

Understanding the Sociology of Ekiti People

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Abstracts

The Ekiti people of South-West Nigeria among other things are considered by many as; intelligent, honest, fearless, disciplined and hardworking. Evidently, these attributes are not mere scholarly gesticulations and accolades bestowed on this homogenous group of people but they are time-tested traits rooted in historical contexts, and produced through painful encounter with both nature and human in the last two centuries. However, despite these spacial and social encounters, they have unconsciously discovered their hidden potentials and created a long lasting identity for themselves. Ekiti people have achieved some strange results under strange circumstances, and the thrust of this paper is to consider, from sociological point of view, how the social currents that shaped past events continued to shape present and future narratives.

Key Words: *Ekiti People, Ekiti Parapo War, Academic Performance, Poverty and Sociology,*

INTRODUCTION

The Ekiti people of South-West Nigeria are not only unique as homogenous people; they have also done some extraordinary things under extra ordinary

circumstances. Two of such strange occurrences will be appraised in this section using sociological lenses. The first is the Ekiti Parapo War (1877-1893); and the second is the emergence of Ekiti State as the best performing State in the 2016 National Examination Council's result. These two events, as would be shown very soon, constituted historical events that have shaped and will continue to shape how Ekiti people are perceived by others, and if well understood by Ekiti people themselves, it will serve as a self-looking glass through which future decisions and policies will be based. Also, in this section, I want to consider the positive functions of crisis and poverty in relation to the emergence of Ekiti as an intelligent and hardworking people. I am going to show, from sociological point of view that poverty and oppression produced the Ekiti identity.

Evidently, sociology appears to be the best discipline to do justice to these issues because sociology allows us to understand WHY things happened, and HOW they

changed over a period of time. Sociology is a social science discipline that uses scientific methodology in explaining how human society is organised and the patterns of interaction that produce social change within a human group. One of the major perspectives that sociologists use to understand the nature of social change is Functionalism. This perspective sees human society as an organism that has different parts, and each part contributes to the survival of the whole. Each part performs specific function for the system to continue to exist. A function is simply the effect that the parts have on the whole. The effect may be positive or negative. Interestingly, the negative effects are the catalysts for social change. In producing or explaining social change therefore, it should be noted that some of the social currents that altered existing configurations may not appear to be palatable but eventually they helped in creating a lasting identity. That was the Ekiti story. The social currents, such as poverty, crisis, war and oppression that produced the Ekiti identity did not come as a pleasant experience. The Ekiti identity, like the geographical meaning of the name itself (Okiti) is a product of hardship. The people did not just experience difficulty in relating with the mountainous

environment; they struggled with poverty before they became renowned intellectuals. Poverty brought out the best in them. And in responding to these social currents, the hidden gold beneath their skulls became their source of defence. Consequently, this mental power has become their most popular attribute and defining characteristic.

Generally speaking, Ekiti people are regarded as disciplined, highly intelligent, determined, hardworking and fearless. These five qualities, regardless of their educational qualifications/emotional attachment/cultural exposure and religious worldview are the defining characteristics of Ekitis, and these attributes have enabled them to survive and overcome difficult moments. Adeshina Adetola, in his groundbreaking book titled “Ekiti Kete: The Value, The Virtue and The Vision, vividly summarised the first two qualities I listed above with the following words:

“On a general note, Ekiti as a people have no respect or sympathy for indiscipline. They believe in justice and equity, therefore, they are always there to make a correction when an error is made or detected. Moreover, the zeal for educational process and thirst for academic attainment is a unique agenda

to the Ekitis. Therefore, their unity (parapoism) is not only limited to their cultural values and self-determination but also extended to the academia, thus making knowledge acquisition an integral part of Ekitism.(Adesina Adetola, 2008,p9).”

The other attributes, such as intelligent, hardworking and fearlessness will be examined by looking at some of the historical events that have shaped the course of history of Ekiti People. The first that will be considered in this section is the Ekiti Parapo War, and the second, is the emergence of Ekiti as the intellectual capital pool of Nigeria.

THE EKITI PARAPO WAR (1877- 1893)

The Ekiti Parapo War (Kiriji War, 1877-1893) that lasted for about 16 years was the genesis and empirical/traceable evidence of fearlessness and zero tolerance for oppression by the Ekiti People as a homogenous and indivisible ethnic group. The war broke out of the obnoxious and dehumanising policies of Ibadan after her significant role in the Osogbo war and her victory over the Ijeyes which indisputably pronounced her as the successor of the old Oyo Empire and as the head of the Yoruba

race. Prior to the violent confrontation of Ibadan by the coalition of Ijesha and Ekiti, Ibadan had stationed her administrators in other parts of Yoruba land. The administration did not just forcefully collect tax from towns and provinces in Yoruba land; they also harassed and raped their women. The Ekiti people rejected this oppression and fought back with their lives. Professor Olajide Osuntokun, a foremost historian gave an insightful lead into how the fight began and some of the warriors that gave Ekiti a place of pride:

“In 1876, Falola, the beautiful wife of Prince Fabunmi Abe Adesoye was seized in the market by Oyepetun, the Ajele (resident) of Ibadan in front of the Oba’s palace in what is now Okeimesi, but was then called Igbo-Odo. In anger of the humiliation of local Prince, Fabunmi cut off the head of Oyepetun. In response, the ruler of Ibadan, Are Latoisa, who originally came from Ilora-Oyo, sent one of his top military commanders, Ajayi Ogboriefon, to bring him the head of Fabunmi. This was the signal the first armistice was forced on the combatants by the British, virtually all crowned heads and princes in what then was called Ekiti Parapo were involved. Notable among them, were the Oore of Otun, Oba Okin Baloye Oriade, who was primus inter pares

among Ekiti Obas; Oloye, Oba Fajembola, Ajero of Ijero, Oba Olatiloye Oyeyosoye; Prince Faboro and Oba Olayisade Odundun of Iddo; the Alara of Aramoko; the Onitaji and the Ologotun. Others were Prince Adeyela of Ila-Orangun; Apapalaso, the Balogun of Ekan-Igbomina; Akeoro of Ire; Aje of Egosi; Sairo of Akure; Aso Ogundana, the Elejoka of Ikole; Ajaka, the Balogun of Omuo; the Balogun of Esa-Oke; Onibonoje led the Ijebu Jesha forces. Ikeji warriors were led by Olorijeobe. The Imesi-Ile forces were led by Kayaoja, Ajayi and Opiliki and others two numerous to mention. Hundreds of thousands of people died either because of direct action or as a result collateral damage. Eventually the Ibadan/Oyo forces had to withdraw after Ogboriefon died in action and the Alaafin Adeyemi 1 signed on behalf of Ibadan/Oyo to end hostilities with British pressure on both sides (Osuntokun, 2009).”

From the functionalist point of view, the crisis strengthened their sense of unity and indivisibility. The crisis further promoted their homogeneity not only in maintaining their geographical entity but also in promoting positive attitude towards one another. Apparently, the most important positive function of Ekiti Parapo War was

the awakening of the sleeping giants in Ekiti Warriors. The war provided an unusual opportunity for Ekitis to emerge as warlords among the Yorubas of that era. The sophistication and intelligent displayed by the Ekiti warriors during the war is a testimony to the fact that Ekiti people are not only bound to the book; their native intelligence is second to none. The Ekitis employed the most sophisticated weapon and strategy to resist the oppression of Ibadan. The coalition of Ekiti warriors purchased and used large number of cannon guns which produced the thunderous sound “Kiriiiiji”. Eventually, the Ekiti warriors won and the obnoxious rule was stopped through violent resistance of the Ibadan administration. What can be deduced from this historical war from a sociological point of view is that the crisis turned the sleeping giants of Ekitis to respected warlords. In other words, difficulty brought out the best in them.

Next, let us briefly examine how difficulty (especially, poverty) produced the generation of Ekiti students that announced Ekiti to the world as the home of erudite scholars.

POVERTY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN EKITI

To say that Ekitis are famous for their intellectual wizardry is an understatement. From producing the first Professor of Geophysics in Africa, Professor Olufunmilayo Ojo, aka, Ojo Ugbole to the first Professor of Electrical Engineering in Nigeria, Professor V. A Williams; and from producing the first professor of Mathematics in Nigeria, Professor Adegoke Olubummo to the first Professor of Computer Science in Nigeria, Professor Olu Longe; the state also boasts of producing some of the most renowned Neurosurgeons in Africa, such as; Professor Olukayode Osuntokun (NNOM Laureate) and Emeritus Professor of Neurosurgery, Adelola Adeloje. The likes of Professors Ade Ajayi, Jide Osuntokun and Michael Omolewa gave Nigeria and Africa a sense of history by producing historical materials that have become reference points. What about Adedayo Adeyinka, the first Professor of Architecture in Sub-Saharan Africa? The list is endless! The records of excellence and the unusual demonstrations of academic prowess by these giants have placed Ekiti on the world map. The academic legacy and dominance of Ekiti

people in sophisticated arrears of knowledge is a living testimony of the state as The Fountain of Knowledge.

Again, it should be pointed out that the veracity of Ekiti's exploits in the academia cannot be subjected to any form of incredulity. Because they are people bound to the book. Perhaps, the best description of Ekiti in this regard was the one rendered by Yemi Adebisi, an Ekiti-born poet and novelist:

Ekiti,

One family in several caves

Like cocoa seeds

*One proud voice from many
mouths*

Full of riches is this land

Stored in the heads

Instead on the fields (Cited in
Oluwagbohunmi, 2016)

Yet, Ekiti did not just emerge as the Fountain of Knowledge. In other words, the epithet, 'Fountain of Knowledge' did not come on a platter of gold. The emergence of Ekiti as the intellectual capital pool of Nigeria was a product of painful struggle and sacrificial commitment by the founding fathers that burnt midnight oil, trekked long distances to schools; travelled in wooden Lorries and paid their school fees by their sweats and those of their

parents. The zeal for educational attainment and thirst for qualitative education define real Ekiti person. When it comes to education, an average Ekiti man is ready to exchange pleasure for knowledge. This spirited determination for success was exemplified in the life of Professor Adegoke Olubummo, the first professor of Mathematics in Nigeria, who, as a result of poverty trekked from Nigeria to Sierra-Leone.

“Olubummo was a native of Orin Ekiti who stormed the African academic scene in the 1950s in an unprecedented manner. In his quest for educational knowledge, he left his home, Ekiti, for far away Sierra Leone in a very strange circumstance. Olubummo amazed all when he decided to trek from Nigeria to Sierra- Leone in the early 1940s in search of higher knowledge. In 1942, he was a pupil teacher at Methodist Primary School, Ifaki-Ekiti after he had attended Wesley College, Ibadan between 1938 and 1941 for his Higher Elementary Certificate. He was nonetheless contented with his status as a teacher with Higher Certificate in education; he determined to carve a niche for

himself in the academic world. He wanted to have the much admired university education in an institution of his choice, but he could not meet all the financial obligations required. As such, Olubummo decided to apply a rather funny logic: the simple economic theory of opportunity cost. He had to forgo the expenses of transportation for an alternative of more importance -his tuition fees and costs of books. So, he had to trek to the far away northern city of Kano where he joined the caravan of traders on a trip to Ghana. He became a teacher in one or two schools in Ghana and after some years, he joined another set of traders to Sierra Leone. What a strange adventure? Adesina Adetola, 2008).”

Ordinarily, poverty would have been a roadblock to the success stories of the academic giants in the state, but the exact opposite was the case. Poverty for them was a catalyst, and a salient force that gingered them towards greatness. Although they were physically poor, they were not mentally retarded. They were not suffering from poverty of the mind that has bedeviled the younger generation. Perhaps,

they were too poor to remain in poverty and education was the only way out of poverty. Most of these professors, erudite scholars and legal icons were from rusty and poor backgrounds. The situations and conditions under which they studied were so pathetic and dehumanizing.

Professor Niyi Osundare described his ugly experience this way:

“The first line in my preface to ‘The eyes of the Earth’ is ‘farmer born, peasant bred’. My father was a farmer; my mother was a cloth weaver’. My father had a library, that library was full of yams. I heard my mother sing as she worked on the loom which leaned against the wall. I watched threads and threads of cotton become pieces of fabric. That was actually how the first uniform I wore to St. Luke’s School in January 1953; that was how it was made. It came from my mother’s loom and went straight to my Uncle’s machine.”
(Cited in Oluwagbohunmi, 2016).

The Founder of Afe Babalola University, Aare Afe Babalola, put his own this way:

“We did not wear shoes to school. But on Sundays I wore the white tennis bought for me by my

mother. On my return from the church, I used to clean my shoes, wash them, apply white Nuggets, dry them and keep them till the next Sunday.”

Perhaps, the name of Professor Adelola Adeloye wouldn’t have appeared in this book if not for his excellent performance and special interest that Rev. Mason had for the poor students of that era. Poverty almost blocked them from getting to the top. Adelola Adeloye described his experience thus: “I found it impossible to get my school fees of 17 Pound per year paid in 1948. We struggled to pay only a part of it.” While making a special case for him to be awarded scholarship, Rev. Mason, the Principal of Christ’s School at that time also lent credence to the inability of Adelola’s parents to pay his school fees. In a special letter sent to Inspectorate of Education, Ibadan, Western Nigeria, on December 8, 1949, he wrote: “I would like to recommend a boy whom I consider to be, both in character and ability, one of the best boys in the school. Owing to lack of adequate financial support, it is unlikely, unless help is forthcoming, that he will be able to return to school next year. His name is Rufus Adelola Adeloye. He is a native of Ikole-Ekiti. His father is a small farmer. He has found it extremely difficult

to pay his fees ever since the boy began school here.” (Adeloye,2013).

Similarly, if not for scholarship, it would have been very difficult for these giants to become what they have become today. In support of this observation, Adelola Adeloye threw more light: “The Native Administration helped as much as was financially within their means with scholarships and bursaries. Mason judiciously used the funds to keep the Ekiti children in Christ’s School. Some 50 boys were assisted in this manner in 1949 to the tune of 780 Pounds Sterling and another 60 boys benefited with the 870 Pounds Sterling raised in 1950.”

On his part, the first Professor of Architecture in Nigeria, Adeyinka Adeyemi, enjoyed scholarship throughout his school days. He declared: “I enjoyed the scholarship throughout my days in school as an architectural student, and up till now, I have never spent my money on study; it was always one type of sponsorship or the other.” These erudite scholars were the generations of Ekiti students that trekked thousands of kilometers before they could be educated. It should be noted that these giants of history lacked almost all the material infrastructures for educational success

except good teachers. They were reputed for borrowing text books.

The story of Professor Olufunmilayo Ojo (aka Ojo Ugbole) is a good example here. Similarly, the likes of Aare Afe Babalola and Professor Samuel Aluko studied as private students. What this means is that, they had no physical class, no physical classmates, no school libraries, no teachers, and by extension, no formal schooling. However, they were baptized with Ekiti Spirit (strong determination for success and a fighting habit of being the best in whenever place or field they found themselves). Despite these constraints and harsh conditions, they did not only excel; they outshined their contemporaries. They were all operating at more than 1000 per cent on the intellectual scale. It should be noted that, instead of blood, three social currents were flowing in their veins; Values, Virtues and Ekiti Spirit. They were disciplined, they were committed and they were baptized with Ekiti Spirit. Today, when the music of Africa’s excellence beats in the wind, their names echo its lyrics.

Now, let us look at the response of Ekitis, particularly, politicians and government officials to the 2016 NECO’s rating that placed Ekiti as the number one performing

state in the federation and its sociological implications.

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF THE “SERENDIPITOUS EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE” OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE IN THE 2016 NECO’S RESULT

The 2016 National Examination Council’s result rated Ekiti State as the best performing State in Nigeria with an excellent performance of close to 100% - the first in the history of the State and NECO. Rather than a rousing applause from the stakeholders and educational observers; the result has generated unnecessary debate between the ruling party and the opposition party in Ekiti State.

To some people, particularly, opposition party in the state there is no empirical justification for Ayodele Fayose to celebrate the outcome of the National Examination Council’s rating that placed Ekiti as no 1 with a staggering record of about 96% excellent performance. To the people in this school of thought, Fayose cannot provide evidence-based answers for

the serendipitous performance of the students.

They claimed that the result obtained by the students couldn’t have been as a result of Fayose’s less than two years occupancy of the government house. They, therefore, traced the success story to the immediate past administration of Kayode Fayemi. The politicians without sociological inclination in this school of thought argued that Fayemi sowed the seed of greatness that Fayose was reaping. They posited that the strategic efforts of Kayode Fayemi in renovating about 180 schools, computerisation programme, competency test for teachers among other numerous initiatives of the administration were responsible for the 2016 outcome. They claimed that the success did not just happen overnight but it was a result of long planning by Fayemi between 2011 and 2014:

“Reacting to the state’s performance, APC Publicity Secretary, Taiwo Olatubosun, said in a statement that the feat was attributable to education policy instituted by Fayemi that put life into educational administration and management in the state. Fayemi gave a laptop per child that

exposed them to study online and eradicate miracle centres while providing incentive to teacher, including renovation of schools to enhance good learning environment, and also approved special allowances for core subjects and rural postings of teachers. Fayemi's giant strides in education made Ekiti one of the three states in the federation that benefitted from the World Bank's \$50m State Education Programme Investment project (SEPIP). In addition to these, Fayemi's administration was continuously organising training programmes for the teachers, while 400 motorcycles were distributed to teachers serving in rural areas, even as he distributed 20,000 sets of lockers and chairs to public schools across the state (Vanguard, September 17, 2016)."

Despite these intervention programmes, when Fayose took over in 2014, Ekiti was ranked 22nd, 28th and 35th in 2012, 2013 and 2014 results of WEAC. The PDP administration under the leadership of Ayo Fayose responded by saying that the rating was as a result of last year's Education Summit, cancellation of free education system, introduction of examination fees,

effective supervision and monitoring of secondary schools, and the unique ways with which Fayose is celebrating Teachers' Day annually are some of the reasons for the 'miraculous' result. Egunjobi put it more vehemently;

"Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, Jide Egunjobi, hinged the performance on the efforts of Fayose, highlighted some steps taken that led to the performance, to include; improvement in capacity building for core subjects' teachers in public secondary schools, introduction of 28 monitoring and supervision teams that did intensive job in monitoring and supervision of teachers and the various sensitization meetings held with stakeholders in educational sector gave the state the result. (The Sun, October 6, 2016)."

The two positions, from political point of view are, indeed, compelling. Before I add the third perspective, which is the objective of this section, I want to say that the two perspectives lack proof, and if it lacks proof, it can't provide insights into the origin of this "sudden change". These explanations are mere political

gesticulations that cannot give us the true picture of reality.

To start with, if truly we (speaking as an Ekiti man now and I want to do that for the rest of this paper) are the Fountain of Knowledge do we really need to question our success story in the business of knowledge production? If success is who we are, do we have to question and defend the outstanding records in a sector that gave us our ethnic identity? If the result is expected, do we have to defend it? I mean, do we have to question why the state that was (is?) known for academic wizardry should emerge as the best performing State in the education sector?

However, it seems we need a convincing explanation on why a State that occupied the 10th position in less than a year miraculously jumped to the first position? Perhaps, the explanation becomes more necessary looking at the fact that the result does not have an objective and measurable/consistent connection with either the past or with the future. The 2016 May/June WEAC result that rated Ekiti as the 11th performing state also shows that the April/May NECO that rated Ekiti as the number one performing state is a serendipitous performance. 1st in May (NECO) and 11th in June (WEAC) of the

same year by the same set of students! Something is still missing. Have the students changed so much within a month? Has the incentive failed to perform the magic of motivating the teachers to do their jobs as it did less than a month ago? Or can we say the rating is faulty?

Again, can we objectively say that the “failed” computerisation project of the Fayemi’s era was responsible for this outstanding performance? Without mincing words, I want to say that there is no positive correlation between the computerisation programme and the excellent performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. The adoption of computer as a tool for learning is still an on-going experiment that has not yielded any known positive result in Nigeria, especially at the secondary school level. The said computers had already been withdrawn from the students before the expiration of Fayemi’s tenure because the students were not using it for academic purposes. They were using it to watch videos and games online. And consequently, they wasted precious time that should have been devoted to learning. And what do you expect? When you give a necklace to a mad man on the road, he may decide to use it to tie his leg or his stinking hair; one thing is sure, he will misuse it

because he doesn't know its value and usefulness. Computerisation programme without a proper sensitisation on the use of time and internet ethical culture will produce unintended results. That was the case of Ekiti and Osun state that adopted the 21st century tools without developing a 21st mind. Fayemi was very wise to have withdrawn the gadgets from the students before it destroyed them completely. The reverse is the case in Osun State. In Osun state where the computerisation programme is still on-going, a deeper look at the WAEC's rating shows that the more Opon Imon (Computer) they have in Osun State, the more failure they record in WAEC! As important as Computer is to teaching and learning in the 21st century, if not well managed, it can become the most important source of distraction for students. The evolution of computer and its adoption in teaching and learning at secondary school level constitute what sociologists refer to as 'cultural shock'. Some of these students pay attention to the 'wonders' of the machine more than the 'positive usefulness' of the machine

Again, the two administrations tried to locate their commitment to teachers as the reason for this excellent performance. However, it should be noted that both of them at one time or the other have failed

the teachers in the state by not meeting up with their demands. For instance, the Fayemi's administration incurred the wrath of the teachers when he subjected them to competency test. Although the competency test is a good idea, most of the teachers failed to agree with its relevance and subsequently described it as a gimmick of the administration to demote and sack some of them.

On the other hand, Fayose is popularly regarded as "Teachers friendly Governor". The teachers' Day celebration under Fayose's administration has become a phenomenon. But this is not to say that Fayose has lived up to teachers' expectation at all time. For instance, Ekiti state workers, including teachers were on strike from January to April in 2016 as a result of the inability of the state government to pay their salaries. The teachers were not in the class with the students 16 weeks before their serendipitous performance. Ayo Fayose, including his cabinet members also joined the striking workers! The Governor's office was locked! Both the teachers and the ministry officials that are supposed to lead the students to success were at home for 16 weeks before the examination that proclaimed the state as the best performing state in the federation.

The question that is begging for answer is; how can a State that was unable to pay salaries of teachers for four consecutive months prior to the examination turns out as the best performing State in the federation? I mean, how can Ekiti teachers being at their best when some of them were reportedly stealing Amala (cassava flour) from their neighbours in order to survive the hardship that visited Ekiti State between January and May 2016 as a result of the inability of the State to pay salary due to dwindling revenue from the federation account?

Certainly, the government, whether APC or PDP cannot “correctly” and “objectively” lay claim to this serendipitous victory. Again, teachers in Ekiti would be abusing our sense of justice if they attempt to claim responsibility for this trailblazing record. Unless they want us to believe that hunger was a catalyst that propelled them to go extra mile in delivering this enviable performance. The point I am making from a sociological point of view is that, the government or its agency cannot absolutely claim responsibility for this outstanding performance. The only objective explanation here is that, like the days of old, Ekiti students have done strange thing under a strange circumstance. Their best

came in the most difficult moment and this cannot be seen as an isolated happenstance; it is merely a repetition of historical pattern. The explanation for this enviable height can be traced to the GENEALOGY of Ekiti people. From this perspective, I WANT TO ARGUE THAT AN AVERAGE EKITI MAN PERFORMES BETTER UNDER A DIFFICULT TIME. DIFFICULTY BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN HIM. As I have argued in the first two sections of this article, the name Ekiti was coined from Okiti, because we are people surrounded by stony lands and mountainous geographical environment. Our forefather traversed this difficult geographical terrain and gave us a settlement. Likewise, Ekitis came into limelight in Yourubaland as a result of their violent resistance to the exploitative tendency of the Oyo Empire. It was this difficult moment that brought out the warrior in the sleeping giants of Ekiti extraction, such as Fabunmi Oke Imesi. The need for independence made them realise their potential as warlords.

Likewise, the academic giants that illuminated the academic firmament of Africa were from the poorest home in Ekiti. These students lacked access to most of the required educational facilities. Yet, they were operating at more than 1000%

on the intellectual scale. For instance, Professor Ojo Ugbole, the first professor of Geo-physics in Africa trekked from Igbole Ekiti to St Andrew's College, Oyo on several occasions because he couldn't afford transportation fare. He had no book and yet he made distinction in all his papers at the college. Professor Adegoke Olubummo also trekked from Orin to Sierra-Leone in early 40s because he couldn't afford the transport fare. He ended-up as the First Professor of Mathematics in Nigeria. Professor Kayode Osuntokun never saw how a Chemistry laboratory looks like during his secondary school days, yet, he became the second Professor of Neurosurgery in Nigeria. He published 321 academic papers before he died at the early age of 60 years old and he was awarded NNOM laureate, the most prestigious academic award in Nigeria.

Time will fail me if I dabble into the experience of Aare Afe Babalola, a man who never wore any shoe for the first decade of life and who never attended any formal school except Primary school. What about Professor Adelola Adeloye, a renowned Neurosurgeon from Ikole Ekiti; he had no Chemistry teacher at Christ's School. Professor Adeyemi Adeyinka, the first Professor of Architecture in Sub-Saharan Africa; Professor Olu Longe, the

First Professor of Computer Science in Nigeria and Professor Niyi Osundare? I have documented in my book titled "Ekiti Kete: One People, Two Generation" how poverty and hard times produced those we celebrate as academic giants in Ekiti State today.

The truth is that an average Ekiti man has this innate potential, native intelligence and administrative prowess, but he may not give you his best when he is operating from his comfort zone. Difficulty reminds him of who he is; challenges motivate him to rise above his mates. Funny enough, this spirit (I called it Ekiti Spirit) is a unique characteristic of most Ekiti people. The homogeneity is not just in name; it is also an attitude. EKITI IS NOT JUST A NAME: EKITI IS AN ATTITUDE. Ekiti is an attitude that defines who we are and what we can do, particularly in strange and difficult circumstances. It was this attitude of excellence that made a class of less than 30 students at Christ's School in early 50s to produce 9 Distinguished and Emeritus Professors in different field of learning. It was this strange record and many more that earned Ekiti the epithet, "Fountain of Knowledge." It should be noted that Ekiti was not the first in the business of knowledge production in Nigeria but when Ekiti products arrived, they were the best.

They overcame the frontrunner (Ogun State) and made education more functional.

It was this Ekiti Spirit that made Ekiti to emerge as the intellectual capital pool of Nigeria. The Ekiti Spirit of old was not a religious spirit. It was rooted in stubborn and spirited determination for success. It is a Spirit that never sees second position as good enough. It is either first or nothing! It was the Ekiti Spirit that turned secondary schools of old into academic battle grounds and those who won became academic giants.

Funny enough, the crown was not for the genius, but for whosoever that has been baptised with this spirit and attitude of excellence. Students of old received the Spirit in school while their parents, through the power of expectation and discipline nurtured it at home. The culture of hard work flew from farm to classroom. The larger society of that glorious era was a self-looking glass where only excellent result can be mirrored and appreciated. Now that strange circumstance has produced strange result like the days of old, can we now say that Ekiti Spirit has returned to our secondary schools? I want to say that if there is any reason to celebrate the 'new' status, of Ekiti, we

should give the kudos to the students. They have done strange thing under a strange circumstance!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

For how long are we going to continue to be defined by difficulty and strange circumstances? Can't we be proactive instead of being reactive? Historically speaking, Ekiti is unique. But unfortunately, Ekiti people have not explored the opportunity of their rich heritage in promoting her greatness. We have not used the knowledge of historical event and pattern to understand the present and to predict the future. Again, we have not explored the invisible power that has defined the curse of Ekiti history. We continued to locate the cause in the government whereas government has contributed less or nothing to the identity of Ekiti people as the fountain of knowledge. We continued to motivate and encourage the teachers whereas research has suggested that what motivates the teachers may not motivate the students. We need to find out, from history, what actually motivated Ekiti students of old into greatness. Those little things such as award day, scholarship and educational grants have become a forgotten history in

our society. I want to say that whatever brings healthy competition among secondary school students in Ekiti will automatically restore Ekiti glory on a sustainable basis. And the truth is that the time is ripe for the young generation of Ekiti students to study historical patterns, and the most dependable way of restoring values of old, virtues of excellence and Ekiti spirit into education is through the introduction of “History of Ekiti” into secondary school curriculum in the state. Studying ourselves is the most reliable way of knowing who we are, and what we are cable of as Ekiti people. There is no doubt on my mind that we have left the precious values that define us as Ekiti people behind. And if we fail to act now, it is question of time; our cemeteries will be richer in values than our universities and public institutions. If our value can only be found in the dustbin of history, then, we are dead people.

I will end this section by quoting Jadesola Babatola on the need to maintain and retain those values that define us as a unique people;

“It is only the people that know what the society appreciates and values that would align their interest with the society to advance

the overall interest of the people for the common good. This is why society produces its own values through existing literature that constitutes the literati. The environment we live in often influence or determine how we act or think. We have no choice than to ensure that the values of our society which forms part of its norms and culture are set on tested and trusted gains of social interactions and manipulation of ideas relevant to system building and social sustainability. Any society that lacks practical, appreciable and acceptable rational thought process- that is just, right and proper values in building social structures and endowing good and endurable mannerism among its individual actors is bound to produce misfits, miscreants and misnomers. Such society would be chaotic, crisis-ridden, self-centred and bedevilled by leaders and followers whose attitudinal approaches to life are devoid of dependable and commendable characters worthy of emulation” (Jadesola Babatola, 2015)

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