

# Overview of Hausa Cultural, Societal and Linguistic Affinity in The Educational Attainment of Nigerian Child

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## Abstract

Education is the key to one's brighter future. Without it, a person is reduced to a mere common being, positioned in the lower of the low in the society. The process of acquiring education can be in different forms and at different stages, through the help of certain functional agencies in the society. The more educated a nation's populace is, the better position it gains in the worldview. It is in recognition of all these that the paper tries to examine such vital roles as played by the society, culture and language, in general, towards effective educational attainment, through cultural and linguistic affinity. The paper is in two folds; first, the cultural overview of the Hausa history and culture; and then, the child's educational attainment in relation to his culture, society and language.

**Keywords:** Hausa cultural, Linguistic Affinity, Educational, Nigerian

## A. Introduction

The Hausas are people who use Hausa language as their primary means of communication. It is not necessary to regard any place where the Hausa people settle as Hausaland. For instance, there are many Hausa communities in some African countries such as Ghana, Niger Republic, Senegal, Cameroon, and Sudan. However, these places may not be regarded as Hausaland. This is because the Hausas settling there are not many and they are not the founders of these places. Some of them only migrated to these places on the bases of trade and other factors.

In simple terms, we can say that Hausa land comprises of places like Kano, Daura, Rano, Birum, Zazzau, Zamfara, Sakkwato, Kebbi, and Gobir. These are the places where most of the Hausa people could be found; and Hausa is the main and most important language of interaction in their day-to-day life. The coming of Usman Dan Fodio and his **Jihad** in the nineteenth century put Hausaland under the flag bearership of Islam.

It was at the beginning of the **jihad** that the knowledge of reading and writing in **ajami** script was introduced. Before this period the Hausa people had no records pertaining to their history except some legends and oral stories that were inherited from ancestors.

The most prominent and acceptable version of the history of the Hausas is that of Bayajidda. History has it that Bayajidda originated from a place called Baghdad. He was a prince who decided to flee from home as a result of an attack on his people. He fled with many of his followers, with no specific destination in mind. It was on his way that he reached Maiduguri, in the present Borno State. On his arrival, when the Mai of Borno saw his followers and their might, he established a good relationship with him and eventually gave him his daughter's hand in marriage. Gradually, Bayajidda's followers came under the leadership of the Mai of Borno. That made Bayajidda to develop cold feet, because he was afraid that the emir wanted to kill him. As a result, he decided to move further. This movement took him to Daura.

The time Bayajidda arrived Daura, the place was been ruled by a queen called Daurama. At the same time, the people of Daura were suffering from acute shortage of drinking water. Drinking water obtainable only once weekly, on Fridays. This was because there was a snake called sarki inside the only well they had in the town that was preventing them from obtaining water on any other day.

It was in this situation that Bayajidda arrived Daura very late, one certain night. He met an old woman called Ayyana who gave him a container, which he used in fetching enough water to drink. In the process, he killed the snake thereby making him a hero in the land.

In the end, Bayajidda's heroism paid him off as the queen agreed to marry him and their marriage produced what is today, known as Hausa kingdom. However, this does not mean that Bayajidda is the founder of the Hausa people, rather the kingdom of the Hausa traditional rulership.

## B. The Cultural Setting of The Hausa People

In simple terms, one can say that culture is the general/entire way of human life, the way people take to run their day-to-day life. Culture varies from people to people. Every ethnic group have their traditional and modern culture. The traditional culture is that which is inherited from ancestors, and is fixed; while the modern culture is that which is found as a result of mixture with other people, and this is not fixed, thus it can be changed and even done away with.

Hausas are people who love and cherish their traditional culture, most especially pertaining to clothing, food, shelter, and issues relating to marriage, birth, death, and interactions between relations, friends, and leaders. So also issues of occupations, trading, and the search of knowledge. Every culture is dynamic. It changes with the trend of the time and the life of the people who have it. This is because the life of the people changes with time, and when this happens, the culture also changes. Before the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804, the entire Hausaland was scattered in different towns. Each town had wider areas comprising smaller towns that were under its control serving as the central point of government.

The traditional leadership of the Hausa people started from household to household. This is because right from the beginning, the Hausas started as household by household. There was a household head in each of these households living with his children and relations. These-children and relations were to him as his peasants. This was because as at that time there was nothing like emir (**Sarki**). If there was any demand or chaos that arose, he was the arbitrator. Things that pertained to food and marriage, he was the one to take all the responsibilities.

This was how the traditional political system of the Hausa people started. Neither there was nothing like an emir nor was there anything like the police force. As time went by, population became higher, to the point that one could not exercise powers over another's household. Hence, the need for a single leader who would combine all the households and rule them arose. This was just like a small village with a village head (**Dagaci**) controlling it, and with each household head as ward head (**Mai Unguwa**). When the number of the wards increased, the people started getting attackers/raiders from various places. As such, all these wards came together and selected one person who would serve as their leader (**sarki**) whose leadership embraced all the wards.

**Sarki** (emir) is the overall leader in the hierarchical setting of the Hausa political set up. As the overall leader, he was the one to execute any verdict in his territory. He is the one to lead his people to a warfront and to protect them from any raid or ambush. The immediate duty of the emir is execution of leadership among his people.

Traditionally, in the initial setting of the Hausa political setup, certain things are considered in the appointment of an emir/king in the Hausa land. These are qualities that the king makers look at before making any appointment. The person to be appointed has to be intelligent, generous and very brave. Moreso, he has to be one who is close the spirit they worshiped (**Tsumburura**).

**Waziri** is the second in command to **sarki**. All his duties are that of the **sarki**. However, he can only execute them when the **sarki** is away for some official duty and their like, e.g. touring of his empire. In other words, **Waziri** is the deputy of **Sarki**, the next to him (**sarki**) who acts in his absence. The duties of **mai unguwa** is the one taking care of the problems of the people residing in his ward. He takes care of all their problems, socially. If the problems are beyond his powers, he then hand them

over to the village head (**dagaci**). It is also the duty of **mai Unguwa** to collect tax from of his people.

Marriage is regarded as a union of man and woman in wedlock; a lifetime contract; a legal relationship between spouses; a legally recognized relationship, established by a civil or religious ceremony, between two people who intend to live together as sexual and domestic partners. In the Hausa cultural set up, there are different ways and activities in which the Hausa people follow before a marriage is contracted. These include courtship (*neman aure*) and the ceremony (*biki*), among others.

In Hausa land, the birth of a new baby is received with pomp and pageantry. A householder start to make hectic preparation as soon as he knows about the impending birth of a new baby. He buys, ram enough foodstuff and a sack of kolanuts and sweets. Immediately after the birth of the new baby, *UngwarZoma*, a traditional midwife serves the umbilical cord, washed the child three times a day and presses the wound where the unbilical cord has been served with hot water until it heals. *Kunun kanwa*, a medicinal gruel is prepared for the baby's mother. This she takes everyday. Also, the women takes hot bath three times a day for forty days.

According to Madauci et al, 'a woman who gave birth, begins to drink highly spiced gruel unto which some potash is added. She also starts her maternity hot bath morning and evening for the next forty days, using hot water. A large earthenware basin, kept in the local bathroom is filled with the hot water. Then a bunch of leaves and small branches of the 'chediya' or the 'runhu' tree is pouring the water over the body of the woman until all the water in the basin is finished.

### The Consideration for Naming a Child

In Hausa tradition, there are various ways and situations in which the naming of a child is based. They range from the religious to the season of the year. **Religious:** A child could be named after the prophets, some angels and the companions of the prophets in Islam. In fact, there is no Hausa child without a religious name. Example of these names are:

Name	Christian Equivalent
1. Muhammad	-
2. Yusuf	Joseph
3. Dawud	David
4. Isa	Jesus
5. Usman	Othman
6. Musa	Moses
7. Zubairu	-
8. Hamza	-
9. Abubakar	-
10. Ibrahim	Abram
11. Amina	-
12. Maryam	Mary
13. Khadija	-
14. Rukayya	-
15. Zainab	-
16. Adamu	Adam
17. Sulaiman	Solomon
18. Abdullahi	-

Time	Male	Female
1. The height of raining season	Aruwa	Marka
2. Fasting period	Dan- azumi	Azumi
3. Sallah day	Sallah	Tasallah
4. Hamatern	Bari	Dari
5. Ed-el kabir	Alhaji	Hajiya
6. Beans harvest	Ciwake	Ciwake

According to Ibrahim Madauci, Yahaya Isa and Bello Dauda in their book Hausa custom, some Islamic names have local or traditional equivalents and they give examples as following:

Islamic Names	Traditional Equivalent
1. Adamu	Ado
2. Abubakar	Garba/Abu/Buka/Saduki
3. Muhammadu	Inuwa
4. Ibrahim	Ibro
5. Musa	Kallamu
6. Umar	Sanda
7. Idris	Idi
8. Usman	Shedhu
9. Yusuf	Nadabo
10. Aliyu	Sadauki/Ali

The three authors have observed that most people with the name Mohammed 'have a second name which tends to overshadow the actual name: 'they give the following examples of such names:

1. Lawal	10. Nuhu
2. Hasunu	11. Inuwa
3. Kabir	12. Tukur
4. Dini	13. Bello
5. Bara'u	14. Nasir
6. Mamman	15. Rabi'u
7. Sani	16. Mustapha
8. Sabi'u	17. Salau
9. Amina	

## Traditional Festivals of The Hausa People

### Sallah Festival

The Eid- El-Fitri otherwise known as Karamar Sallah is celebrated all over the Muslim world, Hausa land, inclusive. The occasion comes up at the end of the fasting of the month of Ramadan following the sighting of the new moon of Shauwal on the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> of the said Ramadan.

As soon as the new moon is sighted, the first day of shawal automatically becomes the Sallah day. However, Eld-Elkabir comes up on the 10<sup>th</sup> is celebrated world wide also. The Sallah ceremonies start by way of purchasing ne traditional attires especially for children and women as well as buying enough food stuffs to be cooked as shared among members of the family and the neighborhood.

On the Sallah day, in the morning, especially dishes like tuwo da miyashinkafa da miyar dage-dage etc. are prepared by the qwoment, men and children dress in their special Sallah attire and troop to the praying ground prayers are offered. In the case of Eid-Elkabir (Sallah Baba or Babbar Sallah), the emir has to slaughter his ram before leaving the praying ground, signifying that everybody can

return home and slaughter his own animal (ram, goat, cow or camel). The Sallah celebration continue when the emir and his subordinate officers stage what is called Jahi (the payment of homage to the emir by the emir's subordinate officers). The emir's subordinate like the district heads, the village heads each of the subordinate officer raises his fist and say ranaka-yadade, Allah ya ja Zamaninka. The emir responds by raising his fist in acknowledgement. After this, the emir delivering his Sallah speech in which he call on his subject to be law abiding and kive in peace and harmony Sallah continues the following day with exchange of gifts and visit between relatives, friends and well-wishers.

### **Some Traditional Occupations of The Hausa People**

#### **Smithing (Kira)**

Smithing (Kira) is the act of making article with metal. This iron work is carried out in a place called smithy. The hausa called smithy 'makera.'

#### **Features of a Smithy**

In a smithy, the most important took as the anvil or 'Uwar makera.' This is a tool with a flat head and long tail, that is riven into the ground. The blacksmith cover the iron into different article using the flat head of the anvil. The back smith uses a special hammer called 'masaba' iron is burnt in a special fire smouldered with bellows made of animal skin and the name of tjis instrument in Hausa is Zuga-Zugi. The blacksmith, uses anuinstrument called 'kurfi' to cut the metals while modashi' used to make holes in woods. 'matson' is used to punch holes in the metals. The blacksmith produces knives, machetes, axes, harvesters spears and other metallic articles.

#### **Potting (Ginin tukunya)**

This is one of the most important traditional Hausa occupations. It is hereditary, the porters produce article using clay. Articles such as Tukunya (pot, randa (large pot for storing water), tulu (also for storing and cooling water), kula (or cooker) and kasko or the traditional fireplace. To make a pot the potter gets the required quantity of clay and a fine powder of loamy soil which he mixes with water into a sticky mass. He then ibstains a frame in the form of an old neckless pot. Then the potter cleans the place on which he plants to build his new pot. The new is pot then build over the frame until when he reaches the stage where the proposed neck of the new frame is supposed to be. At this stage he stop so that the frame can be safely removed. The new pot is then smoothen using apiece of calabash and by springkling some drops of water. After drying the pot in the sun the old frame is removed from the new pot. Then the neck of the pot is build and the whole pot is put in sun dry completely. The next thing is for the potter to burn the pot in fire after which he inspects the pots separating those with cracks from the good ones. Those once with crack can be mended using powered fruits of Jerusalem thorn to fill in the cracks.

#### **Dying (Rini)**

Dying is carried out in a dye-pit which is six to nine feet deep. The pit which is dug on a raised ground has its walks and bottom plastered with 'karsi' which is a special traditional cement made from the sediment of a dye-pit. The plastering of the inside of the dye-pit is done in order to ensure that the dye solution does not seep into the ground. Indigo plants are fermented moderately and then stored in a room later these plants are cut into small pieces with a tool called 'kurada'. Some quantity of wateris put into the pit together with some required quantity of cup indigo plants are added to the umixture in the pit. After three days, burn it pit sediment is added and left in the pit

with the mixture of water and ash for two consecutive days: after every two days the mixture is turned over for not less than five times. The dye can be said to be ready after this.

### **Tanning (Jima)**

Tanning (jima) is the craft of treating hides and skins for leather work. The skin, is first immersed in a mixture of water and ash. Then the hair from the skin is removed with the help of an instrument called 'kartaji' which has two handles, one on each side. It is further softened by immersing it in a solution of a plant called rubi with water. To remove the skin from its bad smell, it is immersed in another solution made up of a mixture of water and powder, obtained from dried leaves of Jerusalem thorn. After this, the skin is finally treated with local cow butter. To give the skin its colours, it is placed into a mixture made up of the powder of the leaves of the plant resembling guinea corn and the sap of the green tamarind fruit, to be ready for use.

### **Formal Education**

Formal education in West Africa generally, if we recall, began when the missionaries came with the aim of spreading their religion i.e. Christianity. Similarly, the formal education started in the mother-tongue when the missionaries put their efforts earnestly, to spread the religion as effectively as possible by teaching people to read the scriptures in their own tongues and to show through the study and use of the African languages that those who spoke these languages were not less than human. According to Aziza (nd) "when the Christian missionaries first came into the country, they recognized that the best and quickest way to spread the Christian religion was to teach people to pray, read and preach the Holy Bible in their own mother-tongues. Consequently, they set about studying these languages, translating the Holy Bible in them". This emphasis on the technical know how of education and the importance attached to it, is extended to the acquisition of Western Education (through culture and language) in Nigeria today.

Considering the most appropriate age at which to introduce children to a formal education programme outside of or in collaboration with the home, Bloom (1968) revealed that; from conception to age four, one develops 40 percent of mature intelligence, from age four to eight, another 30 percent; and after eight, the remaining 30 percent.

More to that, he discovered that two to five years are the children's most creative and intellectual period. He showed that children are "capable of extra-ordinary feats of inductive reasoning if left themselves". This is what he referred to as "a property responsive environment"

Similarly, investigation revealed that the Swiss Psychologist, Jean Piaget, found that;

intelligence emerges from a child's sensory experience with concrete objects which the child can act upon, that language development is essential to increased powers of thinking, that repeated exposure to a thing or an idea in different context contributes to the clarity of comprehension... accelerated learning of abstract concepts without related direct experience may result in symbol without meanings, Elkind (1968:25-80).

The above investigation results show clearly, that knowledge/education acquisition through cultural affinity is a phenomenon of human life.

### **Childhood Education in Nigeria**

The society in which the child lives serves as his first school upon which he acquires his early education. The child is the property of the society in general. This is so because he is regarded as being not only for the parents but the whole community/society. In Nigeria, traditionally,

childhood education was the collective responsibility of the mother, father and the entire community. All significant adults undertake the good upbringing of the child.

The concept of child's educational attainment has evolved through the years. Education is significant to the child especially if acquired within his/her cultural, societal and linguistic circumference. This is because every child needs external help to afford him to become exposed to, and internalize the various structures of thinking and learning to enable him cope with the demands of formal scholarship.

This brings us to the issue of giving the child a solid foundation of education through the aforementioned circles in preparation for the formal one. As stated in a report by the World Bank (1988) on Education in sub-Saharan Africa, what the African (Nigerian inclusive) child needs most on entering formal school is to be given the supportive conditions which will enable him adjust to the new, if not strange, environment and methods of operation of the school. This aim can be achieved by the use of the child's societal affinity in learning processes.

The structure of Nigerian education system (6-3-3-4) recognizes the primary level as the foundation upon which the entire educational system is built. This is where the government, through Nation Policy on Education (1981) accords due status to pre-primary education. This is found in section 2, sub-section 10 of the document. It stipulates the purposes of childhood education to include:

1. Effecting a smoother transition from the home to the school;
2. Preparing the child for the primary level of education;
3. Providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work, on the farms, market, or offices;
4. Inculcating social norms'
5. Inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creative through the exploration of nature, and the local environment;
6. Teaching co-operation and team work;
7. Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes forms etc, through play;
8. Teaching good habits, especially good health habits. It further states in sub-section II that government shall play only supervisory roles through the;
  - a. Encouragement of private effects in providing pre-primary education'
  - b. Making provision in teacher training institutions. For student teachers wanting to specialize in pre-primary education'
  - c. Ensuring that medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment and that to this end will;
    - 1) Develop the orthography of the Nigerian language and
    - 2) Produce textbooks and other instructional materials in Nigerian language'
  - d. Ensure that the main method of teaching of pre-primary institutions will be through play, and that the curriculum of teacher training colleges is appropriately orientated to achieve this;
  - e. Regulate and control operation of pre-primary education as well as ensure that the staff of pre-primary institutions are adequately trained and that essential equipment is provided.

For a better and successful education attainment in Nigeria, the government should, at all times, ensure the process of imparting the refined knowledge to the child. She can do so through some channels like giving mothers proper orientation on how to educate their children at pre-primary stage to monitor the activities of the ministries of education on the basis of making regular inspections to ensure maintenance of standards. This may help in giving the child a better and standardized childhood education that is in conformity with the societal needs.

Refined and sound education is a right to every child. The mind of the child at early stage is just like a photocopying machine for he takes in exactly what he sees or hears. Investigation reveals that the first three years of human life are extremely important because during these years the child has an "insatiable curiosity, a grasp of language and a zest for learning", (Ushie, 2000).

This is concluded by Brurton White's (1973) remarks, that if parents and siblings respond with fluent conversation and warm relationships, the child's cognitive development is quickened.

### **The Role of The Parents on Child Education**

Parents constitute the large part of the society in terms of promoting the child education, whose role and influence can not be quantified. They mould the character and behaviour of the child towards acceptable norms, and educationally they are the determinants on whom the child's faith lies. R.A. Hess and V.C. Shipman (1962) rightly observed this where they say:

Parents can be viewed as a teacher, as a programmer of input, during the pre-school years and that parents from different social class levels will programme or socialize the behaviour of their children in different ways.

A child naturally is born with blank mind, which John Lock a scholar, regarded as "tabular-rasa". At the time he was born the brain is as clean as a slate, only through experiences he learns to acquire ideas and knowledge. This is an indication that he hardly separates his own ideas from that of the environment. He seems to be primarily conscious of double feelings-pleasant and unpleasant. His maturity of determining 'what is' and 'what is not', largely rests on the shoulder of his parents' influence through successful guidance that gives him the faculty of acting to discriminate.

It is, at the same time, the parents in conjunction with other instruments of the society/environment that provide an array of alternative for thought and action which permits the development of the child's ability to discriminate and select the relevant stimuli in the environment, and to make rational choices among the possibilities that the society/environment makes available for him. The significance of the mediating functions of parents and other important figures in the child's experience so far as early education and cultural disadvantage are concerned derives from the fact that the parent-child relationship is part of a large social system. The nature of the interaction between parents and child reflects the positions and circumstances of the family in the community.

The above extract presented an argument that child's capabilities of thinking and doing things is deeply rooted in his relationship to the social and cultural structure in which it occurs. In educating the child it has been discovered that professional skill such as teaching can not yield optimum result without bringing in the parents and the society in general, to gain their support and solicit for their contributions at all times in all ways, as observed by J.S. Farrant (1980) that:

This ensures that the parents get an accurate idea of how their children are getting on and it helps the teacher to clear up with the parents any misunderstandings that there might be.

Generally, in all ramifications in terms of educating the child, parents have a lot to contribute within the range of their capabilities and background. These contributions can be moral, financial and or material.

### **Class Influence of The Parents on The Child's Education**

Parental class, as well as the society of the child, can psychologically be viewed from the aspect of normality and abnormality background. Where normality background consist of the motivational sphere, parental and societal attitudes towards the education and future employment of the child, together with the degree of encouragement which they felt they offered the child towards school work, are all significantly related with IQ and performance. In this respect there is no iota of doubt that the class difference as stated above have a serious impact on the education of the child as rightly expressed by Fraser (1959), who found that parental education and reading habits, income, occupation and living space all related significantly with IQ and school performance.

Thus, with this, one can say that there is a strong relationship between the culture, social class, the environment, as well as the language towards educating the child. And that the contribution of environment can not be neglected for it has a specific meaning for the developing personality and intellect deriving from the specific configurations of the whole matrix of factors as stated by Veroff (1965) that:

There is a critical stage for learning the effective association attendant to the development of motives and motivational expectations. If the environment supports learning these associations during the critical period, then strong motivational dispositions will develop; if the environment supports a time later than the critical time, anxiety connected with these motivations will develop and if the environment supports learning at a date later than the critical time, very specific motivation and expectations will ensue.

Hence we know that the majority of the students experiencing success in school come from home backgrounds that can be characterized as 'advantaged' with respect to the expectations which are held by the school. We know also that the vast majority of the students who not experience success in school are from 'disadvantaged' home background, again with respect to school expectations. To this end, several finds have revealed that to recognize the 'advantaged' and the 'disadvantaged students, home background was estimated with three socio-economic status characteristics, viz, i. father's education, ii. mother's education and iii., status of father's occupation. The work of Warner et al (1960) attests to the significance of these characteristics as estimates of home background. Where it is revealed that the advantaged students were those students whose parents had completed 12 years of education or more and whose fathers had occupations which where in the three highest status occupations. The disadvantaged students were those parents had completed only eleven years of education or less and whose fathers had occupations which were in the three lowest status occupations. This finding indicates that there is a great relationship between home background, culture, language and the school success of the child.

### **C. Conclusion**

The knowledge acquired by the child at the early years of his life, in affinity with his culture, society and language, is as the saying goes, like a rock carving. This early knowledge is solid foundation upon which the latter is placed. It is at this early stage that the child has all "insatiable curiosity, a grasp of language and a zeal for learning" (Ushie, 2000). However, all these natural endowments rest heavily on the good shepherdship of the child's parents in particular and the society in which he lives, in general. This is very care has to be taken in imparting education to the child at this stage for Whynn, Deyoung and Whynn (1977) cautioned that:

the society and culture in the early life of the child, serve as a school, with the parents as teachers, and social laboratory of human relationships. Consequently, the home should be a well designed and appropriately finished place for living and learning... the child should find the home a haven of hope, love and security, a place made efforts in child and materials welfare.

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