Abraka Journal of Religion and Philosophy - **ISSN: 2971-5997 (Online)**
Volume 6, Issue 2 (July – December), 2026, pp. 160-171

Epistemic Discourse on Poverty Alleviation in Modern Nigeria: Yoruba Traditional Professions as Pathways to Enhancing National Economic Development

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Abstract
This paper argues that the real cause of poverty in Nigeria is basically economic. Poverty is a term that indicates a state of lack, inadequacy or being poor. Poverty is rooted in the inability of both the leaders anad the led to cognize the vast human and natural resources at their disposal and to put them into optimal use. The paper argues that economic growth and dignity of labour as found in traditional Yoruba men and women may help reduce poverty in the long run, but it is not sufficient in itself to assist the chronically poor people. The paper adopts a phenomenological method. It examines how individuals experience poverty, how they perceive government interventions, the challenges they encounter when accessing assistance, and how such programmes influence their livelihoods and general well-being. Rather than concentrating mainly on numerical measurements of poverty, the phenomenological method seeks to understand poverty from the perspectives of the people directly affected by it. The paper recommends, among others, that economic growth in terms of goods and services can help poor, uneducated people because they can learn manual professions or do mini jobs in organizations. The paper concludes that federal and state governments should educate people more on professions or investments like agricultural development, Rural banking schemes, microcredit schemes and other benefit programmes that could be of help to alleviate poverty in modern-day Nigeria.

Keywords: Poverty, Alleviation, Modern Nigeria, Yoruba, and Economic Growth.

Introduction

The traditional Yoruba profession are associated with families. Each of the extended family living together is known for a profession. Ojetayo (2025) claimed that it is mostly uncommon for people to learn a different vocation that is not inherited from within the family. Anybody who does this in Yoruba land is regarded as being lazy. Children born into the family learn the professions as they grow up. They eventually inherit it when their father died. As mentioned above, different professions abound in Yoruba land. While some of these professions are gender specific, others can be taken by both sexes. For instance, both male and female can take to farming as professions but only male can take to drumming or hunting, while only female can take to dying or oil-making business, pottery, soap making, making of indigo dye etc. Fadipe (1970) assert that one thing that is peculiar with professions in Yoruba land is that one can determine the profession of a family from the names they bear. For instance, any family that bears names like, Ayanwale, Ayanbiyi, Ayanyemi, and so on are likely to be drummers, while names like Ogunyemi, Ogunwale, Odebiyi are given by families who are hunters or blacksmith.

Theoretical Framework on Poverty Alleviation

A theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for explaining the causes of poverty and the mechanisms through which poverty can be reduced. Poverty alleviation is

concerned with deliberate efforts by governments, non-governmental organisations, communities and individuals to improve the economic and social conditions of people living in poverty. Several theories can be used to explain poverty and poverty alleviation. However, Amartya Sen's Capability theory is particularly suitable because it views poverty beyond inadequate income and focuses on people's ability to live the kind of life they value.

Capability Theory

The Capability Theory was developed by Amartya Sen, particularly through his works on poverty, inequality and human development. Sen (1999) argues that poverty should not be understood simply as a shortage of income or material resources. Rather, poverty represents a deprivation of people's basic capabilities the real opportunities that individuals have to achieve valuable states of being and activities, such as being adequately nourished, educated, healthy, employed and participating effectively in society.

According to Sen (1999), income is important because it provides individuals with resources that can be converted into valuable outcomes. However, having income does not automatically guarantee that an individual will achieve a satisfactory standard of living. Factors such as access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, social institutions, security and public infrastructure influence how people convert resources into improved living conditions. Therefore, effective poverty alleviation should focus not only on providing financial assistance but also on expanding people's capabilities and opportunities.

The Capability theory distinguishes between functioning and capabilities. Functionings refer to the things a person actually achieves, such as being educated, being healthy, having employment or participating in community activities. Capabilities refer to the genuine opportunities or freedoms that a person has to achieve those functionings. From this perspective, a person is considered poor when he or she lacks important opportunities necessary for achieving basic human well-being.

The theory therefore suggests that poverty alleviation programmes should empower people rather than merely provide temporary relief. For example, government programmes that provide vocational training, agricultural support, affordable education, healthcare, access to credit, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship development can increase people's capabilities. In the Nigerian context, poverty reduction strategies are more likely to be sustainable when beneficiaries acquire the skills, resources and opportunities required to become economically independent rather than depending permanently on welfare support.

The Capability theory is also relevant because poverty is multidimensional. The World Bank (2024) notes that poverty involves deprivation in several dimensions of well-being and that improving people's access to economic opportunities, education, healthcare and basic services is important for sustainable poverty reduction. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (2024) emphasises that poverty should be understood through multiple dimensions, including health, education and living standards, rather than income alone.

An overview of National Economic development in Nigeria

Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule on 1 October 1960. Since independence, the country has experienced several stages of economic development shaped by agricultural production, industrialisation, petroleum exploration, government policies, international trade, population growth and political changes. The Nigerian economy has moved from an agriculture-based economy to one in which crude oil exports and the service sector play major roles.

National economic development refers to the process through which a country improves its productive capacity, employment opportunities, income levels, infrastructure, industrial activities and the general welfare of its citizens. In Nigeria, economic development since independence has been characterised by periods of growth, economic crises, policy reforms and continuing challenges, particularly poverty, unemployment, inflation, inadequate infrastructure and income inequality.

Although Nigeria possesses substantial natural and human resources, the benefits of economic growth have not always translated into improved living standards for all citizens. Understanding the country's economic history is therefore important for examining the challenges of national development and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies.

During the first six years after independence, agriculture was the dominant sector of the Nigerian economy. The country produced cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil, cotton, rubber and other agricultural products for domestic consumption and export. Agriculture provided employment for a large proportion of the population and generated substantial foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. Regional economies were also strongly associated with particular agricultural commodities.

The government introduced development planning to promote economic growth, expand infrastructure, improve education and healthcare, and encourage industrial development. The First National Development Plan, covering 1962–1968, emphasised economic growth, human capital development and the expansion of productive activities.

However, the economy faced challenges associated with regional inequality, inadequate industrial capacity, limited infrastructure and dependence on primary commodity exports. Although petroleum was becoming increasingly important, agriculture remained central to employment, production and exports during the early years of independence (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2021). The 1980s were characterised by serious economic difficulties. The decline in international oil prices reduced government revenue and foreign exchange earnings, while external debt, inflation, unemployment and balance-of-payments problems placed additional pressure on the economy.

In response to these difficulties, Nigeria introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. The programme sought to restructure the economy, reduce excessive dependence on oil, improve export competitiveness, encourage private-sector participation and correct macroeconomic imbalances. Its policy measures included exchange-rate adjustments, trade liberalisation and changes to government economic intervention. Although these reforms aimed to improve economic efficiency and restore growth, they also generated adjustment costs for households and businesses. Rising prices, reduced purchasing power and pressures on real incomes affected many Nigerians. The period demonstrated the difficulties of managing an economy that depended heavily on oil revenue while facing structural weaknesses in agriculture, manufacturing and public finance (World Bank, 2009).

Nigeria's economy continued to experience instability during the 1990s. Political uncertainty, fluctuations in oil earnings, inadequate infrastructure and inconsistent economic policies affected investment and productive activities. The manufacturing sector faced difficulties associated with high production costs, unreliable electricity, limited access to foreign exchange and dependence on imported inputs. Agriculture remained important for employment and food production, but its capacity to generate sufficient export earnings and support rapid industrialisation was constrained by low productivity and inadequate investment. The country also experienced persistent poverty and weak growth in real income per person.

The experience of the 1990s demonstrated that possessing substantial petroleum resources did not automatically guarantee sustained national development. Effective institutions, policy consistency, productive investment and economic diversification were also necessary to improve living standards. The return to democratic government in 1999 created opportunities for renewed economic reforms and development planning. Successive governments introduced policies intended to strengthen the private sector, improve public finance, attract foreign investment and expand infrastructure.

One significant initiative was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), introduced in the early 2000s. It focused on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value reorientation. The government also pursued privatisation and reforms in selected sectors of the economy. Nigeria experienced periods of economic growth during this era, supported by favourable oil-market conditions and expansion in telecommunications, banking, trade and other services. Telecommunications development, in particular, expanded access to mobile communication and created new commercial opportunities.

Debt relief obtained in 2005 also helped reduce the country's external debt burden. Nevertheless, economic diversification remained limited, and the economy continued to be vulnerable to changes in oil prices. Improvements in aggregate economic performance did not eliminate unemployment, poverty or regional disparities (IMF, 2021).

Major Challenges of Economic Development in Nigeria

Despite its considerable natural and human resources, Nigeria continues to face several challenges that affect national economic development, which include the following.

i. **Overdependence on Crude Oil:** Heavy reliance on petroleum revenue exposes the economy to fluctuations in international oil prices.
ii. **Poverty and Unemployment:** Many households lack stable employment and sufficient income to meet their basic needs.
iii. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Poor electricity supply, transportation networks and other infrastructure increase production costs and discourage investment.
iv. **Inflation:** Rising prices reduce the purchasing power of households, particularly those with low and irregular incomes.
v. **Low Agricultural Productivity:** Limited access to finance, modern equipment, storage facilities and secure farmland constrains agricultural production.
vi. **Inconsistent Economic Policies:** Changes in government priorities and implementation challenges can discourage long-term investment.
vii. **Insecurity:** Conflict, banditry, kidnapping and other security problems disrupt farming, trade, investment and transportation.
viii. **Income Inequality:** The benefits of economic growth are not distributed equally across households, communities and regions.

These challenges indicate that national development requires coordinated economic policies that promote productive investment, strengthen institutions and improve access to economic opportunities.

The Professions of *Yoruba* People

a. Farming:

This is the most prominent of all the professions that we have in Yoruba land. Since food is the sustainer of life, the profession is regarded as the mother of all professions. As they say, *Agbe loba* "the farmer is the king" and that *bebi ba ti kuro ninu ise, ise buse* "as long as one can satisfy hunger, one is not impoverished. The basic implements that is used for farming are cutlasses and hoes. But with modem technology; farmers now make use of tractors, planters, sowers, and so on. Farming is categorized according to both the distance and the nature of soil and land. Hence, we have *oko-egan, oko-etile, akuro*, and *ogba*. For *oko-egan*, it is normally quite a distance from the house. The farmer may either leave very early in the morning or come back late in the evening, or make it a weekly or even monthly trip to the house. In this case, he constructs a set of huts where he, along with members of his family and probably his labourers, lives. In the case of *oko-etile*, the farmer goes to the farm early in the morning and goes back home to have his lunch; he may go back to the farm later in the evening to work. Ogba is usually located on the outskirts of the town where the farmer can also go and come back home. In most cases, vegetables are the main product. In the case of Akuro, the farm is located near the bank of a river or a waterlogged area. The farmer can plant any food crop at any time of the year since there is a constant supply of water, but this is often used for vegetable farming. Those with large farms enlist the services of their colleagues through Owe and Aaro. In this case, other colleagues work for him on certain days, and he only provides them with food and drinks. Farmers may also employ the services of paid workers or Alagbaro.

This type of farming encourages men to be polygamous. The more wives and children they have, the more hands that will assist the farmers with their work. If the man has male children, they assist him with the farm; however, if he has female children, it is incumbent on their husbands to assist their father-in-law. There is division of labour between the husband and the wife or wives in the disposal of the farm produce. While the husband produces the farm products, it is the responsibility of the wife/wives to take these products to the market for sale; the husband will then give them a certain percentage depending on the sale. There are two categories of farm products; these are cash crops and food crops. Examples of cash crops include rubber, cocoa, kola nut, cotton, and so on, while examples of food crops include yam, cassava, maize, pepper, vegetables, and so on.

The role of agriculture towards the growth and development of the Nigerian economy cannot be overemphasized; this is why various scholars confirm, despite oil gaining ascendancy, that it is still the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. It provides employment opportunities for the teeming population, eradicates poverty, provides foodstuffs and raw materials for other sectors, provides investible funds through surplus savings for other sectors, and contributes to the country's GDP through foreign exchange earnings and an expanding market for other sectors (Okoro, 2011; Olashore, 1991; Anyawu et'al, 1997; Omawal and Rodriguez, 1979). Mabuza, Taeb and Endo (2008) defined Agriculture as the cultivation of land, raising and rearing of animals for the purpose of production of food for man, animals and industries. To them, it also comprises crop production, livestock and forestry, fishery, processing and marketing of those agricultural products.

At independence, agriculture was the major source of government revenue. Over the past decades, before oil gained ascendancy, agriculture constituted one of the most important sectors of the Nigerian economy. The nation enjoyed self-sufficiency in food, and in fact, was a food-surplus country. The contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at independence was about 63% but it declined in the 1970s to 48.8%; this continued in the 80s to 22.2% due to the

neglect of the sector for oil (national bureau of statistics, 2010), and this accounted for the food supply shortage the country is experiencing (Ogen, 2007).

As a matter of fact, the state of agriculture has deteriorated drastically, in the past 35 years. The nation which enjoyed self-sufficiency in food and in fact, was a food surplus country has now become a food deficit country depending more on food imports for the welfare of its people. The agricultural sector ceased to be a major or even important contributor to foreign exchange earnings and its contribution to employment declined significantly, this is as a result of the neglect of the agricultural sector, hence, oil dominates the Nigerian economy with its contribution to the GDP in 1980 as 29% and this rose to 52% in 2005 making oil and gas to be the major sources of government revenue contributing about 99% of exports and nearly 85% of government revenues, although their contribution to employment is estimated only to be 4% (CBN 2013).

b. Hunting

Hunting is another type of profession in Yoruba land. Ogun was regarded as the first hunter. The profession is not just for anybody. Anybody going into it must be generous, brave, must be able to endure, must be swift or slow as occasion demands. A lot of training is required for would-be hunters. Training may take up to five or more years to complete. It is usually very intensive. Part of the training includes, among others, how to hibernate for animals, how to handle various types of hunting implements, and how to act and react in the bush to various situations. Hunters are also expected to be versed in various types of assorted traditional medicines like *egbe, afeeri, ajabo, idiwo,* and so on. Any hunter without this entire juju must not venture into the hunting profession, or else, he'll pay dearly with his life. Hunters are expected to offer sacrifices after each hunting expedition, particularly if they kill certain types of animals. For instance, they must offer sacrifices after killing elephants, buffalo, pythons, and other big animals in this category. If any hunter defaults, the consequences, in most cases, are disastrous. For instance, he may not kill any other animal for a very long time or even again; he may have abnormal Offspring or not even have any. It is forbidden for hunters to cut corners with their colleagues for fear of being struck to death by *Ogun-the god of iron*. Some of the don'ts of hunters include the following:

1. He must not lie to a fellow hunter,
2. He must not marry another hunter's wife
3. He must not steal another hunter's game
4. He must not sit on the same seat that a fellow hunter's wife sat or sleep on the mat that the fellow hunter's wife slept.

Apart from their profession, they also assist the community that they are in other ways. For instance; they are used as night-watchmen against armed robbers and night marauders. They are used to check external aggression. They are the bedrock for the town's army in case of war.

c. Cloth Weaving

This is another major type of profession in Yoruba land. This is a male dominated job. The types of clothes that can be woven include *aso-ofi* (of various types and shades like *sanyan, alaaari, etu, dendelawo, sanmo-nmi,* etc) and *kijipa*. Before the coming of the Europeans, they had the traditional weaving treads that were soaked in dyes depending on the color and deepness of the dye required by the customers. Banjo (2011) states that specialist in cloth weaving can now purchase any type of weaving tread in the market that has been made to specification. Some of the traditional instruments used for cloth weaving include but are not limited to the following, *kokogu, biribiri, oko, omu, asa/iwa, ese ofi*, etc.

Women were not left out in the economic development and transformation of *Yoruba* land. Apart from keeping domestic animals and engaging in subsistent fishing, women also engaged in basket and mat production. The richness of the geographical environment in the production of reeds, raffia, and palm thread which are major ingredients in the production of mats and baskets, encouraged the development of many mat producing centres along the coastal corridor of *Yoruba* land. While women constituted the bulk of the producers of mats and baskets, the men were the producers of the raw materials because of the intensity of the labour required and the field hazard.

Talbot (1969) is of the opinion that Abeokuta lies in a fertile country of wooded savanna, the surface of which is broken by masses of grey granite. It spreads over an extensive area, being surrounded by mud walls 18 miles in extent. Palm oil, lumber, natural rubber, yams, rice, cassava, maize, cotton, other fruits, and Shea butter are the chief articles of trade. It is a key export location for cocoa, palm products, fruits, and kola nuts. Both rice and cotton were introduced by the missionaries in the 1850s and have become an integral part of the economy, along with the dye indigo. Abeokuta lies below the Olumo Rock, home to several caves and shrines. The town depends on the Oyan River Dam for its water supply, which is not always dependable. The dam is situated in the Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State in the West of Nigeria, about 20 km northwest of the state capital.

The Egba are a subgroup of the Yoruba race, an ethnic group of western Nigeria, a majority of whom are from the central part of Ogun State. The Ogun Central Senatorial District comprises of six local government areas: Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ewekoro, Ifo, Obafemi-Owode and Odeda. Abeokuta is an agro-based market with small and middle level agro industries. The people produce agricultural products such as yams, cassava, rice, corn, palm oil, poultry, cotton and vegetables. It also serves as an exporting point for cocoa, palm produce and kolanuts. Although, cotton was introduced by the missionaries in the 1850's, cotton weaving, pottery and tie and dye (Adire) are all traditional crafts of the Abeokuta people. The city is reputed to be the capital of the Adire industry in Nigeria. Tomori (2021) assert that Adire textile is a resist-dyed cloth produced and worn by the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria in West Africa.

Adire/Kampala, which means "tied and dyed," was first applied to indigo-dyed cloth decorated with different patterns at the turn of the twentieth century. With the introduction of a broader color palette of imported synthetic dyes in the second half of the twentieth century, the label *Adire* was expanded to include a variety of Historical Scholarship, Society and Education Educational Development in Nigeria hand-dyed textiles using wax-resist-batik methods to produce patterned cloth in a dazzling array of dye tints and hues. Not until recent times was the business of Adire/Kampala textile production, like other entrepreneurship, which is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by individuals through the use of resources at hand, assumed to be inborn (inherited by birth), and the heritage passed onto the children from the parents whose parents were also involved in the production process. The craft was formerly known to be a family business in Egbaland, passed from parents to their female children and their male children's wives. Given the foregoing, this paper therefore examines Kampala production amongst the Egba with special attention paid to its economic importance.

Abeokuta, meaning "Under the Rock" derived its name from Olumo Rock, the town's most famous landmark. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State, in Nigeria and is the home of tie-dye and batik cloths. Abeokuta has been noted for the high quality technique in both batik and tie-dye called

Adire for decades because of the fast rich dye produced by indigo plants in the area. Many consumers within Nigeria considered Abeokuta the premier center of Adire production.

Adire was first produced in Jojola's Compound of Kemta, Abeokuta, by Chief Mrs. *Miniya Jojolola Soetan*, the second *lyalode* (Head of Women) of Egbaland, and later passed to her children and onward to the future generations. Adire production was formerly known to be a family business passed from parents to their female children and their male children's wives. The first Adire material was made with Teru (local white attire) and Elu (local dye) made from Elu leaf which is planted in the Saki area of Oyo State. Traditional process used in the production is similar to those inherited from the older generation, which makes the art a routine entrepreneurship.

The routine entrepreneurs are those who produce the same product using traditional processes similar to those existing in the market. As a distinctive textile type, Adire first emerged in the city of Abeokuta, a center for cotton pro'' on, weaving, and indigo-dyeing in the nineteenth century. The prototype was Kijipa, a hand-woven cloth dyed with indigo for use as wrappers and cloths. Female specialists dyed yams and cloth, and also refurbished by re-dyeing the cloth with tie-dyed patterns. In the early decades of the century, a vast trade network for Adire spread across West Africa, f Ghana, Congo and Senegal. In the 1930's, two technological innovations.

d. Blacksmithing

Blacksmiths make simple kinds of objects. Some of these include guns, cutlasses, hoes, axes, and knives, spears, gun, arrows, (go to hell), etc for farmers, hunters, and even household uses, etc. They also sharpen these objects whenever they get blunt. Some of the materials used for this profession include the following: owu, omo-owu, iponrin, ewiri, emu, ikoko-omi, etc. Aro is the spot where blacksmithing takes place. It takes about four to six years to graduate from learning this profession. It is equally mandatory for the apprentice to be blessed by the master so that he can be prosperous.

e. Drumming

This is another type of profession associated with the Yoruba. It is also associated with families. Some of the names they bear include the following: Onilude, Ayantunji, Ayanleye, Onigbinde, etc. Beating of the drums can be for the following reasons; for entertainment during ceremony as in naming, burial, wedding, or any other function in the society. It can also be used to wake the Oba or a very important chief in the morning. It can also be used to herald the arrival of invaders so that those who are concerned will get prepared. Drums are also an important ingredient during any traditional festivals. Drums, the Yoruba belief can talk. Those who are familiar with them can understand their different meanings. Some of the various types of drums that we have include: *dundun, gangan, adamo, abebe, osugbo, aje, sakara, bata,* etc.

f. Arts

Africa, Nigeria in particular, is endowed with this gift of God to produce masterpieces that have the penchant to draw the attention of the rest of the world; in two and three dimensions which include painting, sculpture, printmaking, textile and crafts. Also, other aspects like literature, performing arts; music, theatre, dance, acrobatic displays and folklore have great potential of giving more to Nigeria economically, in addition to their intrinsic value. In fact one of the foremost things that got Nigeria noticed is the art works. Fagg (1990:19) substantiates that Nigerian sculpture, through the historical accident of the Benin Expedition of 1897, may be said to have provided the catalyst which made easy penetration of the European universe of art by ideas and inspirations from the 'primitive' world, with incalculable effect in the experimental beginnings of modern art. Fagg

also affirmed that it was only in the spring of 1897, when some thousands of Benin bronzes arrived in Europe, that African art suddenly acquired a real presence in the civilized world. According to Fagg, (1990:20) "in sheer mass and in richness of ornament, the Benin antiquities dazzled Europe...and a few of them were of superlative quality" It is often said that Europe and American museums are replete with Nigerian art-works.

In year 2000, when Bill Clinton the then American President visited Nigeria, the eulogy he made to Nigeria began with the recognition of art works in literature and music; he mentioned the name of Professor Wole Soyinka and King Sunny Ade. As highly esteemed as scientists are in the plan of government and preferences of intellectuals, politicians and philosophers there was no outstanding scientific achievement that was mentioned by the visitor. Adepegba (1995) assert that wood carving are produced by carvers who are known to be men in the traditional Yoruba setting; it is one of the most prominent and profuse art practices of the Yoruba, which are represented in different gender forms and styles.

Consolidating Nigerian Economy with full Potentials of Art

Art is a powerful resource to empowering the Nigerian economy, giving the fact that, right from time Immemorial, art has been what the Nigerian people practised with ease. Whatever anyone does with ease that has the capability to solve human problems in turn has economic potential. Apart from socio-religious functions, which formed the bedrock of Nigerian art. Art possesses both utilitarian and aesthetic functions. In these areas, some self-motivated Nigerians have excelled nationally and internationally. These successful self-motivated Nigerians served as a litmus test to the fact that, if art is encouraged in every area of our national life, there is the possibility of art enlivening both intra- and international trade.

Nigerian economy ought to derive its strength from multiple sources, instead of shifting from one source to another. For instance, initially agriculture held sway until it was dethroned by crude oil in 1956, when it was found in commercial quantity at Oloibiri town in Bayelsa State. It may sound funny that the resource that art could generate for Nigeria can be more consistent than that of oil; because the geologist could predict when oil is going to be in short supply, but production of art could only be on the increase, as long as the enabling environment is provided and its practice is not obstructed, because all it requires is our culturally enriched intellectual power coupled with emotional sensibility. Timothy (1992:26) attests to the fact that the drive has been to broaden the foreign exchange earnings base through the production of alternative export products and services. He made reference to the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) presently reviewing incentives and guidelines for exporters from Nigeria, and the handicraft business has been identified as noteworthy. He laid emphasis on United Nations' assisted surveys which have identified handicrafts as potential export products. Handicrafts products Include hand-made textiles such as tie-dye and batik and hand-woven textiles. It also include mats, hand-fans, leather-bags, leather-shoes, ivory products and all small art-works that compliments industrial or machine products.

Nigerian sculpture which has been Nigerian first art-seller to the outside world still has the capability to enrich Nigerian economy. Timothy's (1992:27) documentation of the exhibition sponsored and coordinated by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) S.M. Okeke and Sons (Nig.) Ltd. and ICON Limited (Merchant bankers) with the active involvement of the various States Councils of Arts and Culture and the ECOWAS Secretariat, listed the products exhibited which included wood carvings (in ebony mahogany, iroko, ooma, etc.), human figures (full or bust), animal and bust carvings. It also includes other sundry carvings which included pendants, serving

spoons, trays, statues, Sango staff, twins images (*ere ibeji*), masks, (*ayo*) game, boxes, walking sticks, royal stools, support columns, chairs and tables, wall plaques and paper knives. Other items exhibited included ivory carvings of masks, bangles, earrings, whole carved tusks, calabash carvings of lamp shades and various animals. There were also coconut shell carvings of saucers, ashtrays with stands, necklaces and belts, and kernel shell carvings of rings (with personalized initials or other symbols). The exhibition also included leather crafts exhibited products from hides and skins (including snake and crocodile skin), talking drums with wood and fibre frames.

Textile materials exhibited included the hand-woven *Akwete* and *Aso-oke* cloth, blankets (Akwete and camel hair), tie-dye (*adire*), batik, tablecloths, napkins, and wall pieces. Various mosaics in stone, glass and sand, and coral beads. Pottery items included mugs, jugs, plates, flower vases, water pots, and paintings depicting different styles. The exhibition included bronze and brass works. Nigeria also has economic potential in the area of performing arts: theatres, music, films, cultural dances and acrobatic displays. The international recognition given to some Nigerian artists and artistes attests to this fact. It is on record that Nigeria produced some of the foremost known comedians in Africa; they include Moses Olaiya, popularly known as "Baba Sala" and Babatunde Omidina, also known as "Baba Suwe". There are other notable artistes, even in the music industry, whose productions can become commodities for earning foreign exchange for Nigeria.

Also, two- and three-dimensional arts such as drawings, paintings, graphics, textiles, ceramics, and sculpture have the potential to boost the Nigerian economy. The way to achieve this is to ensure that the artworks are rich in artistic traditions of Nigeria, because no artworks attract foreigners like those ones which are infused with elements and characteristics of Nigerian culture and traditions. Bruce Onabrakpeya, with Urhobo traditions, explored this method in his art pieces, and the practice earned him global recognition.

Conclusion

This study has examined the epistemic discourse of poverty alleviation in modern Nigeria. The discourse reflects the disposition of hard work and dignity of labour among traditional African Yoruba men and women, as well as their sources of labour required for economic activities, particularly in their various professions, most importantly in the agricultural sector. The study similarly informs us that for poverty to be alleviated modern day Nigeria youths must cultivate the attitude of hard work and traditional system of establishing professions. The work further explains that poverty is a condition of low income; poverty is a condition of low income, inability to provide basic needs of life such as food, clothing and shelter. It is a situation in an economy where there is an inadequate level of income and consumption, resulting in insufficient necessities of life such as health care, housing, adequate nutrition, adequate clothing, etc.

The World Bank referred to poverty as an economic situation where a household income is insufficient to meet the minimum nutritional needs for growth and long-term survival. It is a vicious circle of multiple adverse circumstances that limit the choices of the poor. It takes the grace of God for people in this category to experience a change or improvement from one generation to the next. The World Bank Development Report (2002) identified that over 65% of the world's population live in absolute poverty. This phenomenon is rampant among third-world countries like Korea, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria, etc. In these countries, most citizens are unable to adequately provide themselves with the basic needs of life like food, shelter, clothing, education, etc. This occurs especially, when people are not engaged in any meaningful economic activity.

Recommendation

Having considered some causes of poverty in Nigeria, the basic and challenging question becomes whether or not there should be any way out. Since the problem of poverty syndrome is both internal and man-made, what roles should Nigerians play to alleviate poverty? It is not out of place to suggest possible solution to the problem of poverty of poverty in Nigeria can be achieved if our governments at all levels invest more on agricultural sector. This paper finds that the agricultural sector is still major despite the impact of the oil sector because it provides employment opportunities for the teeming population, eradicates poverty and contributes to the growth of the economy.

In line with the above point, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2002) reports that the agricultural sector contributes to employment, food production, foreign exchange earnings and raw material supply for industries as individual inputs. Also, it shall be a welcome development if the necessary authorities and all people in positions of trust will begin to enforce policies in society that support the traditional African Yoruba System of establishing professions. In the family, parents as well as adults should try to revitalize the virtues of the traditional African Yoruba way of life, which encourage hard work and shun laziness, fraud, and dishonesty in modern Nigerian society.

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