non-Western world, that is, it was devoted to the "export" of Western institutions and values." The acceptance of this "exported" institutions and values creates a gap between the youths and their cultural heritage. Apparently, while the youths feel comfortable despising their own cultural heritage and align themselves with the global cultural trends, it does not itself give them the western identity they seem to crave for. The problem, indeed, is that while they succeeded in alienating themselves from their cultural root, sad enough, they found themselves not acceptable by the culture they try to embrace.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Formal education should include indigenous practices like traditional proverbs. This will help to promote and popularize these indigenous practices which are often considered primitive and thus relegated.

There has to be promotion of culture and traditional practices especially by the ministry of arts and culture. The ministry in charge of arts and culture has to do more in terms of promoting indigenous arts and practices rather than importing foreign cultures which could help to inundate the dwindling indigenous practices in Cameroon.

To preserve and promote indigenous practices books have to be written to document present practices for future generations. Authors and publishing houses, researchers ought to write and publish works on indigenous practices, processes, meaning and relevance of these practices. Without a good understanding of these practices either by Cameroonians or foreigners, their value and relevance will continuously be relegated and replaced by other games considered modern.

There is a need for the study of botany at a more in-depth level. The study of botany and an attempt at making modern the practice of traditional medicine will enhance and promote traditional medicine. If the present practice whereby the cultivation, processing, handling, dosage and consumption are seen as primitive are maintained, traditional medicine which is very effective will gradually fade away. If the ministry of health could make it more attractive by introducing hygiene in the cultivation, handling, packaging and distribution, it would attract more attention.

Promotion of storytelling. The art of storytelling helps to transmit language and values found in them are taught, understood and handed down from one generation to another. Promoting story telling will

inevitably promote the learning of indigenous languages. Indigenous languages need to be taught in school for better transmission of knowledge and values. Proverbs, are transmitted through the medium of language. If indigenous languages are not taught formally and documented, they will disappear gradually and values will be lost.

Sixthly, promotion of competitions and games. Promoting activities, festivals and competitions during which traditional practices are central would help in preserving and promoting indigenous practices. There are a lot of competitions in the secondary schools. If indigenous games become part and parcel of the competitions and not just imported games, the indigenous games would be preserved.

Conclusion

Discussions, in this paper, has largely centered on how proverbs as a cultural resource can provide a pedagogic tool for teaching, learning and adolescents cognitive development. The discussions on the use of proverbs, as presented here, raises certain fundamental questions which are considered to be central to the question of whether there can ever be a logical relation between the physical characteristics of a person and his motives, intention and desires. This question leads to the contention on why individuals should be wary of using a person's physical characteristics to explain his actions, attitudes and motives. The corollary of this matter is that parents must at all-time let their children know that proverbs serve as mirrors for the understanding of the inherent problems e.g. deception, mistrust, dishonesty and so on which sometimes generate from interpersonal relations among human beings. It is the contention in this paper, therefore, that using the example of proverbs in Kom language, young people in sub-Saharan Africa should understand the virtues of patience, perseverance, and rational choice which should constitute the linchpin of their life.

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