

## IGI WÓRÓKÓ: SATIRISING EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is the bedrock of any development. It is the best legacy for a future generation of any country. The education sector of Nigeria presently has suffered a major setback; there is no progress as far as the novelist is concerned thereby satirising education and development. The Mirror Image Approach of the Sociology of Literature is employed to analyse the novel Igi Wórókó. It is established that Yorùbá novelist are conversant and observes the decadence in the education and development of this country, thereby presenting it and calling for an education summit that will address the retrogressions happening in the sector.*

**Keywords:** Education, Development, Mirror Image Approach, Satire, Decadence.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is very important to all and sundry. It is the bedrock of development of a society. Igbuzor(2006) stated that education is a human right that should be accorded to all human beings solely by reason of being human. The present crisis in the education sector motivated the writing of this paper by specifically assessing the Nigerian educational development as it appears during the colonial era and now. Education is the best legacy that parents can give their children. There will be no milestone development without good educational foundation and funding especially now that the education sector of the economy is facing great challenges. Adéjùmó (1999:230) posited that literary artists are the voices of the people and their major function is to depict the society as it is and if there is any problem in the society, they should try to find solutions. Láwuyì Ògúnníran actually depicts the education sector of Nigeria in the novel *`igi wórókó'*(*crooked stick*) Undoubtedly, Nigeria had witnessed a series of educational system since independence, there was a lot of ills and shortcomings in Nigeria educational system as it was based on the British educational system which did not pave way for yearning needs, interests and aspirations of Nigerian society. This gave birth to 1969 curriculum conference that focused on Nigerian children in Nigerian society with National policies on Education in 1977, 1981; 1998 and 2004 respectively. (FRN, 1977,1981; 1998 and 2004), all with the prime purpose of improving the quality of Nigerian Education. (Adeyemi B.A. et al,

2012) After Nigeria's independence in 1960, there was a realisation that the educational system, our colonial master left us with needed critical re-examination of the worth; content, objectives, relevance, methods, administration and evaluation. Uchegbu C.N et al (2009) posited that this led to the curriculum conference led by the National Educational Research Council (NERC) where it was recommended that the National policy on education (1997) and the revised policies 1981 and 2004 should be based. Against this background of national aspirations, a new education system: 6-3-3-4 emerged and was implemented in 1982 (Uchegbu C. N et al, 2009).

However, after the adoption of the laudable education system, government at all levels failed to implement it. The novelist has fully assesses and examines how government at all level is implementing this education policy thereby writing the novel *igi wórókó*(crooked stick).

The major aim of the 6-3-3-4 educational system is to introduce vocational and skill acquisition to student at secondary school level to help in developing Nigeria National Development positively and if well implemented, there would be great changes in the sector.

### 1.1 AN OVRVIEW OF SATIRE

Hight. G. (1962:3) defines satire as a form of art of literature. It pictures real men and women often in lurid colours but always with unforgettable clarity. While Phillips Encyclopaedia of Literature (2003) defines Satire as a literary genre in which foibles and institutions are mocked, ridiculed and parodied, Robert Harris (2004:1) says accordingly, the best definition of satire should be formulated from a combination of its correctives intent and its literary method of execution. Therefore, a reasonable definition of satire is "a literary manner which blends critical attitudes with humour and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved" Satire has been used extensively to order the behaviour of people in the society. In ancient times, there were neither written laws, nor prisons in the modern sense to sanction and punish law breakers. People were expected to respect the rights of individual in their society and conduct themselves in a way that would promote peace and brotherhood. Hence, those who committed major crimes faced automatic physical torture ranging from ritual execution to ostracism or being sold into slavery. Minor offenders like thieves, adulterers, liars, domineering housewives and lazy husbands are singled out for ritual attack. Therefore, satire is a manner of ridiculing, decrying and denouncing the anti-social behaviour of people in a bid to improve and amend their likes in the community.

The satirist is not an easy man to live with. He is more conscious of the follies and vices of his fellow and he cannot stop himself from showing that he is. Like a preacher, he seeks to persuade and convince, but his position in relation to those he addresses is more delicate and more difficult than that of a preacher. The latter seeks primarily to make his hearers accept virtues while the former must make his audience agree with him in identifying and condemning the behaviour he regards as vicious. The satirist may seem to condemn too easily, even to enjoy doing it. He asks us to admire the skills with which he uses the weapons to recognise him as an artist and satire as an art. Ògúnrání, O. (1987:4)

Arthur Pollard (1970:2) expresses the magnitude of the relevance of satire to the society in the following words:

*Satirist may enjoy his talent and hope that the audience will enjoy it too; the satirist normally allows a more serious intent. The true end of satire is the amendment of the vices and the other end reformation.*

Láwuyì Ògúnníran uses the novel *Igi Wórókó* to satirize the socio-political situation of Nigeria which he referred to as Oko Lóngé. Satire is acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In our understanding of the society, literature and sociology complement each other. The study employs mirror image approach under the theory of sociology of literature which is an attempt to understand the inter-relationship between literature and society. It postulates that a work of art does not exist in isolation and should not be studied as such.

This is because works of art are not independent of their society. Literature is language in action and language with which a work of art is composed is the property of the society. The French Philosopher Louis de Bonald (1755- 1840), one of the proponents of this approach believes that literature depicts the on-going in the society. Bonald was one of the first writers to argue that through a careful reading of any nation's literature, one could tell what his people had been. Ritzer (1996; 11).

The approach conceives a literary work as an attempt to depict events and transform the fictional world of literature to specific social meanings. Lowenthal (1957;19) expresses what the approach expects of a literary critic. It is the task of the sociologist of literature to relate the experience of the writer's imaginary character and situation to the historical climate from which they derive. He has to transform the private equation of themes and stylistics means into social equation. Adéòsun (2005) explained that the relationship between literature and the society can never end. This is because the novelist will always manifest his own ideology about the society in his novel. The prevalent socio-political, religious and economic factors of the novelist's time determine largely the content of his work. His novel and the influence of the society on him have to be considered together for a critical analysis of his work Táíwò (2013)

In sociology of literature, the artist does not merely reflect. Reflections are not end; it is a means to achieving a definite end. Yoruba novelist/playwright reflects their society in their works. This approach shall reveal Láwuyì Ògúnníran's view on the society. The concepts of the mirror image approach adopted for this paper are reflection of social issues like education and development. The theory provides the tools for analysing *Igi wórókó* because the text is all about Nigerian education and development.

## 1.3 About the Novel of Ògúnníran.

The novel is all about the happenings in the socio-political life of a country called Oko Lóngé. Oko Lóngé, formerly under the colonial government has regained her independence but it turned the situations of the country to the worst, both economically and educationally.

Elders Ayégbókíkí, Óbìdíke and Aámúsà are three retired journalist who witnessed the good old time. They narrate their experiences of the old time and compare it to the present situation in the country. These three elders are worried about the present situation of Oko Lóngé. During the colonial era, teachers were dedicated, disciplined and committed but it is no more so now.

The remote and immediate cause of this bad situation could not be traced to anybody or group, because all levels of society are affected. Everybody contributed to the fallen standard of education in Oko Lóngé.

A national summit or conference was held to resolve and find lasting solutions to the problems in Oko Lóngé. A communiqué is issued and forwarded to the government on the strong determination that everybody would contribute his /her own quota towards the reformation and transformation of their country. The novel was written in 1998 when the education sector has just started declining.

## 2.0 SATIRISING EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Social and political issues are the favourite and pre-eminent topics of satire. Most satirists are deeply involved in social and political issues, hence, some great satirist, have been known to antagonize the established government. The satirist poets, novelists or playwrights, write political and social satires to attack specific political and social evils and propose or at least imply that would not endure such evils. In many of the African satires, politicians and the ruling class are portrayed as exploiters of the masses and plunderers of the national wealth. They are often presented as people who hardly strive for cultural values that are higher than money or other material things.

Ògúnníran's satire echoes much the same view as those expressed by other satirists in Africa. He is sceptical of the political leadership and happenings in Nigeria in all spheres. His satire ridicules, mocks and laughs at those who call themselves leaders but lack the qualities of sincere leadership. *Igi Wórókó* is a reflection of the socio-political realities of a country called 'Okò Lónḡé' - a name given to Nigeria by the satirist. Nigeria as a country is facing the challenges of modern (western) civilisation. The cardinal satirical situation is the dilemma in the education sector.

Ògúnníran satirises the quality of education students are receiving today by comparing the colonial era to the present political dispensation when he writes the novel.

*Ilé èkó girama kíl se èyí tí omọ̀ lè wò  
lái yege idánwò àbáwọ̀lé, wón tún nílátí  
fí òrò wá a lenu wò láti mọ̀ bí irú omọ̀  
bèè yóo lè yẹ ní ẹnì tí wón yòò gbà wọ̀lé*

*A ward cannot secure admission to  
secondary school without passing  
the entrance examination. An interview  
will also be conducted to know the worth  
of the student. Ògúnníran (1998:22).*

This is not so in Nigeria again as there are many private secondary schools that will admit wards even without them passing the entrance exams. The decadence in the primary and secondary school education was brought about by the proliferation in the establishment of private schools which are not really following the laid down curriculum and policy thereby impeding the development of this country forgetting the Yorùbá proverbs that says 'eyin ló n dákùkọ' meaning "it is the egg that transform to cock" which shows a condition precedent that the young shall surely grow to become the leaders of tomorrow.

The novelist satirizes fallen standard of education in Nigeria. He condemns the non-challant attitude of education officers on inspection to schools, by comparing them to the officers working during the colonial era.

*Aláṣẹ ilé-ìwé kò sàì má bẹ àwọn ilé-ìwé  
tí ó wà lábẹ̀ àkóso rẹ̀ wò. A máa tọ́pín  
iṣẹ̀ àwọn olùkọ̀, àti láti mọ̀ àwọn ohun tí  
ilé-ìwé' wón se aláìní àti láti ṣàyèwò ijáfáfá  
àti àìjáfáfá lenu iṣẹ̀ rẹ̀. Òtító àti òdodo ni àwọn  
olùbẹ̀wò fí n ṣiṣẹ̀ wón, kò sí àbètélẹ̀ fífún-ni  
tàbí gbígbà lówó ẹnì.....*

*The education inspector does not fail to visit schools under his supervision. He supervises the works of the teachers and knows the needs of the various schools and also monitors the steadfastness and non-challant teachers. The supervisors works in truth and honesty. Bribery is not allowed at all.*

*Ogunniran( 1998:20)*

He tries to compare education in the olden days to what obtainable at present. There is no discipline among the teachers and even the students. Education inspectors can be bribed to cover up some little lapses on the part of the teachers or the whole school. There is corruption in the whole polity.

Satire is always acutely conscious of the indifference between what things are and what they ought to be. The satirist shows the disparity between the male teachers of the colonial era and the male teachers of the democracy era.

He satirizes the quality of education that students are receiving today. The act of writing petition or instigating students against the government; use of charms or hired killer to assassinate one's boss, destruction of property, indiscipline among students and teachers; indecent dressing among students and teachers, cultism in the nation's universities are among the flaws the novelist notices in the education system of Nigeria.

*Ní yunifásítì ìgbà náà kò sí ohun tí jé  
 ẹgbé òkùnkùn tàbí ẹgbé awo. Ta ni yòò  
 mú un débè? Akékòṣò kí rí olúkó fín.  
 Olúkó kí tẹná àrífín. Olúkó kí wẹwù bí  
 ọmọ ijẹkà tàbí ọmọ agúnbẹ, bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni akékòṣò  
 kí wọṣọ bí ọmọ tí kò lasuusi.*

*There was no cultism in the university  
 then or secret cult. Nobody dares establish  
 such. Students do not disrespect teachers.  
 A teacher does not do a thing of disrespect.  
 A teacher will never dress like a tout and also the student.*

*Oguniran (1998:24).*

*Kò sí rògbòdìyàn ní ilé-ìwé yunifásítí rí.*

*Kí ni ìbá fàá?.....?  
 Kò sí pé olúkó okùnrin ní sọ fún akékòṣò obìnrin pé  
 bí kò bá gba ọrẹ fún òun, òun kò ní jé kí ó páàsì.  
 There was no chaos in the universities.  
 What would have caused it.....?  
 Male teachers dare not threaten a female  
 student to date him before she can pass.....*

*Ogunniran (1998: 22-23).*

It is not so in the present educational system of the country especially in our nation's universities, male teachers harass and date female student freely. Nobody is checkmating them, even, in our secondary schools; female students are having intimate relationship with male teachers; the integrity in teaching job is minute as many male teachers have soiled the white garment with red oil.

The best satire does not seek to do harm or damage by its ridicule unless we speak of damage to the structure or vices but rather, it seeks to create a shock or recognition and to make vices repulsive so that they will be expunged from the person or society under attack of from person or society intended to benefit by the attack (regardless of who is the immediate object of the attack) whenever possible this shock of recognition is to be conveyed through laughter or unit. Harris (2004)

Ogúnníran makes the citizens of Oko Lónḡé to recognise the vices in the society especially in the education sector and swirl one of them up to ask for the root cause of the whole matter.

*Alàgbà bí oko Lónḡé bá láyò tó báyií  
nígbà kan rí, tí àwọn ènìyàn n fì ìgbádùn  
ṣayò tí ayé sù gbèḡemuke fún wọn, kí  
ló wá dé tí ayé fì polúkúrúmusu lÓko  
Lónḡé òhun báyií?*

*The elderly one, if there has been peace  
and tranquillity in this community,  
where people are enjoying and living  
At ease, what has made things fall apart  
now in Oko Lónḡé?*

Ogúnníran (1998:29)

Ogúnníran attributed the source of the problems to the thirst for independence. It was after the Independence that the politicians took over and disrupted all the laid-down rules and plans of the colonial master which has been working for Nigeria. He said this through Elder Ayégbókíkí.

He says:

*Ṣùgbòṅ ní ti idàgbàsókè ilú, kò wú ni lórí rara, a gbé gbogbo àwọn tí wọn pe ra wọn lólósèlú  
nígbà tuntun yìí sóri iwòṅ, wọn kò tẹ wòṅ.....Ètanú òsèlú tí wòṅ n ló sí àwọn tó fún wòṅ  
lómìnira ni wòṅ kò jáwó nínú rẹ lẹyìn tí àwọn onítòhún ti lọ tán .Wòṅ gbé e wòṅú ijòba.*

*But the community development is not encouraging at all,  
If you weigh our politician, they could not make any difference. They were acting at variance  
with the colonial masters and continued in it after they have gone. It has been introduced into  
governance.*

Ogúnníran (1998:12)

Concerning the issue of development, it is not encouraging at all, it has a number of striking resemblance to the basic ethical view point of religion. Both satire and religion believe strongly in the fallen nature of man and that right conduct is not possible for a man without a guide. That is why Ogúnníran condemns the new curriculum set up by the government of Oko Lónḡé to make the teaching of Religious Studies an elective subject for students.

*Nínú àgbékalè ètò èkó tuntun yìí, èkó nípa èsìn kò pọ́n dandan fún akékòò, èni bá fẹ́ ló lè kó  
ọ.....Lójú tiwòṅ, èkó nípa èsìn kò ní nńkan se pèlú idàgbàsókè tí wòṅ lè fójú rí nípa orílè-  
èdè, bí ó tilẹ́ jẹ́ pé, idàgbàsókè tí èsìn n kó nípa ti èmi ló n tún iwà akékòò se.*

*In this new educational system, Religious Studies is not  
Compulsory, it is optional.....To them, studying religion  
does not have anything to do with visible growth and*

*improvement of a country, despite that it has positive effects on students morally.*

*(Ogunniran (1998:36)*

It is not only religious studies that is optional but also Yoruba language. This has really affected the good character (Ìwà ọmọlúàbí) that Yorùbá people are known for. Most of the student in our nation's tertiary institution does not have respect for elders. All the Yorùbá culture written and expounded in some textbook has been neglected.

The former president, Olúségún Ọbásanjó while delivering a convocation lecture Education and Development at the University of Nigeria Convocation ceremony in the year 2012 commented on the relevance of education by saying "for Nigeria education to become more relevant to our development process, it must train the individual for a better appreciation of his own cultural traditions whilst at the same time equipping him with the ability to absorb new ideas", Ọgúnńíran canvasses that the glory of education should be restored and the entire situation of Oko Lónǵé be changed. He says, it is better for the present government to leave them in the way they were during the colonial period. He says this though Mr Ojokoro who also contributes to the discussion.

*Ó tún dánu dúró diẹ ó gbórí sókè, ó wò  
àyíká. Ó pòwe kan..... Ọ̀d̀s̀à, bód̀ le gb̀emí  
Gbogbo wọn parí ọ̀we náà ----- Semí bó o ti bá mi*

*He keeps quiet for some time. He lifts his head up.  
He looks round. He says a proverb-----  
Idol, if you cannot benefit me, everybody ends the  
proverb make me as you met me.*

*Ogunniran (1998:65)*

Also, speaking on the socio-political situations of the country, the novelist drops a satirical bomb on the situation of Oko Lónǵé. The satirical bomb is dropped on Nigeria where all things are going wrong. 'The rat is arresting the cat on the way; it cannot be possible, it is in Nigeria that we see the illiterate controlling literate. It is in our country that impossibility is possible. The satirist is mirroring the happenings in Nigeria where there is enough oil product and yet suffers from fuel scarcity. All the happenings in the country is what the satirist highlighted. All things have gone wrong and nothing has been done to effect a change or reform our nation.

*Orí padà, ó ń didí.....  
Èkúté ń dá ológbò lónà  
Akátá ń sọdẹ erin  
Oúnjẹ ń bẹ nílẹ, ebi ń pará ilé*

*The head is changing to the tail  
The rat is arresting the cat on the way. Food is  
at home, yet people are suffering from hunger*

*Ogunniran (1998:1)*

The satirist makes us to understand that there is corruption at all levels in Nigeria but it is only the masses who suffer, when a governor or minister is found guilty of corruption charges, he/she may be asked to repay some amount of money whereas a poor man may be sentenced to life imprisonments for stealing a ram. We have many mineral resources like petroleum products but suffer scarcity all the time in Nigeria.

Ògúnníran at the long run in the novel call for a summit on the way forward on education and development in Oko Lónḡé. This was revealed through Mr Ojokoro – the chairman of union of Journalists who led the summit. He speaks further:

*Ìdí náà ní sókí, ní bí ọ̀rọ̀ ẹ̀kọ́ tíí jé  
 ipinlẹ̀ ọ̀go, agbára àti idàgbàsókè  
 Orílẹ̀-èdè se ń rí ní oko Lónḡé yì  
 àti ibíkùbìí tó ń bí -----*

*The summary of the whole thing is on how  
 education which is the foundation ,glory, power and  
 development of Oko Lónḡé as a nation is and the bad  
 outcome of it.....*

Ògúnníran (1998:64)

It was after the summit that the blame of the condition of Oko Lónḡé is put on all and sundry, and they all agreed to bring positive changes to the education sector of the country.

## 2.1 CONCLUSION

On a strong note, the novel's title *Igi wọ̀rọ̀kọ́* is derived from a Yoruba proverb 'igi wọ̀rọ̀kọ́ tí ń daná rú, ẹ̀ni burúkú tí í ba ilé jé'

meaning "crooked stick that disrupts the fire, a bad person that destroys the family house" which describes someone who is a problem within a group of people i.e the new education policy is the crooked stick that is disrupting the peace of Oko Lónḡé. Even the name of the country Oko Lónḡé is satirical, the full Yoruba proverb says "Ewu wà lóko Lónḡé, Lónḡé fúnrarẹ̀ ewu ni" meaning "There is danger in the farm of Lónḡé, Lónḡé himself is dangerous. It is used to warn of a danger ahead in one's proposed undertaking. It is chosen to ridicule a country that is attributing all her problems to the colonial master even when she herself is dangerous and full of filthiness.

What the novelist wants is for a national summit to be conducted in the education sector to amend and adjust all the anomalies in the sector and that everybody( parents) should contribute his/her own quota towards the development of the education sector of the country.

As a watchdog of his society, Ògúnníran is a concerned observer of the corruption, oppression, hypocrisy, injustice and other absurdities in his society. He is not a pessimistic satirists who hates people and believe that the entire world is doomed to eternal ruin, and hence, writes to punish but he is more of a philanthropist who like people but think that they are blind and gullible. He writes satire not to repeal but to cure them of their ignorance. He wages war against evils in the society and his contribution is in fact relevant to our contemporary society in Nigeria. Nigerian government needs to understand that education is the only investment with a sure interest.



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