

THE  
**SOCIAL**  
**LIFE**  
OF  
**CULTURE**

GASTRONOMY, THEATRE,  
AND EDUCATION

EDITOR

**Pooja SHUKLA**



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**THE SOCIAL LIFE OF CULTURE: GASTRONOMY,  
THEATRE, AND EDUCATION - 2026**

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**EDITOR**

Pooja SHUKLA

**AUTHORS**

Lect. Soner ÖZYALÇIN

Assoc. Prof. Senden ÖZERDEN

Dr. S. J. Ikiroma-OWIYE

Moses Adeolu AGOI

Oluwakemi Racheal OSHINOWO

Tola OLUJUWON

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## **PREFACE**

The *Social Life of Culture: Gastronomy, Theatre, and Education* brings together a collection of scholarly contributions that explore the multifaceted role of culture in shaping social life and human interaction. Culture, in its various forms, continues to influence identities, practices, and institutions, reflecting both historical continuity and contemporary transformation.

The chapters in this volume address diverse cultural domains, including gastronomy, theatre, and education. From the historical and cross-cultural influences on culinary traditions to the role of theatre in expressing social realities and identities, the contributions highlight how cultural practices serve as powerful mediums of meaning-making. In addition, the examination of digital culture and its impact on educational institutions underscores the evolving nature of learning in a rapidly changing technological environment.

By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, this volume integrates insights from cultural studies, performing arts, and education sciences. It not only contributes to academic discussions but also provides a broader understanding of how culture operates as a dynamic and transformative force within society.

It is hoped that this book will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, students, and practitioners interested in culture, society, and education, while encouraging further exploration of the connections between cultural expression and social change.

**Editorial Team**

**March 24, 2026**

**Türkiye**

**CHAPTER 1**  
**TRACES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES OF**  
**VENETIAN CULINARY CULTURE ON CYPRIOT**  
**GASTRONOMY**

Lect. Soner ÖZYALÇIN<sup>1</sup>  
Assoc. Prof. Senden ÖZERDEN<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>International Final University, School of Tourism and Culinary Arts, Gastronomy, soner.ozyalcin@final.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0009-0004-1068-7579.

<sup>2</sup>International Final University, School of Tourism and Culinary Arts, Tourism, seden.ozerden@final.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2484-9856.

# *THE SOCIAL LIFE OF CULTURE: GASTRONOMY, THEATRE, AND EDUCATION*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mediterranean history has largely been shaped through the political narratives of land-based empires; however, the primary force determining cultural circulation in the region has been the mobility of maritime powers (Chambers, 2008; Abulafia, 2003). Within this context, the Venetian Republic emerges as one of the most influential seafaring actors connecting East and West from the Middle Ages to the early modern period (Lane & Frederic, 1973; Arbel, 2013). The dogeship system, which represented nearly a thousand years of political organization, constituted the foundation of Venice's economic and political continuity. The city-state became institutionalized with the election of its first doge in 697 and withdrew from the historical stage with the abdication of the last doge in 1797 (Karsten, 2020; Lane, 1973). This long continuity demonstrates that Venice functioned not only as a commercial center but also as a significant power directing cultural circulation in the Mediterranean. Located at a crossroads of the Eastern Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus has historically fallen within the sphere of influence of various civilizations due to its geographical position. As a result, it became culturally stratified under the dominance of major powers such as the Hittites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Hellenistic administrations, as well as the Roman and Byzantine Empires (Hill, 1940; Given, 2002). From the Venetian perspective, Cyprus was not merely an island with economic value but also a strategic naval base essential for securing eastern trade routes and controlling Mediterranean geopolitics. Following the transfer of authority by Caterina Cornaro in 1489, the island remained a maritime colony of the Serenissima for nearly a century (Kiss, 2016; Arbel, 2013). Venetian culinary culture developed as a result of its geographical and commercial structure, shaped by both the seafood resources of the Adriatic lagoons and the diversity of spices transported from the Levant. Lane (1973) and Zanini (2018) note that Venetian cuisine was particularly structured around the cicchetti tradition, grain-based dishes such as polenta and risotto, salting and drying techniques, sauces based on a vinegar-spice balance, and wine production practices. Through Venice's trade networks, this gastronomic structure did not remain confined within its own borders but was reflected-at varying intensities-in the port cities with which it interacted (Riley, 2007; Parasecoli, 2010; Van Gelder, 2009; Lugli, 2017).

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A significant portion of the gastronomic changes observed in Cyprus during the Venetian period emerged as a result of this transmission process (Coureas, 2024). In particular, the increased use of spices, diversification in seafood processing methods, localization of salting and drying techniques, the incorporation of sweet-and-sour sauce concepts into certain dishes, and the development of grape and wine processing knowledge are considered among the traces of Venetian influence on Cypriot cuisine (Coureas, 2018; *Cyprus Mail*, 2025). Such changes indicate that Venice's impact on Cyprus was not limited to administrative structures but was also evident in everyday life practices (Sepos, 2008). This study aims to examine the reflection of Venetian culinary culture on Cypriot gastronomy within historical, cultural, and gastronomic contexts. It seeks to identify the channels through which products, cooking techniques, and dining practices specific to Venetian cuisine were transmitted to Cypriot culinary traditions. Accordingly, the study adopts a qualitative methodology, employing documentary analysis based on historical sources, gastronomic literature, and cultural analyses.

The literature review reveals that despite the existence of numerous studies on the political and economic structure of Cyprus during the Venetian period (Hill, 1940; Arbel, 1995), research that systematically examines the tangible effects of Venetian culinary culture on Cypriot gastronomy remains limited. Existing works have largely focused on trade, administration, and architecture, while gastronomic interaction has been treated as a secondary topic. By addressing this gap in the literature, the present study aims to contribute to making visible the traces of the Venetian period in Cypriot cuisine at the levels of products, techniques, and dining culture.

### **1. CULTURAL STRUCTURE OF MEDITERRANEAN MARITIME STATES**

The Mediterranean basin has historically served as a fundamental arena in which different societies engaged in economic, social, and cultural interaction. These interactions were shaped largely through maritime activities and sea trade. Trade networks established by seafaring states enabled not only the circulation of goods but also the transmission of knowledge, techniques, and everyday life practices.

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For this reason, the Mediterranean is best understood not as a region of closed and static cultural structures, but as a historical space characterized by continuous contact and transformation (Braudel, 1972; Horden & Purcell, 2000). The trade networks formed through maritime commerce exerted a direct influence on culinary cultures. Staple food products such as grains, legumes, spices, olive oil, and wine circulated throughout the Mediterranean, and the cooking techniques and consumption practices associated with these products were adopted across different regions. However, this process of transmission was not unidirectional; rather, it was reshaped according to local conditions, climate, and social structures. As a result, Mediterranean cuisines came to share common elements while remaining heterogeneous in character (Montanari, 2006). One of the most illustrative examples of this process of cultural circulation can be observed through the Venetian Republic. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period, Venice played a central role in transporting spices, rice, sugar, and dried products into European cuisines through its trade relations between the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe. These products spread not only as commercial commodities but also together with new taste profiles and cooking methods. This dynamic contributed particularly to the prominence of Eastern Mediterranean influences in northern Italian cuisine (Albala, 2011). Similarly, the Republic of Genoa exerted a significant influence on the circulation of food culture through its maritime trade network connecting the eastern and western Mediterranean. Genoese commercial activities, grounded in seafaring, focused primarily on fish products, grains, and foods suitable for long-term storage. This emphasis supported the widespread adoption of preservation techniques such as salting, drying, and curing, which over time became integral components of the culinary identity of coastal settlements (Goody, 1982). Another major actor in Mediterranean gastronomic circulation was the Ottoman Empire. Encompassing the Mediterranean, the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Levant, the empire's vast territorial reach generated a multidirectional culinary interaction. Trade and population movements through port cities facilitated the development of local food practices in constant interaction with imperial cuisine. In this context, food functioned not only as a means of sustenance but also as an indicator of social status, identity, and cultural belonging (Pilcher, 2016).

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Taken together, these examples demonstrate that gastronomy in the Mediterranean cannot be explained solely by environmental or geographical conditions; rather, it is directly linked to historically shaped maritime networks and political power relations. Consequently, gastronomy provides a functional and tangible analytical field for examining the cultural influence of maritime states. The circulation traced through foods, products, and culinary techniques allows the Mediterranean to be understood as a shared space of cultural production (Claval & Jourdain-Annequin, 2018).

### **2. THE MARITIME MODEL, TRADE NETWORK, AND FOOD CIRCULATION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC**

The Venetian Republic constructed its historical development on a power model based on maritime activity and trade rather than military conquest. This model achieved continuity primarily through intensive commercial relations with the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant, resulting in the formation of an extensive economic network supported by port cities and commercial colonies. Venice's political and economic strength rested on the control of sea routes and the stable maintenance of commercial circulation (Lane, 1973; Braudel, 1972). The Venetian trade network facilitated not only the movement of goods but also the circulation of cultural and social practices. These networks, established across the Mediterranean, played a decisive role in shaping culinary culture. The continuity of trade directly influenced which food products were preferred and how they were processed. Within this context, Venetian cuisine developed around products that were accessible, transportable, and suitable for long-term storage (Horden & Purcell, 2000; Abulafia, 2011). Grain, spices, salt, wine, and dried seafood emerged as the principal commodities of Venetian trade with the Levant. Beyond their commercial value, these products became fundamental components of everyday dietary practices. In particular, commodities such as spices and sugar transformed not only taste preferences but also cooking techniques and culinary approaches (Ashtor, 1983; Mintz, 1985). As a result, Venetian culinary culture took shape as a synthesis in which products originating from the Eastern Mediterranean were integrated with local cooking practices. Food circulation is also essential for understanding the technical dimensions of culinary culture.

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An economy based on maritime trade necessitated the widespread adoption of food preservation methods. Techniques such as salting, drying, and curing emerged as practical solutions to the demands of long sea voyages and commercial continuity. Over time, these methods became embedded not only in the practices of sailors but also in the everyday culinary routines of urban populations (Goody, 1982; Adamson, 2004). This process simultaneously facilitated the circulation of culinary knowledge and cooking techniques. Products transported from the Eastern Mediterranean to Venice were reinterpreted according to local taste preferences and social structures, allowing culinary culture to evolve from a static system into one characterized by continuous transformation. Consequently, although Mediterranean cuisines shared a common pool of products, each developed distinctive identities shaped by local conditions (Montanari, 2006; Dalby, 2003).

In conclusion, the maritime model and trade network of the Venetian Republic constituted a decisive factor in the formation of culinary culture. The circulation of food products renders visible the relationship between economic structures and culinary practices, positioning gastronomy as a historical, economic, and cultural field of analysis. In this respect, the Venetian case offers an instructive model for understanding the interaction between trade, seafaring, and culinary culture in the Mediterranean world (Albala, 2011; Freedman, 2007).

### **3. STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF VENETIAN CULINARY CULTURE**

The culinary culture of the Venetian Republic developed as part of an economic system grounded not in agricultural production but in trade, seafaring, and logistical continuity. Accordingly, the fundamental elements of Venetian cuisine were shaped around grain-based dishes, seafood sourced from lagoon and open-sea environments, preservation techniques such as salting and drying, and a cooking philosophy based on a balance of sweet and sour flavors. This structure indicates that Venetian cuisine was determined more by functional and economic necessities than by aesthetic preferences (Lane, 1973; Grieco, 2015).

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Grain products, particularly preparations based on wheat and maize, constituted the nutritional backbone of Venetian cuisine. Dishes such as polenta were widely consumed by broad segments of the population due to their low cost and high caloric value. Seafood, supported by the lagoon ecosystem, became a natural component of daily nutrition; fish, shellfish, and dried seafood occupied a central position in the culinary repertoire (Ballerini, 2012; Civitello, 2008). The continuity of maritime trade necessitated the development of food preservation techniques. Methods such as salting, drying, and curing were widely employed not only to meet the needs of long sea voyages but also to ensure year-round access to food for urban populations.

These techniques represent defining characteristics of Venetian cuisine and clearly reflect its maritime origins (Flandrin & Montanari, 2013; Adamson, 2016). Another distinctive feature of Venetian cuisine is the balance between sweet and sour flavors. The combined use of sugar, vinegar, dried fruits, and spices is closely associated with products introduced through Levantine trade. This flavor profile functioned as a marker of social status in medieval and early modern European cuisines; in Venice, however, it became widespread due to commercial accessibility (Laudan, 2013; Albala, 2002). Dietary practices in Venetian society were sharply differentiated along social class lines. Popular cuisine was structured around simple cooking techniques and local ingredients, prioritizing satiety and sustainability. In contrast, the cuisine of the noble and governing classes was characterized by imported spices, refined sugar, high-quality wines, and complex culinary techniques. Table arrangements and the diversity of dishes served functioned as direct indicators of social status (Gentilcore, 2010; Grieco, 2015).

This class-based culinary distinction was partially reproduced in the port cities and colonies under Venetian control. While ruling elites adopted Venetian culinary practices to make their cultural affiliation visible, local populations continued to develop their food traditions in accordance with available ingredients and established practices. This dynamic reveals that culinary culture functioned not merely as a means of sustenance, but also as a domain of power, identity, and representation (Wilson, 2006; Freedman, 2015).

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**4. AN ISLAND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: CYPRUS**

Cyprus is an island located in the Eastern Mediterranean at the intersection of maritime routes, positioned close to the Anatolian coast, the Levantine corridor (Syria–Palestine), and the Egyptian triangle. This geographical location has historically made the island not only a focal point of military and administrative struggles for control, but also an integral component of trade and supply networks (Abulafia, 2011; Braudel, 1972). For this reason, the historical role of Cyprus cannot be explained through a single period; rather, the island has produced a multilayered cultural structure shaped by the successive influences of different empires and systems of governance (Horden & Purcell, 2000).

Shifts in political control over Cyprus followed the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Mediterranean. During antiquity and late antiquity, the island remained under Roman rule and subsequently Byzantine influence. From the late twelfth century onward, it entered the post-Crusader political order under the rule of the Lusignan dynasty. This period reinforced Latin-Frankish administrative structures and the institutional framework of Mediterranean trade on the island (Hill, 2010). By the late fifteenth century, the end of the Lusignan monarchy and the transfer of the island to the Venetian Republic integrated Cyprus directly into the commercial and logistical system of a maritime republic (Lane, 1973). During the period of Venetian administration (1489–1571), Cyprus was evaluated within Venice’s Eastern Mediterranean trade and security strategy along the axes of military fortification, economic reorganization, and supply continuity. In this context, the island functioned not merely as a frontier zone or defensive territory, but also as a site of production and storage (stockpiling) that supported commercial circulation (Arbel, 2000; Ashtor, 1983). Studies on the Venetian period demonstrate that administrative and economic regulations on the island were institutionalized in a durable manner, directly shaping the functioning of the island’s economy (Grivaud, 1998). From a gastronomic perspective, a critical issue emerges at this point: the supply logic of maritime states transforms the production, circulation, and storage of food products—such as grain, salt, wine, oil, sugar, and dried goods—into strategic domains (Montanari, 2006; Laudan, 2013).

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Cyprus's agricultural production capacity and its maritime connections through port cities assigned the island a "supportive" role within Venice's Eastern Mediterranean trade network. Sources from the Venetian period indicate that grain production was particularly prominent on the island and that certain agricultural products were evaluated in direct relation to external trade (Arbel, 2000; Ashtor, 1983). Venetian rule over Cyprus came to an end with the Ottoman conquest of 1570–1571, marking the beginning of a prolonged Ottoman period. This transition represented not only a change in political sovereignty but also the establishment of a new framework in structural domains that indirectly shaped the food system, including property relations, production structures, and taxation regimes (İnalçık, 1994; Jennings, 1993).

### **4.1 Society, Power, and Cuisine: Table Culture in Venetian Cyprus**

During the period of Venetian rule, culinary culture in Cyprus was shaped in direct relation to social structure and military–commercial demands. Everyday food practices, elite table culture, and port- and garrison-centered food logistics should not be regarded as separate domains, but rather as different layers of the same system. This perspective demonstrates that Venetian influence in Cyprus did not produce a uniform culinary model; instead, it generated a multilayered structure differentiated according to social class and functional needs (Horden & Purcell, 2000; Abulafia, 2011). During the Venetian period, popular cuisine in Cyprus displayed a predominantly simple, locally grounded, and functional character. Grain-based dishes, legumes, wild greens, and seasonal seafood formed the foundation of everyday nutrition. This culinary structure corresponded both to the island's agricultural production capacity and to the economic conditions of the broader population. Certain products and techniques associated with Venetian culinary culture were incorporated into popular cuisine not through direct replication, but through adaptation in line with local habits and available raw materials. This process ensured the persistence of long-standing local practices within popular food culture (Hatay, 2006; Jennings, 1993). By contrast, Venetian administrators and the island's elite adopted a table culture more closely aligned with Venetian culinary norms.

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Imported spices, high-quality wines, sugar, and refined products were more prominently featured at elite tables. For these groups, table arrangements, the diversity of dishes, and modes of presentation functioned not merely as means of nourishment but as indicators of social status and cultural affiliation. This distinction reveals that gastronomic practices in Cyprus were socially stratified and that cuisine became a visible domain through which social hierarchy was expressed (Goody, 1982; Albala, 2002). The differentiation between popular and elite cuisines was further reinforced by the food logistics system structured around ports and military garrisons across the island. Cypriot ports functioned as points of storage, distribution, and transshipment within Venice's Eastern Mediterranean trade network.

Garrisons and military installations, requiring regular and durable food supplies, played a decisive role in shaping culinary techniques. The widespread use of methods such as salting, drying, curing, and vinegar preservation emerged directly from these military and commercial imperatives (Arbel, 2000; Ashtor, 1983). In this context, food logistics influenced not only military provisioning but also civilian culinary practices. The prioritization of long-lasting products encouraged the adoption of similar preservation techniques within popular cuisine. As a result, culinary culture developed along axes of continuity, durability, and accessibility rather than aesthetic refinement. This dynamic demonstrates that during the Venetian period, Cypriot cuisine evolved in close connection with military and commercial requirements and that gastronomy cannot be considered independently from economic and logistical structures (Montanari, 2006; Laudan, 2013). In conclusion, culinary culture in Venetian-era Cyprus was shaped through multidirectional relationships between popular food practices, the status-oriented table culture of the elite, and port- and garrison-centered food logistics. This configuration reveals that Cypriot cuisine was not a monocentric system but rather a composite structure incorporating social and functional diversity.

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**CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that Cyprus's geographical position in the Eastern Mediterranean has played a decisive role throughout history not only in terms of military and commercial strategies, but also in the formation and transformation of its culinary culture. The analysis focused on the Venetian period reveals that gastronomic interaction cannot be explained as a simple process of cultural transmission; rather, it constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon that requires the joint consideration of trade networks, administrative arrangements, production and storage systems, and social structures. Under Venetian rule, Cyprus became integrated into the Eastern Mediterranean trade system, directly influencing the nature of product circulation, the strategic value of foodstuffs, and the orientation of culinary practices.

The prominence of grain, salt, wine, and long-lasting products shaped not only the range of ingredients used in the island's cuisine, but also the ways in which food was processed and preserved. However, this influence did not result in the eradication of local culinary practices; on the contrary, it gave rise to a process of adaptation in which external elements were reinterpreted within the framework of existing taste memory and local products. Social structure emerged as another determining factor in the shaping of culinary culture. While popular cuisine developed around accessible and functional foods, the table culture of governing and elite classes became a marker of status through the use of imported products, spices, and formal dining arrangements. This differentiation illustrates that culinary culture served not only to meet nutritional needs, but also to render social hierarchies visible. Food logistics organized around ports and military garrisons further influenced both civilian and military dietary practices, shaping culinary culture along axes of continuity and durability.

The findings clearly indicate that Cypriot cuisine does not constitute a monocentric or single-period structure. The Venetian period added a new layer to the island's culinary landscape, which together with subsequent Ottoman and modern influences reinforced the composite and multilayered character of Cypriot cuisine.

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In this context, Venetian influence should not be regarded as a temporary or superficial factor, but rather as one of the structural components of a gastronomic identity formed within the historical contact zone of the Eastern Mediterranean.

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**CHAPTER 2**  
**CONCEPTUALIZING AND CONTEXTUALIZING**  
**THEATRE AND DRAMA IN AFRICA: THE**  
**NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

Dr. S. J. Ikiroma-OWIYE<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Faculty of Humanities  
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, [somieari.ikiroma-owiye@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:somieari.ikiroma-owiye@uniport.edu.ng)

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**INTRODUCTION**

What is history? What is theatre? what is African theatre?

In the course of these study these questions will be answered. ``History and theatre serves same purpose in society recording and preserving past events for the education, edification, entertainment and enlightenment of society. But theatre goes a step further by documenting all aspects of the peoples arts and crafts be it dress, food, costume, make-up, mores, values, that is the totality of the peoples culture in a microcosm. Thus we see theatre in Africa emanating with man in Africa. Theatre as an art is innate in man, the act of imitation. Learning in relation to man as mostly imitative as children learn more from their parents by acts of imitation. From imitating parents to creating self roles to imitating nature, controlling and appeasing nature culminating in the initiation of worship.

From aeon of time man in Africa have used theatre to teach, entertain, educate and enlighten his fellow man from ancient Egypt to the present. Most records of theatre in Africa where graphically illustrated in rock paintings, hieroglyphics and sculpture in metals, clay, bronze and the story telling theatre prior to the emergence of the Arabian slave trade or Trans Saharan slave trade which brought about the stagnation of creativity, learning and the performing arts in precolonial Africa. The African needs to liberate his thought process by studying to redefining himself in contemporary society as theatre is life and embraces all aspects of live. In theatre all aspects of a peoples culture are presented for edification and appreciation hence a decline in a peoples culture is reflected first in their theatre.

Theatre as an all embracing aspect of the cultural history of a people must be properly defined to chart a part way for any society. This experiment if seen in related cultures where their culture is sacrosanct even though they have been affected by foreign cultures like China, India, Japan, Indonesia, Korea etc., they studied and researched and examined European culture side by side with their indigenous culture identifying the issues of borrowing and diffusion. Nobody or society neglects the cultural achievements of her ancestors and embraces a new culture to survive in this world of competition.

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Your theatre which is embedded in culture distinct you from the committee of nations hence our dramatic festival culture and production process embedded in our traditional languages need to be encouraged and taught in our indigenous schools to bring out the best in our performing culture for the performances are what brings the people collective conscience together in unity of purpose. We cant be Europeans, Arabs or Americans.

We know some African societies have been mentally colonized religiously and culturally to an extent that they do not have an independent mind. They think Arabic or European they do not have a culture to transmit so they think. But Africa housed the best of cultural performances the world over. Foreign barbarian and vandal culture of war and an extreme violence have now become the African way of life because they are now neglecting the African festive nature of celebrating life. Birth, death, marriage, coronation, harvest in festivals from dawn to dusk. Europe and Arabia are the real problem to the development of African theatre (mind). The concept of play is eroded from their mentality what obtains is war and forceful engagement even in marriage. In Africa marriages are contracted in festive periods, masquerading, wrestling, acrobatics juggling arts and craft etc. Prowess or dexterity in performance culminates in wealth and marriage. You cannot change your cultural norms to please anybody. Europe and Arabia are theatre s of war from the middle ages till the present. They train their children to war while we train our children to be playfully creative in productive performance. These societies do no longer observe the reverence given to the universal fem-men as practiced in most African societies where the creative force of life is ascribed to as the universal feminine. They fight wars to rape spoil and pillage which is what is spoiling African countries presently because they are endowed with natural resources. These uncivilised and violent minds only need to be tamed through the creative revival of the African mind in celebrating life in its entirety through festivity

### **1. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL THEATRE PRACTICE**

African traditional theatre as Krama (2001, p. 12) observes vividly “entails those forms of entertainment and theatrical nuances that existed before the colonial experience.” Theatre practice as an art form in Africa predates the coming of western civilization.

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Theatre has existed in African societies for aeons of time. African traditional theatre is also sometimes looked at as an art of dramatic presentation in which all aspects of the African cultural world view in performance characteristics are presented as is observed in Greek theatrical traditions. Performances are not just done but involves processes and are presented by a specialists group of people which involves the elements of total theatre music, dance, mime, costume, make-up and narrative, mostly achieved through the use of sound, and drummed language of communication for the realization of an artistic expression, which entails entertainment, education and transmission of cultural values in dramatic presentations involving all aspects of African cosmic world view.

Thus we see theatrical experience in Africa existed before the coming of Europeans to Africa. Theatre is a way of life integral in the socioeconomic productive systems of the Africans. African sensibilities transcend European civilization theatre predates the coming of western civilization. Theatre is life and life is theatre. Because man, as a playing being must reflect his daily activities in the context of play at a particular time and season in the course of a year or several years as the society deems fit. Theatre has existed in African societies from aeons of time. African theatre is also sometimes looked at performances presented in Africa prior to the coming of the Arabs and Europeans to Africa.

### **1.1 Prehistoric Stages of African Theatre**

African traditional theatre was an integral part of the performance culture that existed in African societies prior to the coming of western civilization. In Egypt they had the pyramid plays, coronation festival plays, “Heh Sed” (coronation jubilees), and passion plays dating back to almost 4000 B.C. There were also Ra (Sun god) plays about his nocturnal fight with Apophis, snake god of the underworld; Ra always won. The most famous ... Passion play was the Osiris Passion Play; performed at Abydos between 1887 and 1849 B.C. ‘This’ as always, concerned the murder and dismemberment of Osiris, an early King (who subsequently became a god), by his brother Seth, and the reassembling of his body by his wife –sister Isis and their son Horus.

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The performance included battles on land and water, voyages on the Nile, and a scary resurrection scene. The action took several days. There were also the pyramid plays which were religious ceremonies which acted sections about either the ascent of a deceased King's soul to become one of the imperishable stars, or a king's resurrection (Graham 1999). Elsewhere in Mali Ibn Battutta recorded the dramatic presentations in palaces festivals, coronations, puberty rites, planting and harvest festivals etc., the story teller or griot is ever present in most African communities. His performances are not just done but involves processes and are presented by a specialist's group of people which involves the elements of total theatre sculpture, painting, scarification, music, dance, mime, possession, acrobatics, animal juggling, costume, make-up and narrative, mostly achieved through the use of sound, and drummed language communicated through instrumental sound and drummed communication for the realization of a dramatic presentation. A profession such as this, in which all aspects of the African world view is expressed, entails reviewing and appraising their transmissions of cultural values of African cosmic world view. According to Traore (1980, p. 7),

These artists' achievements find their main expression in an abundant oral literature consisting of myths, legends, stories, short pieces in prose and verse, rhymed or free, and finally satires. This is no mere puppet show or exhibition of conjurers, magicians and animal charmers, as is found in certain parts of Africa, but real drama with a perfect sense of plot and unity, aiming through its actors, to develop a given theme.

These artists tell the African story, their achievements migrations, and encounters in an orderly sense of presentation before the people. Thus, in every form of dramatic presentation, we observe that there is orderliness in movement, sequence, music, drumming, dance, mimetic presentations and pantomimic dramatization. But there are some sensitive and concerned contemporary African theatre artists who in their search for meaning in African theatre practices or the indigenous or traditional African theatre are confused or tangled up by the contradictions of looking at African indigenous theatrical practices from the view point of Eurocentric aesthetics. - With regards to the reliance on Western theatre theorists' emphasis on the text like Ruth Finnegan, Gbileka, Echeruo, etc. of the Finnegan school of thought.

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African theatre relies on a total theatrical performance experience of which Hymes, tells us that “textual analysis “is with performance, not as something mechanical or inferior, as some linguistic discussion, but with, performance as something creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of ordinary course of events” (as cited in Okpewho, 1979, p. 4). From this discourse we can decipher that African drama does not emphasize language or linguistic content of communication but a total theatrical experience involving the use of the sense’s music, instrumental sounds, songs, drummed communication, sculpture, painting, to make meaning. But the actual dramatic creations are narrated through the use of music, dance, mime, songs, visual arts, masquerade and pantomimic dramatization as forms of narrative to achieve its desired artistic expression of entertaining, educating and enlightening its audience, which is the primary goal in any form of dramatic presentational experience.

### **1.2 Functionality of African Performance**

Echeruo (1980) a critic of the evolutionary Finnegan school of thought even at the height of his doubts on the dramatic completeness of African theatre in the course of his studies recognizes the Efik’s, Yoruba’s and Ijaw’s as having a complete dramatic culture’s that have spanned centuries. Thus, the need arises if there is a dramatic culture in Africa south of the Sahara, to identify if it fulfills dramatic purpose like that of the Greeks, Romans, Indians, Chinese, and Japanese etc.

According (Ikiroma-Owiye, 2007), Then if these performances perform dramatic functions and are complete, in them then comes the question who coordinates, controls, dictates or performs the functions of the director in these African traditional theatre performance practices. In a sense, the orderliness experienced in African traditional theatre performances in terms of composition, movement, rhythm, picturerization and pantomimic dramatization must be the handiwork of some great artist. In Greece the Choregus serves as a master communicator rehearsing the chorus coordinating and dictating movement so also is the chief drummer or master instrumentalist in African theatre.

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In furtherance of this discourse on the functionality of traditional African performance dynamics we will also examine what some other scholars have said about African theatre in fulfilling the core of drama. Especially when it comes to the role of artists, like who is in charge of the performance process, the language of the performance, the script, director, directing, and the place of the audience in a performance. Richard Schechner (1973, 9. 5-6), in his article "Drama, script, theatre and performance" explaining the role and functionality of performance in society opines that

Altogether to "theatre" and "performance." Before attempting a concrete, tax-onomical presentation of these words I must acknowledge the difficulty of using them. Words like "script," "drama," "theatre," and "performance" is loaded, and none have neutral synonyms. We know nothing of the scripts used by the dancer-shamans of the Palaeolithic temple-theatres. I don't say 'texts,' which mean written documents. I say 'scripts, which mean something that pre- exist any given enactment, which act as a blue print for enactment, and which persists from enactment to enactment.

The achievements of African artists do not just occur but have a sense of orderliness and preparatory rehearsals before presentation. Thus, in every form of dramatic presentation, we observe that there is sequence, orderliness in movement, music, song, dance, mimetic presentations and pantomimic dramatization which embodies the aesthetics of dramatic presentation.

### **2. EUROCENTRIC PERCEPTION AND PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES**

Africans have been seen as primitive, undeveloped, unable to create culture or make meaning to it. We have also seen that there has been a dearth of studies documenting, examining and interpreting discourse on African traditional theatrical practices of which if this trend continues African indigenous theatrical practice will go extinct overtime like current trend in the speaking of indigenous languages by children. Also, presently we have seen cultural conflict which has resulted in the scarcity of cultural performances due to the role of Christianity, Islam and modernization. We have seen that the cultural identity and knowledge, and creative economic productive systems of the people are embedded in these performances.

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An African traditional dramatic festival is what creates cohesion and unity among the people. Thus, in order to break their resolve such strong cultural institutions need to be discouraged because if encouraged it will be difficult to culturally dominate the people so there is a need to denigrate such performance processes as fetish, primitive and bereft of meaning form or content. There is also the notion held by some scholars that these performance processes do not have a sense of direction, directing or organization and functions of the director in African traditional theatre practice, which has not been addressed by scholars of African theatre.

There is also the issue of African dramatic performance practices been presented in images produced autographically and audio-visually by sociologists and anthropologists who are not of African origin to qualify African theatre for Africans? If African dramatic tradition is accepted it would turn to an academic subject of study thus the anthropologist Johannes Fabian (1999, p. 28), revealed that to the European “performances need to be dismissed because they are threatening to any enterprise, project or institution that depends for its existence on maintaining distance and control. Most nation states, many religions and academic disciplines are of that kind.” This phenomenon gives rise to the urgent need for Africans to redress this imbalance by taking control of the media of production by creating her own images from her own cultural perspective and theoretically linking performance relationships with the drama of other nations. To realize this process the visual ethnographic method of research is necessary to grasp the centrality of the missing link in the presentation of facts about the role of African theatre in making meaning and serving as a source of the people’s creative economy.

Thus, identifying who is in charge of communicating the unfolding dramatic action, ideas or controlling the language/dialogue of the performance process has experienced a dearth in examining this phenomenon in respect to African traditional performance practices, which has resulted to the contentious issue of African theatre not having language/script of performance. If this trend, of the non-audio-visual examination of artistic process and artists continues without proper empirical examination like the chief drummer in Ekine drama.

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The demise or death of a chief drummer versed in these performance process most dramatic notes and tones will go extinct overtime and it will connote that African traditional drama has no language, script of performance or a sense of organization or directing. Consequently, coupled with the euro centrists desire to deny Africa any form of knowledge African indigenous theatrical practice will go extinct over time with attacks from religion, culture and academics. There is also the notion held by some scholars that these African traditional performances do not have language of communication. Without language of communication there can be no sense of direction or directing. Hence for there to be direction there must be a language of communication. Subsequently the problem of organization and sense of direction surrounding the existence and functions of a director in African traditional theatre practice has been a problem that has not been addressed by scholars of African theatre.

### **2.1 Universality of Theatrical Narrative**

This phenomenon of tonal narrative in performance is embedded in the drum lore tones of the chief drummer in Ekine drama which is a natural phenomenon in the performance culture of African societies south of the Sahara. The use of the drum language in communication is evident in most African societies and every other oral culture without an orthographic tradition in the world though deciphered in differing forms. Based on this observation I agree with Barthes that narrative cannot be confined to only one culture but a relative universal phenomenon which can be perceived in the cultural performances of all peoples of the world either in written, spoken, chanted, danced, masked, or musical drama performance forms. In furtherance of this view of the universality of dramatic/ performance culture narratives in the world Turner (1993, p. 67), also observes vividly while describing cultural narrative in relation to dramatic performance of ‘traditional societies especially in Asia and Africa thus Some societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories. Story telling can take many forms- myths, legends, ballads, folk-tales, rituals, dance, histories, novels, jokes, drama- and can be seen to have many apparently difficult social functions- from entertainment to religious construction it seems that story telling is part of our cultural experience, inseparable from and intrinsic to it.

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This clearly depicts that every culture/society tells stories, stories about the past exploits of their ancestors which they narrate to their forebears, through a chosen form of narrative; conversant with the culture concerned which most times in Ekine dramatic convention are embedded in drum lore tones ushered by the chief drummer which serves as the communal script of masquerade performance. These communal scripts contain the reenacted story of the ancestors which is dramatized as a representation of ancestral spirits or in the words of Nzewi 'spirit 'manifests.' These spirit manifests are representatives of the ancestor's whose stories and past exploits are reenacted by actors in a dramatic performance. The past exploits of the ancestors in Ekine dramatic convention as embedded in drum lore tones coordinated and controlled by the Chief drummer come in the form of metaphors and allegories, riddles, jokes etc. thus in representing these notes dramatically, the role of the dramatic characters is to pantomimic ally respond to the drum language signals of the chief drummer in respect to the story behind the play i.e. ferocious warrior, protector of the harem, jester, clown, pilferer etc. which are mostly anthropomorphic characters bearing human characteristics been presented by masked dramatic characters through use of gestures, and dance movements.

### **2.2 Language in Indigenous African Theatre**

The language of communication in Ekine (African) drama is a communally integrated work like that of greek theatre, symbols coordinated by music and instrumental sounds like the chief drummer who dictates, and controls dramatic composition, movement, rhythm, picturerization, and pantomimic dramatization which are basic fundamentals of performing theatre, as evident in performance. This study will decipher how the chief drummer in Kalabari society is instilled by cultural dictates to function as an encyclopedia/text narrator, master communicator, informer, dictator, and all-round i.e. omniscient performer director in social and dramatic circumstances. The chief drummer prior to the performance also uses the drum language to coordinate the rehearsal process and the performance proper as the drummer is ever present calling for rehearsals, coordinating the rehearsals and directing affairs in performance. Turner (1993, p. 68), furthermore in his discourse on narratives in cultural performance explains that:

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Narrative can be described as a means of making sense of our social world, and sharing that 'sense' with others. Its universality underlies its intrinsic place in human communication 'of which every society has developed its own style over the years that are meaningful in their performance culture.

### **2.3 The Text, Script, Storyline**

The performance "text" in African traditional dramatic experience is enmeshed in the performance process. In buttressing this fact Adedeji referenced Alardyce Nicoll, as saying that

The exaltation of the "theatre arts" in modern times has created a peculiar type of confusion which ignores the wider implications of the development of theatrical art. A very considerable area of the theatrical endeavor has nothing to do with dramatic literature, of plays, ballet, commedia dell'arte, mime-all these, and more, extend its territory and carry us away from the boundaries of drama. Basically, the theatre implies a performance given by one group of persons before an assembled audience." (as cited in Okpakor & Opubor et-al 1986 p. 103).

I agree with this notion in terms diversity of dramatic art, as there are indigenous systems which are whole and complete in them, such as the Ekin dramatic society of the Kalabri Ijaw that often require and demand a unique understanding of the cultural content and contextual indices associated with them to analyze their value systems of storyline, text, language of performance, dialogue and directing. African traditional theatrical practices entail the use of total theatrical exposition of visual and plastic art like mask, mime, music, dance, song, ululation, possession, magic, drum, and elaborate costumes to realize its primary objective. The audiences in African theatre/drama are used to the performance traits as they already know the thematic thrust embedded in the dramatic piece and must have heard the myth, legend or story behind the performance, from their parents or elders in the family or community just like early Greek drama of Aeschylus, Sophocles Euripides and Aristophanes.. What they have come out to watch is how the masquerade characters or dramatic characters will reenact or interpret the script the story in adherence to the language of communication through movement, body expression, and gesture in dance sequences in African traditional dramatic context.

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These seasonal masquerade dramatic festivals formed the major source of education, entertainment and cultural transmission of knowledge in precolonial African society.

### **2.4 Rituals and Theatre**

It is not all African traditional performances that are ritually inclined. In some African societies performances are meant mainly for societal entertainment and edification. African performance culture is playing culture and playing culture is “a mode of expression, and education through which a society communicates its value system, a wide range of playful activities that relates to its social history through dramatic or theatrical performances to members of the society. Theatrical performance in Africa through repetition is the major means of communicating ideas or transmitting cultural values to members of society without a writing culture. Thus, the festival oriented theatrical event in Africa is a non-literary educational and entertaining ‘performance’ that corresponds closely with film and other enlightening moving images, ‘like’ visual arts, dance, music etc. in transferring knowledge from one generation to another. In a sense the playing culture in ‘Africa’ has strong physical, spiritual and mystical elements, which have to be learned through repetitive performance over centuries. Umukoro (2011, p. 90) opines in his discourse on performing theatre that

The iconography of the theatre subsumes the aural and the visual, blending sound and vision into one vital, throbbing pageant ... its fundamentally allusive and circuitous style of communication is hardly surprising that the theatre tends to be dominated by the twin art of parable and satire.

Africans speak in parables, riddles and jokes thus a word, gesture or facial expression can be translated into many sentences. Thus, the symbolic representation of characters traits through the use of masquerade, dance, sound and visual representations we see in human life, coupled with social-cultural, and political realities are nothing more than what is presented in the magnificent feast festivals of history. African people themselves must learn to honor their own before other people honor them (Asante, 2014).

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Consequently, the notion of viewing African performances from a ritualistic perspective have made some scholars to lose sight of the dramatic nature, content and context of these performances as both the ritual aspects and the dramatic aspects are performed by the same people classified guilds, cults or societies in most African societies.

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DRAMA / AND GENERAL PERCEPTION OF AFRICAN  
INDIGENOUS DRAMA AND THEATRE**

Ekine masquerade drama performances make sense to the dramatic characters and the audience as they know the story behind each performance, which they might have been told by their parents, uncles, aunts, or elders in the family as a narrative transmission of the embodiments of cultural mythology, and cosmology of the people. But Ekine drama has not been dramatically or critically reviewed from its cultural perspective but judged from an anthropological, sociological and historical documentation point of view. This we have evidenced in the documentation of African (Ekine) performance culture where the anthropologist Jones (1963), and Horton (1968) documented Ekine performance culture for posterity even though their works were bereft of critical performance dramaturgy. Thus, we see works of scholars on masquerade performance not examining the role of the various characters that make a dramatic production possible, like the director, language and dialogue/script of the performance and who coordinates or exercises preeminent control in developing dramatic process especially critically examining the role of the chief drummer in a performance like Ekine drama.

Concerning Ekine drama the works of Robin Horton has given a good descriptive and explanatory history of Ekine drama and to some extent the use of the drum language of communication but not a critical examination of the chief drummer's role in a performance process. Bell-Gam (2012) also made a case for the chief drummer "The Akwa- Faribo as Director" which is an article in which he clearly depicted the difference between stage orientation and the Akwafaribo (Chief drummers) role in coordinating Inji-Owu performance.

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Adeoye (2010) also made a case for the director in the traditional African theatre where he analyzed the concept of directing but did not situate it with an African traditional performance culture. Sunday Ododo's Facequerade, made a good explanatory and expository case for Ebira Ekuechi festival as drama. Okwesa's (1972) also gave an evidentiary narration of Ekine performance culture but her work is bereft of field work. She opinionated a critical examination of the omniscient role of the chief drummer in Ekine masquerade performance which needs to be investigated, critically examined and analyzed. Which leads us to what theatrical practice in Africa requires, research that documents, critically examines, assesses and interprets performance practices which best express dramatic culture from the differing cultural distinctiveness/uniqueeness of traditional African dramatic performance traditions.

Echeruo (1980) a critic of the Finnegan school of thought even at the height of his doubts in the course of his studies recognizes the Efik's, Yoruba's and Ijaw's as having dramatic culture's that have spanned centuries. Thus, the need arises if there is a dramatic culture in Africa south of the Sahara, to identify who coordinates, controls, dictates or performs the functions of the director in these African traditional theatre performance practices. In a sense, the orderliness experienced in African traditional theatre performances in terms of composition, movement, rhythm, picturerization and pantomimic dramatization must be the handiwork of some great artist (Ikiroma-Owiye, 2007). Especially as it relates to the performance proper when the traditional directors function comes to fore in the omniscient dictates of the chief drummer in performance be it in dance, ritual festival or dramatic reenactment in traditional African societies. Thus, this study will be critically examining the chief drummer's functions in Ekine drama performance as it will help situate him as performing the functions of a director in ekine dramatic performance context. His renditions embody the script and dramatic dialogue in Kalabari cultural context which needs to be interpreted, analyzed and preserved for posterity. Thus, preserving his contributions to dramatic communication in terms of tonal narrative will preserve his functions in world dramatic art for posterity.

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In furtherance of this discourse on the functionality of traditional African performance dynamics we will also examine what some other scholars have said about African theatre in fulfilling the core of drama. Especially when it comes to the role of artists, like who is in charge of the performance process, the language of the performance, the script, director, directing, and the place of the audience in a performance.

### **3.1 The influence of Islam and Christianity**

In respect of the African developing culture, contending positions vary as Count Volney perceived when he saw the Sphinx in Egypt, challenging scholars of Gobeneau's position, that western civilization was learnt from black Africans even the very use of speech. To this Johannes Fabian contends that western thought sees the cultural practices of the developing world as a threat to the dominance of Europe in academics and scholarship thus African civilizations contribution to world body of knowledge need to be dismissed. However, concerning the practicability and functionality of African drama in terms of coordination, narration and who is in charge, or who controls, dictates and directs the performance process there are varying contending positions. While some scholar 's like Richard Schechner, Richard Wagner, Johannes Fabian, etc. are objective in their conception that dramatic art in the world, is relative by broadening the intellectual space to accommodate new ideas of communication in performance studies. Finnegan (1970, p. 467-468) in asserting the communicative nature of drummed communication says that

A remarkable phenomenon in parts of west and central Africa is the literature played on drums and certain other instruments... the instruments themselves are regarded as speaking and n their messages consist of words. Such communication, unlike that through conventional signals, is intended as a linguistic one; it can only be fully appreciated by translating it into words and any musical effects are purely incidental. Echeruo (1980) a critic of the Finnegan school of thought even at the height of his doubts in the course of his studies recognizes the Efik's, Yoruba's and Ijaw's as having dramatic culture's that have spanned centuries.

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Thus, the drum language is not intended for musical effects but plays a central role in social functions and performance culture of the people and serves as the language of communication in theatre performance of which it also embodies the language, script/drama of the performance. Even in terms of narration, one of the most quoted utterances proclaiming the central role of narratives in human social performance function in life comes from the French semiology's and literary critic Barthes; 'who in his analysis of narrative in cultural performance explains that

The narratives of the world are numberless. 'Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories.' Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. ever. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans-historical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (as cited in Czamlawska, 2004).

This phenomenon of tonal narrative in performance is embedded in the drum lore tones of the chief drummer in Ekine drama which is a natural phenomenon in African cultures south of the Sahara. The use of the drum language in communication is evident in most African societies and every oral culture without an orthographic tradition in the world though deciphered in differing forms. Based on this observation I agree with Barthes opinion, as he had seen narrative not confined to only one culture but a relative universal phenomenon which can be perceived in the cultural performances of all peoples of the world either in written, spoken, chanted, danced, masked, or musical drama performance forms. In furtherance of this view of the universality of dramatic/ performance culture narratives in the world Turner (1993, p. 67), also observes vividly while describing cultural narrative in relation to dramatic performance of 'traditional societies especially in Asia and Africa thus Some societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories.

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Story telling can take many forms- myths, legends, ballads, folk-tales, rituals, dance, histories, novels, jokes, drama- and can be seen to have many apparently difficult social functions- from entertainment to religious construction it seems that story telling is part of our cultural experience, inseparable from and intrinsic to it.

This clearly depicts that every culture/society tells stories, stories about the past exploits of their ancestors which they narrate to their forebears, through a chosen form of narrative; conversant with the culture concerned which most times in Ekine dramatic convention are embedded in drum lore tones ushered by the chief drummer which serves as the communal script of masquerade performance. If the Japanese Noh performer uses mime, music, and stylized movements as techniques of representation. The performer of the Indian Kathakali drama uses esoteric gestures and surrealistic costumes and make-up to stimulate action that is being narrated in song and dance, the Chinese shadow players imitate action by the use of “moving figures made of animal skins and cardboard different traditions obviously utilize different techniques to imitate action. It would therefore be misleading to review African mask-performance which uses stylized movement, gestures; dance accompanied by music, songs, masks, costumes, make-up and drummed communication to realize a dramatic situation in terms of the dramatic techniques of another culture.

### **3.2 Similarity between African Traditional Theatre and Drama in India, China, Japan and Classical Greece**

All over the world from aeon of time to the present age drama has served an edifying role in all human societies even though modes of presentation differ. Thus, in all human societies there has been some form of dramatic re-enacting of human feelings and actions performed by a group of people in front of an audience restricted or general in religious ceremonies as recreational activities, sometimes eliciting fear, exciting, frightening or edifying experiences. In some cases, spectacular for entertainment, while in other cases as object of social education or mere buffoonery like we experience in some masquerade's reenactments in African theatre today. Drama or dramatic performance in Greek signifies “action.” which is associated with the Dionysian festival.

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Dramatic activities were performed by the group called the Dithyrambs which is a specialist group of artists responsible for dramatic composition and presentation in the alter of Dionysus in classical Greece. So also, in Africa dramatic performance is associated with a particular guild, cult or group. In Kalabari society is the Ekine Ogboapu (society) who are responsible for the spiritual ad physical representation of dramatic activities in the community. In Africa, drama is referred to as play which is the vision of man in movement in his environment as experienced in all dramatic compositions from eons of time. This behooves the reason to preserve imbibe able aspects of African theatre that create harmony and meaning for posterity, for them not to go extinct in this age of multiculturalism and globalization.

In furtherance of these relationships, we see a clear perception of the development of Greek theatre with Pisistratus using the theatre to replace public execution as a means of communal excitement. For we have seen that theatre all over the world share the same functions, values and elicit similar responses to them per formative enactments before her audience. Karikpo, and Aminikpo relationship with the Chinese and Indian dances, Karikpo the somersaulting dance masquerade, and Aminikpo the puppetry tradition of the Ogoni's in Rivers State of Nigeria is still housed in its cult group while the Chinese have liberated theirs from its origins and have developed a modern play from it by increasing the number of participants to reasonable number eliminating masks and incorporating beautiful and colorful costumes.

Karikpo the antelope horn itself is a hindrance to the performer. But if it is removed from the sacred foundations change the masks to cloths increase the number of participants in a well choreographed manner incorporate into the ducational system teaching children you will see its relationship clearly with the Chinese summersaulting dance. The Chinese Dragon dance drama and the Odum of the Okrika people are also similar in performance. One is celebrated on water while the Chinese and Indians celebrate theirs on land. Aminikpo and Japanese puppet theatre there are real similarities between these performing cultures of the world based on the sensory developmental level of the perceiver.

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To buttress the communal nature of theatre further Okpewho (1979), likened the theatre to biological organism, as a living thing, subject to growth and change, contends that theories and performance modes are not codes handed down from heaven like the Bible to Moses. They are products of historical ideology; descriptions on how things need be done and not commands as performing habits and theatrical practices of man which has evolved through aeon of time that have experienced changes overtime. Sequel to this trend in support of the performative nature of African theatrical practice Renov (1993, p.1), in his discourse on culture, posits that “the assumption that dominant cultural forms or theoretical approaches should enjoy a right of way had been challenged.”

Be cause of the relationships between performing cultures. It is only when you do not understand the performing nature of a culture that you will not see these glaring relationships. Theatrical performance in classical Greece was performed in three days and each day, between one evolution of the sun this sequential arrangement of events, also occurs in African (Ekine) dramatic convention. In Greek theatre a Goat is sacrificed to announce the beginning of the festival in African theatre too an animal is sacrificed to initiate the festival but the sacrificial animal depends on the society in which the masquerade is to be performed, i.e. Goat, Ram, or Foul is used as sacrificial animals to initiate performances.

Thus, we see African dramatic performances like Ekine, Ekong, kwirgehir, Egungun etc., as communal affairs as there are no restrictions to which category of people constitutes the audience, men, women, children, chiefs, and people from neighboring communities, and ancestral spirits all constituting the the performers and members of the audience and attendance is free for all. Furthermore, drama which represents man in movement must primarily reflect those sociocultural and environmental changes motivated by man’s cultural contact with other cultures, which must show our performance and theoretical approaches change with time. This notion Brockett and Hildy (2007, p.16) explicitly observe and states in relation to the imaginative and emotional experience witnessed by the audience of a dramatic performance thus.

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To experience (emotionally, imaginatively and intellectually) what it means to be human in the broadest sense ought to be one of the primary goals of both education and life; few approaches have greater potential than theatre for reaching this goal, because humanity is its subject and human beings its primary medium.

Theatrical or dramatic performance being a reflection of the cultural emotion of man is relative and must be perceived from its sociocultural perspective as it is the basic means of education in most African traditional societies. People who are not conversant with African indigenous performance modes often sometimes restrict the definitions of theatrical or dramatic performance to the written text or spoken word.

Most times neglecting all the other modes or aspects of theatrical communication, of education, entertainment, enlightenment all engaging the people in a spiritual relationship embracing the gods, actors through incantations, invocations and drummed communication which also embodies script, storyline and dialogue in most sub-Saharan African communities. In respect to the reinvigorating nature of cultural symbiosis Schechner on his study of the development and opportunities of the performing arts explains in this perspective of change that

“I’ve been travelling a lot these past few months ... India, china, Ann Arbor, Texas, and Chicago. And I have seen a lot of performances ranging from jinju (Beijing opera) to performance art, from classic dramas to rehearsals of new works of students... the impression I get is that colleagues in India and china are searching through their alternatives concerning training, scholaring, and producing both classic and new works. (p. 4-6)

### **4. PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN THEATRE**

African theatre is not in the educational curriculum of primary schools and secondary schools which are the basic foundations of any society. You cannot develop theatre without it being embedded in in the primary syllabus, because it is the basis of the socioeconomic foundation of the society. Thus, understanding how this theatrical practice is created leads to learning the foundational skills arts and crafts of the performing society.

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Interpretations of performance sequences and who dictates, controls, determines events as they unfold in the dramatic process and documenting same as evidences of traditional theatre practice for posterity. Different scholars have come up with diverse opinions as to this viable academic discourse in support of defining the existence of scholarship on the development of in African traditional theatrical practices with an omniscient director who oversees the harmonious unity of the performance. Which this recorded evidence will lay bare the authenticity of this discourse.

Form the foregoing we have seen that dramatic performances in African societies do not just occur. They are put together by a specialist group of artists, in relation to the society concerned. From this group of artists someone is assigned the function of coordinating the performance, flutist, master drummer, lead singer as the case may be, for them to achieve the desired purpose of a unified production. That person must be someone in-charge of the performance process as prescribed by the community; concerned who organizes, controls, dictates, composition, movement, rhythm, picturerization, and pantomimic dramatization in the course of the performance. The seen or unseen hand who performs these functions in Ekine drama that cultural distance has blinded from identifying especially by most scholars of African theatre/drama (Ekine drama) is the chief drummer.

African indigenous theatrical practice will go extinct overtime like current trend in the speaking of indigenous languages by children. Also, presently we have seen cultural conflict which has resulted in the scarcity of cultural performances due to the role of Christianity, Islam and modernization. We have seen that the cultural identity, knowledge and economic productive system of the people as embedded in these performances. African traditional dramatic festival is what creates cohesion and unity among the people. Thus, in order to break their resolve such strong cultural institutions need to be discouraged and dismissed because if encouraged it will be difficult to culturally dominate the people by keeping them poor, so there is a need to denigrate such production-based performance processes as fetish, primitive and bereft of meaning form or content. There is also the notion held by some scholars that these performance processes do not have a sense of direction, directing or organization.

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There has also been problem of organization and sense of direction surrounding the existence and functions of the director in African traditional theatre practice, which has not been addressed by scholars of African theatre. There is also the issue of African dramatic performance practices been presented in images produced auto-graphically and audio-visually by sociologists and anthropologists who are not of African origin for Africans? This phenomenon gives rise to the urgent need for Africans to redress this imbalance by taking control of the media of production by creating her own images from her own cultural perspective.

To realize this process the visual ethnographic method of research is necessary to grasp the centrality of the missing link in the presentation of facts about the role of the chief drummer in Ekine performance sequential process which has not been empirically examined. The demise or death of such an artist or elder versed in these performance process most dramatic notes and tones will go extinct overtime and it will connote that African traditional drama has no language, script of performance or a sense of direction or directing. Consequently, coupled with the euro centrists desire to deny Africa any form of knowledge African indigenous theatrical practice will go extinct over time with attacks from religion, culture and academics.

From the fore going it has already been established by scholars that Africa housed the best of dramatic practices in terms of total theatre. But Eurocentric scholars because of cultural distance want to deny the uniqueness of African theatre, but the issue, of who directs these practices in a performance have not been subjected to a dramatically inclined critical empirical investigation/examination. The real problem arises from the most important criterion for distinguishing, critically examining and interpreting the chief drummer's, lead dancer, lead singers' function in coordinating, controlling, dictating and directing performance sequences as distinct to western theoretical canons in theatre directing where the directors function ends at the rehearsals. But in African traditional drama all that transpires in the rehearsal process is left to the omniscient dictates of the chief drummer to relate the script/ drama to the dramatic characters and audience in performance.

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Non institutionalization of African cultural arts and crafts have led lack of empirical documentations has also led to the loss of performance details especially at the demise of a chief drummer, or cultural content and context specialists thus and encyclopedia of knowledge is lost to society.

### **5. STAGE AND STAGING**

#### **5.1 The Stage**

In support of the multi-functionality of traditional African drama Okafor (1991, p. 43-44) in her article on the nature of traditional African theatrical performance “Behind the Instruct Able Wonder: The Dramaturgy of Mask Performance in Traditional African Society” opines that,

Traditional theatre does not only refer to the physical arena in which the simulated action takes place but also to the cosmic dimension of the environment. The theatre is therefore a center where the metaphysical action of spirits can be represented through masking. Against this multi-dimensional background, the entire village becomes the acting terrain where players as well as spectators define their spaces.

The stage is mostly situated in the market square which can be assessed from different angles and it is related to the modern thrust, and theatre in the round stages. The audience mostly sit or stand around three corners of the stage and the fourth side serving as the orchestra area with people standing behind the orchestra. African traditional theatre performance culture in a sense embodies all aspects of the people’s way of life. The interrelationship between man and his environment, the intermingling between men, women, children, chiefs, the aged, animals, plants the terrestrial and celestial that constitute the mystical aura that engulfs the performing aspects of this unique form of theatre. This mystical occurrence of inter connectivity is what Victor Turner classifies as the ‘liminal’ which all eyes cannot see the transformations, transmigration's and transfiguration's that occur in the course of African traditional theatrical atmosphere, which also involves possessions and sometimes transformations that all eyes cannot see. Housing theatre has limited theatre to an urban paying audience.

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African theatre is not housed, it is the educational encyclopedia of the people and thus staged in an open square mostly town square, king's courtyard, compound square, sea shore etc., depending on the performing group. Almost every part of the community sometimes constitutes the performing area hence confining such theatre to a limited area will reduce the sense of spectacle. And audience participation because it is an educational theatre where the people come out to learn their culture through participation and practice. Performances are free for all as an all-embracing educational institution. African stage comprises limited actors and a large performative audience. The modern African stage should be structured in a way that it will have an area for the orchestra, actors and the general performing area to contain actors and the performing audience which is mostly crowd scenes.

A play like J. P. Clark's *Song of a Goat* and Soyinka's *Dance in the Forest* if well indigenized would have constituted a very good example of a typical African theatrical performance. In the *Song of a Goat* the play would have begun with the typical Ijaw wrestling contest in a flash back revealing Zifa's exploits as a wrestling champion showing his opponents and contests to showcase the strong wrestling tradition of the Ijaw people, which will appeal to any African that has wrestling as a primary aspect of depicting manhood in their culture. The other aspect would have the character of the sorceress Orukorere whose dialogue and movements would have been representative of the act of mermaid worship and sorcery as experienced in most Ijaw villages accompanied with the earthen pot music dictating and controlling all her movements with limited dialogue. Soyinka's *Dance in the Forest* depicting Nigeria's independence would have exhibited most Nigerian cultural dances clearly showing dance as a unifying factor in social activities of mankind as the audience that constitute these dances or dramatic performances come from far and wide because they are associated with festivals.

In the art of theatrical practice in modern times, there are no universally accepted standards to affirm what constitutes theatre or drama in any society." Thus, if we must appraise traditional African theatrical performance modes with view of not "surrendering artistic superiority" to western and Eurocentric principles of theatre, there must be a critical survey of performance modes."

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Schechner has bridged the gap of misconception of performance modes by his theory deciphering various performance cultures of the world as fulfilling the same dramatic purpose. In terms of directing, directors vary on how they approach the interpretation of a script in the rehearsal process but the final goal of the director's work is a unified production or performance. In terms of directing a production in western theatre we see the director's closest counterpart to the Choregus, or chorus trainer of the chorus in classical Greek drama the original source of western concept of theatre. The choregus work consists mainly in teaching dance techniques, perfecting the synchronization of movement. In a sense, interpreting the theme of the production, through a question-and-answer section of choral rendition in terms of actor's stage position, movement, rhythm and pantomimic dramatization. This directorial function is achieved through dramatic sound and movement of the chief drummer in African theatre Wagner perceives as the primary objective of the theatrical process which entails spectacle, a total use of all the senses which is an inherent aspect or an embodiment of African theatre involving a totality of all the arts in unison. Therefore, when looking at dramatic performances the most similar to African traditional (Ekine) performance tradition is the Indian Kathakali dance which is a highly stylized classical Indian dance drama noted for her attractive make-up of characters, elaborate, costumes, and detailed gestures as well as well-defined body movements which is presented in tune with the anchor play back music and complementary percussion that determine actors movement and interactions. The language of the performance which coordinates movement and rhythm is based on the music and songs and the songs used for Kathakali dance drama are called manipravalam. This type of theatrical performance culture took its roots from the religious temple songs of Krishna worship which used to be sung ... at several Temples at the time when Kathakali was born. In this form of drama the lead singer in some senses uses the Chengala (gong made of bell-metal, which can be struck with a wooden stick) and Ilathalam (a pair of cymbals) to conduct the Vadyam and Getha components, which determine cue and scene changes just as a the chief drummer in Ekine drama or a conductor uses his wand in Western classical music to alternate the tone and melody of the orchestra, coordinating, controlling, dictating scene and mood changes through tempo and rhythm.

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Consequently the complete ignorance of most people in misconceiving the role of music and drum language in directing African traditional theatre and the role of the director in contemporary theatre is that the director in contemporary theatre is not seen in the performance even though he coordinates and blends all the other aspects of the production to a collective whole in the course of rehearsals, but the music and sounds of the chief drummer African drama is perceived as controlling, dictating the performance from the rehearsals to the performance as an omniscient performer director.

### **5.2 Content of the Play Script, Storyline and Dialogue in African Indigenous Theatre**

Content of the play script, storyline and dialogue is presented through music or drummed communication which is central in controlling and dictating the dramatic content of the play like an orchestra or musical conductor during rehearsals and in the course of a performance in African theatre. Music performs directorial functions dictating the dramatic sequences from the beginning of the performance to the end of the performance. Observational learning is the most preeminent form of learning in prior to orthographic societies learning was mostly carried out by rote.

A fundamental objective of African traditional performance culture is that the actors never speak but use facial and bodily gestures and expressions in rhythmic harmony coupled with dancing instead of dialogue to create dramatic impressions. This phenomenon is almost what transpires in African masquerade theatrical practices where dramatic characters do not exchange dialogue but it is the drum tones of the chief drummer who controls dialogue and narrates the script in the course of performance communicating cues, movement, stage positions (composition), character, character interactions and audience responses and dialogue in the course of a performance.

This is achieved through the tones ushered from his mastery of the drum language of communication thus performing the functions of directing in Ekin dramatic convention.

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Thus, a study of the development of African dramatic culture (theatrical practices) warrants critical objectivity and sincere handling of details, in view of situating who performs the various dramatic functions in traditional African forms of theatre with particular reference to Ekine theatre where learning the performance mode is mastered through observational practice and performance. This leads to the question what is African traditional theatrical performance theory in its performance context and content.

### **5.3 Costumes Headpiece and Makeup as Aspects of Indigenous Art and Crafts**

Costumes, in Ekine performance came in varying forms. The performance depicted the rich dressing culture of the Kalabari. This is because the Kalabari man believes in good food, good dressing and stylishness *Asa ti*. Without which he feels in complete which also reflects in the costumes of Ekine members. In costuming various accoutrements and accessories are used from the example of *igwangi*'s costume and head gear below



**Figure 1.** *Igwangi* Adorned With Toru Chalk Kaoline Used to Decorate Body Parts with an Impressing Head Gear. Egbelegbe Headpiece Made up About 46 Different Bird Feathers

Piko (feather) plumes are some of the elegant and flamboyant decorations used in dressing major masquerades. In ekine masquerade performance the masquerades chief costume is the *owu sibi* (the mask) or head gear which is the central symbol of the masquerade performance culture.

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The igbiri (rattle) eweni mettalic rattle, these are mainly tied to the wrists and ankles. For the women 'kurukru bite' that is black George, rolled above the breast, Iria costume lion cloth, trinkets, earrings, Necklaces, wristlets, arm bands, coral beads, for young maidens display wealth and affluence in relation to the family. For the women 'kurukru bite' that is black George, rolled above the breast, Iria costume lion cloth, trinkets, earrings, Necklaces, wristlets, arm bands, coral beads, for young maidens display wealth and affluence in relation to the family.



**Figure 2.** Young Maidens Dressed in Traditional Costumes in Egbelege Performance Sourced from Field Work



**Figure 3.** A Fully Attired Woman Iriabo, Sourced from Field Work

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Imunu-munu (palmfronds), epeingie (raffia tassels) are stuffed at the rear of mostly fierce masquerades to give them dignity but this is absent in Egbelegbe performance. Toru chalk kaolin was used to decorate body parts or head gear, as seen in Igwangi's make-up and Ikoli ogie (sword) held by Egbelegbe in his hands to scar away any intruder. Kieni walking stick scepter, as held by Sbinume and her maidens. Sbinume and her maidens holding walking stick scepters are noble and romantic in appearance in the course of the performance.



**Figure 4.** Ekiti Members Wearing Colourful Costumes Etibo with Waist Coat and 'Akwamiri' India Madras Tied Round the Waist and Eagles Feathers on the Head.

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**Figure 5.** Ekine Chiefs in Their Royal Garments in The Ada Seki (Dance) Sourced from Field Work



**Figure 6.** Afuru and Kala Edi, Sourced from Field Work

The base of the masquerade costume is a skin tight white tunic, covering the hands, but leaving the face free, into which the player is sewn.

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This is seen clearly in the costume worn by Afuru the spy chief of Egbelegbe. A large stomach pad is strapped in front which forms another protruding organ known as Furo pomaye. These two projections give the player Afuru the characteristics body-shape of a water spirit. Strapped on over this is, first of all, a narrow cone made of palm mid rib sections, which protrude horizontally backward from the buttocks and forms the maskers' tail igoli. Then, in front, a large stomach pad is strapped on to form furo pomaye. "This is prominent on Sibilangolo and Afuru, and Sibilume Egbelegbe's mother." These two projections give the masker the characteristic body shape of a water spirit. In many masquerades, "that perform rattling rhythm as a part of the dance sequence a" circlet of locust beans (Igbiri) is tied round each ankle: "of the masker's legs" these circlets sound in time with the dancer's steps and complement the rhythm of the drums as the player dances along "as seen on Sibilumes's legs and Sibilangolos.

The upper part of the costume is sewn unto the underside of the masquerade headpiece, as seen in Afruru's and Sibilangolo's costume and it drapes down over the dancer's torso when the headpiece is set in its place. So far as costume is concerned, there are certain clothes and accoutrements that generally go with particular masquerades, but there is a good deal of variability. The most important part of the dancer's material equipment in masquerade performance is the headpiece (Owu sibi) which is a representation of the family, compound lineage or community which owns it. Each play has one or more headpieces like that of Egbelegbe, Agiri, and Owuama etc. Egbelegbe's and Sibi Nume his mother's headpiece is made of plumes of different bird's feathers about 36 in all sewn round conical palm midrib sections. For that of Afuru it is made mainly of cloth and plumes while that of Sibilangolo is made of same palm-rib mid- section of the palm rib likewise that of Igwangi also.

### **6. DIRECTING N AFRICAN INDIGENOUS THEATRE**

For example, when we look at the term directing it exists in every human culture and society. To this Anthropologists, with good reason of theatre understand that the enactment of stories by players or group of artists before an audience in a given place and at a given time exists in every known human culture of the world.

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These dramatic activities are instinctive, like let's pretend (children's play) so there is no reason to hunt for their origins or how they were derived., coordinated, controlled and directed because when we look at world dramatic performance nature there are only variations in form, which embraces the intermixing and separation among genres, in differing societies of the world and these show the long-term evolution from traditional open air performances to sophisticated or "modern indoor theatre performances. Most of these so-called rituals, genres have a sense of direction and directing, which gives rise to what is directing? And who in a sense is a director? Bell-Gam, succinctly explains the difference in directorial concept of masquerade theatre thus "The major aesthetic difference between directing in conventional theatre and Nji Owu performance lies in the directorial time span of the two. (as cited in Menegbe ed., 2003, p. 12).

Thus, we see scholars like Wagner see the modern director as separate and important entity in western society which impacted the theatre of the world in 1874 when the Duke Saxe –Mieningen toured Europe with his troupe of actors as a denigration of the arts. Saxe-Mieningen's tour showed western theatre artists the value and artistic opportunity a director could have 'which has always been present in African theatre. The role of the omniscient tones of the chief drummer in traditional African theatre Saxe-Mieningen 'also' implemented as 'some' basic directing principles which included intensive rehearsals, the demand for disciplined and ensemble acting, historically accurate costumes, extensive use of stage business, a directorial need of vision and total control over all aspects of the production, and a value for mimetic detail. This can be answered from the performing society's concept of theatre. In this view Brockett and Hildy (2010: p. 4) in interpreting world dramatic performance culture asserts that

As should be evident, much that is found in ritual is also present in theatre there must be actors and those who exercise control over the performance directorial functions often undertaken in the rites by initiates, elders, or priests as members of our own society, but someone really unfamiliar with our cultural conventions might perceive all of these essentially theatrical, just as we might those of non – Western community about whose cultural conventions we are entirely uninformed.

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Brockett and Hildy's explanation shows that, in every theatre performing society there is someone who is in charge of directing the performance process that functions as the director. The directorial role is performed in relation to the 'culture's theatrical or dramatic orientation. Be it ritual, coronation festival, masquerade drama, dance etc. Furthermore, Dean and Carra (1980, p. 24) view on directing have defined play directing as "The presentation of a play on stage for an audience interpreted both in terms of dramatic action and dramatic sound and in terms of the emotional and intellectual concepts of an author's script." Subsequently Schechner (1973, p. 6) corroborates this view when he says that

Whatever the boundaries that are set, it is within the broad region of the performance that theatre takes place, and at the centre of the theatre is the script, sometimes the drama... and just as drama may be thought of as a specialized kind of script, so theatre can be considered a specialized kind of performance.

In respect of the cultural orientation nature of performance studies in the development of the African psyche and consciousness Soyinka (1976, p. 237) succinctly upholds that African theatre is environmentally conditioned when he says that we must not lose sight of the fact that

Drama is created and executed within a specific physical environment. It naturally interacts with the environment, is influenced by it, influences that environment in turn and acts together with the environment in a large and far more complex history of society.

African theatre must reflect African society, arts, crafts, food sense embedded in the the festivals in which it is represented or performed in all ramifications thus Adedeji (1981), Amankulor (1980), see African theatre is environmentally and culturally conditioned and subject to the dictates of the indigenous culture. Every theatre tradition is culturally conditioned but there are similarities in performance observances across cultures, in furtherance of this view Clark (1981) refers the synergy between the drummer and the performers in African theatre to the leader of the chorus, and the chorus give and take engagement in classical Greek theatre. Bell-Gam (2003), attests that the directorial functionality of the chief drummer when he proclaims that "the Akwafaribo's (drummers) "function is to organize, control, manage, discipline, motivate, inspire, dictate, and command the entire members of the cultural troupe to ensure a successful performance."

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While Emasealu in his book *The Theatre of Ola Rotimi: Production and Performance Dynamics* (2010, p. 6) posit that “The history of theatre in Nigeria of which the directorial practice is an integral part should be traced to the ritualistic traditions, storytelling, and ceremonies ... of different communities that make up this nation”. Thus, the preoccupations of this discourse are at all aspects of theatrical production are integral to African culture for as a director welds the entire production to a collective whole so also the chief drummer wields the dramatic sequence to a whole in African traditional theatre practice. The chief drummer in Ekine theatre blends the artistic elements of the production into a collective whole in the course of a production where he functions as an omniscient director artistically ever present in a theatrical production. These aforementioned theatrical practices were not fully incorporated in the modern Nigerian theatre. Especially staging which was not housed but presented in open air space and performances were free for all spectators because it was the major means of communal education.

### **7. EMERGENCE OF MODERN NIGERIAN THEATRE AND DRAMA**

#### **7.1 Colonial Stage**

The Brazilians immigrants who arrived in Lagos also brought their kind of dramatic performances which consisted of songs, dances which contributed immensely to the development of drama in Nigeria. Prior to the traditions were the Christmas cantata or Christian religious festivals, and entertainment programme performed in the Lagos colony mainly at the Glover memorial hall and at European reservation areas. Glover memorial hall opened in 1899 in Lagos. Church festivals or cantata consisted of songs, little dialogue instrumental pieces and poetic recitations of which professor Coker was the chief proponent. These concerts influenced the Yoruba operatic groups led by Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, and Duro Ladipo which existed before the arrival of Axworthy in Nigeria Drama as a literary art and in a set, building started in Nigeria with the establishment of the English Department in University College Ibadan which later developed to the arts theatre. It was initiated by Geoffry Axworthy whose first encounter with theatre came when he was admitted to read for a bachelor’s degree in English.

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From this experience he knew that for each group of people there existed a drama in their cultural past. He was invited to Nigeria in 1956 by Molly Mahood to develop the English department of the University of Ibadan. Before the coming of Axworthy there was student dramatic society and other voluntary groups, such as the Ibadan operatic society, made up of theatrically minded people, clergymen, teacher, civil servants, businessmen carrying on the British tradition of making their own entertainment like school and church plays. Axworthy likened the communal gathering and traditional festivals of the Yoruba and other traditions in Nigeria to Greek dramatic history. “In his words “the similarity was great, the priest as actor, the other members of the cult as chorus and the worshipers as audience” (Yerima, 22).

Axworthy believes in the existence of what he called “traditional drama’ in Nigeria before the existence of literary drama. But what was not in existence before his arrival was a specific building built for the sole purpose of dramatic presentations or performance in mind. Before the coming of Axworthy there was the Glover memorial hall in Lagos which served dual purposes. That is, it served as a hall for official ceremonies but his task in Nigeria was to establish a theatre building and school which will in turn produce professionals in the various components of the dramatic art; actors, designers, costumiers, managers etc.

Axworthy in discussing Nigerian theatre says that “in creating the nigerian theatre Ibadan was taken as the center were the indigenous theatrical tradition was taken as the yardstick; the works of Horton and other scholars were not investigated they concentrated on the immediate environment taking Yoruba popular theatre as their measure for investigating Nigerian theatre. The grants given by ford foundation and the rest were used to propagate Yoruba culture above others but the Yoruba traditional drama was not complete in itself like that of the Ekine, Ekong Obong players, Yakamanchi, Bori Spirit medium etc. the Yoruba believed the masquerade as ancestor worship not dramatic play involving script and dialogue but acrobatic display. This can be deciphered from Egungun and Alarinjo performances. There are no stories of everyday occurrences as it is with the coming of the colonial masters that contemporary themes were incorporated into the theatre from Ogunde etc.

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What would have been done was to institutionalize arts and crafts in the education curriculum at the primary and secondary level including drama for the traditional and the modern to blend naturally all over the country at the same time. Drama is play and play is the primary objective of African societies in all aspects of life. When you remove play from the daily activity of children then anarchy will prevail. The opposite for play is fight. The potential was there, what one had to do was to create a qualitative blend between that potential and the imported rigid copy of an educational system which could be added to drama as subject because drama and its accompaniments were the people's way of communal expression, education and knowledge transmission. According to Adedeji (1980, p.5),

The real problem confronting African traditional theatre arises from the most important criterion for distinguishing drama from ritual in a traditional Nigerian society; that of the tonal context of the performance, including the responses and reactions of the participants and spectators- is not easily verifiable in the absence of records of such performance.

From the foregoing we have seen the problem as an issue of cultural distance, the pioneer breed of theatre scholars did not see African theatre (culture) as an object of primary importance. We learn English from the primary level. The coming of western education did not stop our culture but we ourselves distanced our cultural practices from western education. Creative arts and crafts supposed to be a primary area of study like English language if we see socioeconomic development as a cultural universal phenomenon. But it was not inculcated in our curriculum encouraging indigenous arts and crafts, rather the issue of pioneer, major and minor tribe and cultural ethnocentrism that left no room for developmental creativity which is what that has come to play.

Cultural ethnocentrism the major tribes wanting others to study their language as Nigerian languages whereas their cultures do not have the indices of cross-cultural comparison in terms of the universality of drama. We see the Yoruba ascribing anything voodooism, in the Americas as having Yoruba coloration when mermaid worship has its origins in the coastal Ijaw areas of West Africa. Content, context and dexterity in art are not about population its all about cultural development.

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We must identify that the real problem was when interdependence was granted every tribe wanted to write themselves into modern Nigerian history neglecting the quality of content and context. Eneke even at the height of his doubts about the quality of dramatic content and context agreed that of there are some Nigerian tribes with a dramatic tradition spanning some 200 years. Ijaws, Efik, Yoruba. But dramatic art in Yoruba tradition is recent 18 century for the Ijaw of the Niger delta it emanated with the people. Their interaction with the Portuguese almost at the same time with the Bini's is reflected in the choice of costumes of the Ekine members but because of the environment much artifacts did not remain and Nigerian historians in order to ascribe the contributions of the Iyankpo, to Bonny and Kalabari neglect that aspect of Nigerian history same thing with Nigerian performing theatre.

Because the pioneer college was in Ibadan those who delved into sponsoring the arts in modern Africa concentrated on Yoruba land as representing Nigerian performing culture, they did not see other cultures as being worthy of investigation or the whole nation (Africa) as their constituency but saw their tribe as having the best of dramatic culture even if they are bereft of a viable complete dramatic culture. That is why most aspects of African drama (Ekine) drama was left only to the anthropological interpretations of Robin Horton which is much referenced by Nigerian dramatists hinging on records of western ethnographers, anthropologists and historians like Ruth Finnegan. Who is much referenced by first generation of Nigerian dramatists? We should provide grants for people working in the areas of indigenous culture because it is never late.

### **8. THE WAY FORWARD FOR A NEW NIGERIAN THEATRE**

Festival through the ages has been the main means of creative cultural engagement where all the economically viable and creative endeavours of man have been showcased in cultural performance in Africa from Egypt, Greece, and elsewhere. During these festivals carnival convergence reinvention of traditional values are celebrated which are similar in orientation between Greek theatre and African theatre which could be endeared to modern youths through digital innovation.

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Digital AI innovation can help animate and depict these intercultural relationships between Greek, African theatrical traditions in the use of sacrifice, propitiation, consultation, sorcery, music, dance, movement, and an ever-present chorus seen in the adaptation of Ola Rotimi's *the Gods are not to blame* an adaptation of Sophocles Oedipus the king. This will help theorize cultural performances traditions analysing and documenting them digitally for future generations to see the interrelationship of cultural performance. Digital representation of the festival nature of the origin theatre clearly depicts certain relationships in their per-formative observances. These per formative observances range from communal procession to alter of sacrifice, propitiation, worship, harvest, reveling masking, music, dance fertility rites and procreation showcasing the best in cultural representation. The Osirian plays and the Dionysian cycles clearly show the birth, growth, and death and rebirth cycle of Osiris the Egyptian god of regeneration and Dionysus the Greek god of fertility and wine and other African festival reenactments. Thus, reinventing these cross-cultural relationships through theatre and drama using AI to animate these cultural performances will buttress this relationship to show the universality of cultural performance, which will create a better and more peaceful world.

### **8.1 Reinventing Modern Nigerian Dramatic Performance**

When we talk in terms of reinventing cultural performances we mean exploring, the reviving reinvigorating, rebuilding, reforming, cross cultural performances relationships have done over the years in creating social harmony and meaning in life. From aeon Africans and the Greeks used performances as a means of social transformation and reengineering where music, song, dance, procession, wrestling, boxing, boat regatta animal baiting juggling, acrobatics have made so much meaning in bringing people together in Greece and Africa. Thus, reinventing these cultural communally integrated performance relationships through digital reimaging and scientific innovations will endear and show the similarities between peoples of the world and create more meaning in world performance culture.

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## **8.2 Drama**

Drama had made the most meaning and had been the major means of entertainment education and cultural transmission in Greece, and Africa; this reflects in how these societies have used drama over the years in teaching, educating and transmitting cultural values through generations. In this age of technological advancement these processes will be more effectively disseminated in this digital age through animating these performances to endear to the youths as cartoons are more engaging to youths than books. In the functionality of drama as an all-embracing unifying factor in society traditional African performance dynamics fulfills the core of drama, just like Greek drama. Especially when it comes to the role of artists, like who is in charge of the performance process, the language of the performance, the script, director, directing, and the place of the audience in a performance process.

Which leads us to what theatrical practice in Africa requires, which is to explore means of research that animates, documents, digitally and critically examines, assesses and interprets performance practices relationships of the world's performance which best expresses unity of purpose of dramatic culture from the differing cultural distinctiveness/uniqueness of traditional African dramatic performance traditions and its relationships to Greek performance culture. Digital representation of these dramatic practices that entails bodily movements in music, song and dance will redirect the thought processes of the youths from the war oriented digital cartoons from the East and West which leads them to embrace extreme violence to a more humane cultural performance where music, dance, song, movement and festivity will be more embracing.

Fabian (1999, p. 26) posits in his recourse to such Eurocentric notions thus; "Coquilhat our proto-anthropologist, manages in one sentence, to shore up cultural distance by labeling event superstitious and to deny the Africans creativity when he qualifies the performance as merely imitative of social ritual." This distancing and control notion Galevo (1986), attests to when he cited Count Volney's assertion on the contribution of Africans to modern civilization thus: "To think that to a race of black men who are today our slaves and object of contempt is the same one to whom we owe our arts, science and even the very use of speech" (as cited in Okpaku, Opubor et-al pp. 11-12).

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Count Volney's assertion clearly shows that Western civilization is a carryover of African traditional arts, crafts and value systems in a new name, which are the reasons of the relationships of the birth death and rebirth circle relating cultural traditions of Greece and Africa. But this natural phenomenon of creativity they want to deny by denigrating African perception of life and contributions to the sciences, humanities, education and performance culture as products from non- Africans. Okpewho (1979) likened the theatre to biological organism a living thing subject to growth and change contends that theories and performance modes are not codes handed down from heaven like the Bible to Moses.

They are products of historical ideology; descriptions on how things need be done and not commands as performing habits and theatrical practices of man which has evolved through aeon of time have experienced changes overtime. Furthermore, drama which represents man in movement must primarily reflect those socio-cultural and environmental changes motivated by man's cultural contact with other cultures, must be in a more slight and characteristic way as sub linear gestures, as our performance and theoretical approaches change so also do our performance contents and contexts change with time.

There are some sensitive and concerned contemporary African theatre artists who in their search for meaning in African traditional theatre practices or the indigenous or traditional African theatre are confused or tangled up by the contradictions of looking at African traditional theatrical practices from the view point of Eurocentric aesthetics. Like Ruth Finnegan, (1970), and Echeruo, (1981), who are of the evolutionary perspective of the development of theatre? These are scholars may have been impressed by the claim that African theatre does not yet exist and can only emerge from a symbolic relationship that grows with self-knowledge and the fact that creativity has no excrescence of tribal or cultural idiosyncrasies reflexivity. Most of the defamation and declamation of African theatre by some scholars is as a result of their reliance on Western theatrical canon's which emphasizes the text above performance. With regards to no reliance on Western theatre theorists' emphasis on the text, African theatres rely on performance thus Hymes, tells us "Textual analysis "is with performance, not as something mechanical or inferior, as some linguistic discussion.

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But with, performance as something creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of ordinary course of events” (as cited in Okpewho, 1979, p. 4). From this discourse we can decipher that African artistic and dramatic creations are art forms which constitute the creative base of the peoples economy whose presentation are not textual but embraces music, dance, mime, songs, visual arts, pantomimic dramatization and drummed language of communication as forms of narrative to achieve its desired artistic expression of entertaining, educating and enlightening its audience which is the primary goal in any form of dramatic presentation. In Africa the ‘text’ is enmeshed in the performance process. In buttressing this fact Adedeji referenced Alardyce Nicholl, as saying that, the exaltation of the “theatre arts” in modern times has created a peculiar type of confusion which ignores the wider implications of the development of theatrical art. A very considerable area of the theatrical endeavor has nothing to do with dramatic literature, of plays, ballet, commedia dell’arte, mime-all these, and more, extend its territory and carry us away from the boundaries of drama. Basically the theatre implies a performance given by one group of persons before an assembled audience.” (as cited in Okpakor & Opubor et-al 1986 p. 103). I agree with this notion in terms diversity of dramatic art, as there are indigenous systems which are whole and complete in them, that often require and demand a unique understanding the cultural indices associated with them to analyze their value systems. African traditional theatrical practices entail the use of visual and plastic art like mask, mime, music, dance, song, ululation, possession, magic, drum, and elaborate costumes to realize its primary objective. And not actors and actresses exchanging dialogue in an enclosed stage but in an open arena, as in Ekine masquerade performance where dialogue is centrally controlled and dramatic presentations are performed by a specialist group of people known as the Ekine Society. The interaction that occurs in an Ekine performance is transitory as it synergies an emotional, imaginative and intellectual experience shared between performers an audience. This shared emotional experience that transpires in Ekine theatrical performance serves as a means of education, entertainment and cultural transmission in traditional Kalabari society is also experienced in Greek theatre as the chorus serves as an ideal observer communicating the background of the story to the audience which they already know.

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The audiences in Ekine drama just like the Greeks are used to the performance traits as they already know the thematic thrust embedded in the dramatic piece and must have heard the myth, legend or story behind the performance, from their parents or elders in the family or community. What they have come out to watch is how the masquerade characters will reenact the story in adherence to the drum language of communication through movement and dance sequences. These festivals and masquerade dramatic presentations formed the major source of education, entertainment and cultural transmission in pre-colonial Kalabari society.

### **9. KALABARINA EKINE DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE**

Before qualifying African traditional dramatic relationships with Greek drama there is need to the type of performance context in which African drama operates. Drama or dramatic performance in Greek signifies “action.” Performed by the dithyrambs a specialist group that sing, dance and performed ritual and spiritual functions in the worship of Dionysus. Likewise, Ekine drama is a form of ritual drama practiced by the Ijaw people of Rivers State in Nigeria. An elaborate cycle of 30-50 plays is performed during a festival year by the members of the Ekine society, which is specialist society of actor’s drummers and dancers that feed the various gods and deities in the community. “The Ekine society is the custodians of Kalabari spiritual judicial and artistic culture whose functions include dramatic performances for entertainment, education and the feeding of the various gods and ancestors in Kalabari communities. But their major artistic function in society is entertaining and educating the people through masquerade drama presentations. Not taking time to understudy the cultural significance and relationships between communicational modes of the world’s theatrical performances leads to a misconception if African performances, as they are now judged from a Eurocentric ideological and theoretical perception. To enlighten this school of thought on the universality and interrelationships of the world’s dramatic experience from aeon of time Brockett and Hildy (2010:4) states that “as should be evident, much that is found in ritual is also present in theatre... there must be actors ... and those who exercise control over the performance.”

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The differing forms of narratives and means of communicating ideas in society are imperative and conditioned by cultural contexts and concepts. The European performance divisions of between auditorium, stage and the divisions between dance, music, visual arts are not applicable to the African concept of drama where dramatic arts is an integrated all-embracing process where music, dance, song, mask, elaborate costume, chants, ululations and drummed communication form the essence of theatrical performances. But they all perform the same societal social function of entertaining, edifying, communicating and transmitting knowledge. All over the world from aeon of time to the present age drama has served an edifying role in all human societies. Thus, in all human societies there has been some form of dramatic re-enacting of all human feelings and actions performed by a group of people in front of an audience restricted or general in nature in religious ceremonies, recreational activities sometimes eliciting, exciting or frightening experiences, in some cases for entertainment, education or mere buffoonery like some masquerades reenacted in Kalabarina Ekine. You only need to look around to see how this is a daily or seasonal occurrence in Kalabari Ekine society e.g Ikaki (Tortoise) and Afuru (spy), masquerades which are embodiments of buffoonery. This is characteristic as all human actions and movements presented in the dramatic experience, all controlled by the dictates of the chief drummer in performance.

### **9.1 Relationships between Greek and African Theatre**

When we talk about the relationships between Greek and African theatre it is evident in religion, dance, music, songs, use of chorus etc. The coming of western civilization did not alter traditional African theatrical performance modes but made the people to incorporate western oriented new themes into the dramatic lexicon. In furtherance of this view we see what makes theatre or what constitutes drama as culturally determined in order words, it will be misleading to maintain that theatrical 'analysis or experience that does not conform to Western theatrical canon is not theatre.

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**Figure 7.** Ekinge Chiefs in Their Royal Garments Dons Flowing Gowns with Head Gears Relating to Their Relationships with Europeans in the Ada Seki (Dance) Sourced from Field Work. Some Of the Head Gears Are from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> And 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Thus, we see the theatrical analysis of a festival within an African culture therefore having the capacity to share similarities with Western theatre tradition” for it also presents its own unique aesthetic dramatic features. Thus, we see modern misconception of researching into indigenous cultural practices that create harmony as misdirected colonial apes’ using Western theoretical postulations, canons and religious orientation without relating them per formative similarities to analyze African theatrical practices which do not conform to Eurocentric style or concept of theatrical practice as a misconception. Even in religion we have the God of Abaraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so on and so forth who is sacrificed to by believers so also in Africa nothing is done without propitiation to the gods and ancestors. Most of these gods are deified human beings who have performed one great feat or the other like Osiris, Dionysus in their various societies.

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So, we see African traditional theatrical performance creating edifying meaning whenever and wherever performances occur. Consequently, there is need for modern African creative artists to preserve imbibe able aspects digitally to create harmony and meaning for posterity, for them not to go extinct in this age of multiculturalism and globalization. Sequel to this trend in support of African theatrical practice Renov (1993, p.1), in his discourse on culture, posits that “the assumption that dominant cultural forms or theoretical approaches should enjoy a right of way had been challenged.” Thus, we see emergence of cultural studies, historicism, hermeneutics, as aspects of post-colonial study which has prompted African scholars in trying to rewrite African cultural practical experiences from their own perspective. In this guise Nzewi reveals that “As a society conquers its environment, becomes activated out of its ethnic placidity and isolation of ideas ... so would the implication and role of their theatre change in order to tract and reflect the stature, aspirations, the growth or decadence of the new society at any given period (as cited in Okpakor & Opubor et-al 1986, p. 84). For drama is primarily a universal phenomenon. Take Oedipus the King by Sophocles and Ola Rotimi’s the Gods are not to Blame as clear-cut similarities between Greek culture and African culture. Rotimi’s work was an adaption of Sophocles play which indigenized and fits into African cultural performance. In these plays there is worship, procession, oracular consultations, propitiation, fortune telling, sorcery, use of songs, music, dance, stylized movement and ever active chorus of adherents observing the cultural indices of the use of sorcery, instrumental sounds, as if it was the original.

### **9.2 Story Line**

Ekine masquerade drama performances make sense to the dramatic characters and the audience just like that of the Greeks as they know the story behind each performance, which they might have been told by their parents, uncles, aunts, or elders in the family as a narrative transmission of the embodiments of cultural mythology, and cosmology of the people. But Ekine drama has not been dramatically or critically reviewed from its cultural perspective but judged from an anthropological, sociological and historical documentation point of view.

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Theatre is life as we see theatrical performance in classical Greece was performed in three days and each day, between one evolution of the sun this sequential arrangement of events, also occurs in Ekine dramatic convention. In Greek theatre a Goat is sacrificed to announce the beginning of the festival in Ekine theatre too an animal is sacrificed to initiate the festival but the sacrificial animal depends on the type of masquerade to be performed i.e. Goat, Ram, or Foul is used as sacrificial animals to initiate performances. The theatrical process in Greece begins with a processional movement to the alter of Dionysus led by the dithyrambs likewise in Ekine drama the Ekine members lead the procession and perform the spiritual functions of sacrifice and propitiation.

Ekine performances like Greek performances are communal affairs as there are no restrictions to which category of people constitutes the audience, men, women, children, chiefs, and people from neighboring communities, the ancestral spirits all constitute the performers and members of the audience and attendance is free for all. In furtherance of these relationships, we see a clear perception of the development of Greek theatre with Pisistratus using the theatre to replace public execution as a means of communal information, education, and excitement. For we have seen that theatre all over the world share the same functions, values and elicit similar responses to them performative enactments before her audience.

### **10. AI DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN ENHANCING CULTURAL PERFORMANCE**

Modern technological advancement has brought about creative replication of natural life in believable format which if harnessed will endear youths to the cultural relationships between societies. Artificial intelligence enhanced creations are more effective in communicating with children and the youths in this age of technological advancement. Before it was cartoons but now cartoons stories are animated for a better and edifying experience. If you want the youths or children to be interested in something, use digital technology to recreate it hence dramatic performances should be animated with graphics explaining actions and inactions of the various characters.

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The similarities explained in the course of this paper and the dramatic cultural similarities if enhanced digitally will endear these performances and their relationships to the youths. Sacrificing, propitiating, chanting, chorusing, music, song, dance, mime, pantomimic dramatization, sorcery, divination are all eminent in Greek and African traditional dramatic practices as they are all communal events through which the people learn their culture this is what this paper explored.

### **10.1 Cultural Performance**

Every society is blessed with cultural performance in the sense festivals which are mostly associated, with agriculture and procreation like that of the Greeks and Africans. Thus, at the end of the fishing the Tombia people begin their seasonal festival performance as all masquerade performances will be showcased to teach the children their role in society. That is the traditional occupation of the people should not be forgotten overtime fishing farming and animal husbandry. The Egbelegbe, just like the city Dionysia festival brings all Greeks together, brings all Iyankpo (Tombia) sons from all over the world as it embraces all aspects of Tombia communal life. As every culture/society tells stories, stories about the past exploits of their ancestors to their forebears the Tombia people use the Egbelegbe festival to narrate through the chief drummer in the course of Egbelegbe festival drama the founding and migratory history of the Iyankpo (Tombia) people. To this Turner tells us that

Narrative can be described as a means making sense of our social world, sharing that, sense, with others ... its universality underlies its intrinsic place in human communication of which every society has developed its own style over the years that are meaningful in their performance culture (68).

In Egbelegbe performance narrative is meaningful to the Tombia (Iyankpo) as it embodies the history of all the names of the founding fathers of community, deity's, gods who are all called to come and participate in this festival. It is the highest performance in Tombia culture as the best in costume, make –up, dress sense, acting, dance movement, drummed communication, food sense, maidenhood are all showcased in the course of this festival.

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The people are conversant with the theme and convention of such stories as they are embedded in drum lore tones ushered by the chief drummer which serves as the communal script of the performance. To Barthes: Narratives of the world are numberless. narrative can be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances...all classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... like life.” (Qtd. in Czamlawska 77-78).

These communal scripts narratives contain the reenacted story of the ancestors which is dramatized as a representation of their heroic deeds in society reenacted by actors in a festival dramatic performance, especially how they overcome enemies and environmental forces all embedded in the language of performance as rendered by the chief drummer or the musical instrument concerned. Ekine drama is a collaborative art in the sense that the concept of western theatre is bereft of the synergic nature of African theatre which embraces all the art forms as experienced in Egbelegbe festival. In Ekine perception theatrical functions and religious functions are performed by the same people. This relationship Horton sees in the Ekine serving dual functions in Kalabari society i.e. Religious and social functions as they feed the various gods and entertain the people with their recreational masquerade performance, thus inciting the impactful nature of traditional festival performances on the cohesive development of African societies and on the African mind. It is reflective and subject to synergic change thus for a country to regain its economic potential and impact on the international community it must refine and reflect the totality of the arts music, dance, plastic and performing arts, and economic productivity to suit modern times. This can only be achieved by encouraging research and learning and relearning and opening up of the intellectual space for further studies on cultural research, development synergizing Western and African creative ideologies.

### **10.2 Similarity between African Traditional Theatre, and Greek Theatre**

All over the world from aeon of time to the present age drama has served an edifying role in all human societies even though modes of presentation differ.

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Thus, in all human societies there has been some form of dramatic re-enacting of human feelings and actions performed by a group of people in front of an audience restricted or general in religious ceremonies as recreational activities, sometimes eliciting fear, exciting, frightening or edifying experiences. In some cases, spectacular for entertainment, while in other cases as object of social education or mere buffoonery like we experience in some masquerade's reenactments in African theatre today. Drama or dramatic performance in Greek signifies "action.", which is associated with the Dionysian festival. Dramatic activities were performed by the group called the dithyrambs which is a specialist group of artists responsible for dramatic composition and presentation at the altar of Dionysus in classical Greece. So also, in Africa dramatic performance is associated with a particular guild, cult or group. In Kalabari society is the Ekine Ogboapu is responsible for the spiritual and physical representation of dramatic activities in the community. In Africa, drama is referred to as play which is the vision of man in movement in his environment as experienced in all dramatic compositions from eons of time. This behooves the reason to preserve imbibe able aspects of African theatre that create harmony and meaning for posterity, for them not to go extinct in this age of multiculturalism and globalization.

In furtherance of these relationships, we see a clear perception of the development of Greek theatre with Pisistratus using the theatre to replace public execution as a means of communal excitement. For we have seen that theatre all over the world share the same functions, values and elicit similar responses to them per formative enactments before her audience. To buttress the communal nature of theatre further Okpewho (1979), likened the theatre to biological organism, as a living thing, subject to growth and change, contends that theories and performance modes are not codes handed down from heaven like the Bible to Moses. They are products of historical ideology; descriptions on how things need be done and not commands as performing habits and theatrical practices of man which has evolved through aeon of time that have experienced changes overtime. Sequel to this trend in support of theper formative nature of African theatrical practice Renov (1993, p.1), in his discourse on culture, posits that "the assumption that dominant cultural forms or theoretical approaches should enjoy a right of way had been challenged."

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Because of the relationships between performing cultures, it means it is only when you do not understand the performing nature of a culture that you will not see the glaring relationships. Theatrical or dramatic performance being a reflection of the cultural emotion of man must be experienced from its socio-cultural perspective as it is the basic means of education in most pre literate traditional societies. From our exploration of the relationships between Greek and African theatre we have been able to decipher that theatrical performance in classical Greece was performed in three days and each day, between one evolution of the sun this sequential arrangement of events, also occurs in African (Ekine) dramatic convention. In Greek theatre a Goat is sacrificed to announce the beginning of the festival in African theatre too an animal is sacrificed to initiate the festival but the sacrificial animal depends on the society in which the masquerade is to be performed, i.e. Goat, Ram, or Fowl is used as sacrificial animals to initiate performances. Thus, we see African dramatic performances like Ekine drama and Greek drama as communal affairs, as there are no restrictions to which category of people constitutes the audience, men, women, children, chiefs, and people from neighboring communities, and ancestral spirits all constituting the performers and members of the audience and attendance is free for all. Furthermore, drama which represents man in movement must primarily reflect those socio-cultural and environmental changes motivated by man's cultural contact with other cultures, which must show our performance and theoretical approaches change with time.

Theatrical performance in classical Greece was performed in three (3) days and each day, between one evolution of the sun this sequential arrangement of events, also occurs in Ekine dramatic convention as ekine dramatic performance is done in three (3) days. In Greek theatre a Goat is sacrificed to announce the beginning of the festival in Ekine theatre too an animal is sacrificed to initiate the festival but the sacrificial animal depends on the type of masquerade to be performed i.e. Goat, Ram, or Fowl is used as sacrificial animals to initiate performances. Greek theatrical performances and Ekine performances are communal affairs as there are no restrictions to which category of people constitutes the audience, men, women, children, chiefs, and people from neighboring communities, the ancestral spirits all constitute the performers and members of the audience and attendance is free for all.

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In furtherance of these relationships, we see a clear perception of the development of Greek theatre with Pisistratus using the theatre to replace public execution as a means of communal excitement, entertainment, enlightenment and education... For we have seen that theatre all over the world share the same functions, values and elicit similar responses to them per formative enactments before her audience. Theatrical or dramatic performance being a reflection of the cultural emotion of man must be experienced from its socio-cultural perspective as it is the basic means of education in most African traditional societies as the acts of men are interrelated.

People who are not conversant with African indigenous performance modes often sometimes restrict the definitions of theatrical or dramatic performance to the written text or spoken word neglecting all the other modes or aspects of theatrical communication, music, song, dance educating, and enlightening such as the spiritual relationship between the gods, actors and audience, such as incantations, invocations, instrumental sounds and the drum language of communication which is central in sub-Saharan African communities, or the producer's craft like production, management, directing and acting styles which need to be considered under their own separate headings.

Thus, there is need for redefinition of the African dramatic concept and its relationships through the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence. The language of communication in Greek drama even though is graphically rendered like Ekine drama which is tonal are communally integrated works of art, coordinated and controlled by music and instrumental sounds which also dictates, tempo, dramatic composition, movement, rhythm, picturerization, and pantomimic dramatization which are basic fundamentals of performing theatre, as evident in Ekine drama performance.

Reimagining African performances will show the relationships between theatrical practices of the world and endear them to the world to become a more peaceful environment especially when you see the western society's performance relationships with African music, songs, and dance in masked performances.

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Today the whole world today embrace and learn Makossa dance and it is very pleasing to the eyes, thus Reimagining Karikpo, and Aminikpo cultural performance will reveal its performance relationship with Asian theatrical dances like the Chinese and Indian dances, Karikpo the summersaulting dance masquerade of the Ogoni's in Rivers State of Nigeria is still housed in its cult group while the Chinese have liberated theirs from its origins and have developed a modern play from it by increasing the number of participants to any number. Karikpo the antelope horn itself is a hindrance to the performer. But if it is removed from the sacred foundations change the masks to cloths increase the number of participants in a well-choreographed manner you will see it as a Chinese dance.

What about the Chinese dragon dance drama and the Odum of the Okrika people, Aminikpo and Japanese puppet theatre are real similarities between performing cultures of the world based on the sensory developmental level of the perceiver. Thus, there is need for redefinition of reimagining stylized African dances and masquerade performances to recreate meaning in a self-destructive world, when music, singing, dancing, masking, and dramatic play becomes the main means of socio-cultural interaction among the world's youths a better world will emerge. Governments will fail, politics, will fail, but festivity will not fail as it will create a meaningful world for the youths all these relationships can be better assimilated if digitalized in cartoons and animations.

### **11. HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DRAMATIC CULTURE**

Asian nations institutionalized their traditional performance practices along side western knowledge hence a synergy was created and their similarities and differences were identified and what was needed was taken to improve their knowledge base. But Nigeria the real problem is theatre is not institutionalized but confined in the tertiary institutions. How do you excise a people's popular culture and confine it in tertiary institution. It is not studied at the primary and secondary levels but studied in the universities. By the time the people are introduced to their culture they are already matured in mindset.

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The teeming graduates produced by theatre institutions in the country need to graduate into employment opportunities in the face of competition from the media and film industry. For the theatre to accommodate its teeming graduates in Nigeria traditional art form must be inculcated to the educational curriculum from the primary secondary and tertiary level devising new methods and ways of osmotic synergism in its present form where it is learnt as a discipline in the tertiary level and not from the primary level. The large variety of performances in our communities need to be inculcated into our children as they will compete for prizes in riddles and jokes, songs, music, dances, folklore, drama, play writing, directing, choreography crafting, costuming etc. And every school must need teachers of the dramatic art to prepare them for these competitions. This will create a large vista of employment opportunity for our teeming theatre graduates. Adedeji (1986, p.103), explains that “Since the theatre is a work of art, the theatre as an aesthetic product, the creation a collective endeavor.

Its essence lies not in what is performed or how it is performed. It lies in the resultant functional quality that is gained by the performer and the audience.” The theatre as a work of art thrives on imitation of action and its functional quality lies on what is gained by the performer and the audience in the sense of the audience being educated and entertained while the performer in return gets his economic reward which is profit from his meaningful endeavour. But there are some hindrances to this endeavour in a sense that we know the Islamic religion not being too friendly to theatrical activities but Nigeria is a multicultural society. Instead of been fed with products from foreign cultures, Nigerian societies where dramatic activities form part of their culture should be encouraged to develop and practice same as it is the sure means of creating social harmony, cohesion and socioeconomic development. From aeon of time even the tyrant Pisistratus when he found the Athenian society bereft of social activities instituted the Dionysian festival of plays with prizes awarded to the best, where western theatre took its root from. Thus, there is need for redefinition of African dramatic concept in an African perspective. In support of this notion Nzewi (1986) posits that “traditional theatre was the property of its society.

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Its functions prescribed and regulated by the society while its artistic details and organization were entrusted to a chosen group of talented and knowledgeable members of the society.” (as cited in Okpaku & Opubor et-al. p. 83). The Oxford Encyclopedia for Schools and Colleges (1974, p. 185), also attests to the fact of the dramatic nature of Ekine drama thus: Ekine drama is a form of ritual drama practiced by the Ijaw people of Rivers State Nigeria. An elaborate cycle of 30-50 plays is performed during a festival year by the members of the Ekine society, which is specialist society of actor’s drummers and dancers. “

These masquerade societies in Africa are the custodians of cultural, dramatic and artistic culture of the people whose functions include dramatic performances for entertainment, education and the feeding of the various gods, deities and ancestors in African communities. But their major artistic function in society is entertaining, enlightening and educating the people of new trends in society through masquerade drama presentations. You only need to look around to see how these daily life experiences are reenacted by the Kalabari Ekine society, Ekom Obong players, alarinjo, egungun nmown, yakamanchi, and other traditional forms of Hausa drama. Thus we see modern African scholar’s misconceiving researching into indigenous cultural practices that create human capacity development, employment opportunities, harmony and orderliness in society as misdirected colonial apes’ using Western theoretical postulations, canons and religious orientation to analyze African theatrical practices which do not conform to Eurocentric style or concept of theatrical practice because of their inability to correlate performance cultures similarities and differences. Even in religion we have the God of Abaraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so on and so forth so also in Africa nothing is done without propitiation to the gods and ancestors. Most of these gods are deified human beings who have performed one great feat or the other in their various societies. When the Jews even in Judaism and in Christendom recognize their ancestors is not fetishism, but when the African recognizes his ancestor through propitiation and performance it is juju worship. But modern practical theatre practitioners have seen the importance of world performance by borrowing from other cultures to enrich theirs, for the African his culture is not worth studying hence it is not included in the educational curriculum.

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Thus, we see emergence of cultural studies, historicism, hermeneutics, and post-colonial study as aspects of garnering the prospects of the world's body of knowledge embedded in other cultures for the benefit of universal knowledge which has non prompted African scholar to rewrite African theatrical experiences from their own perspective.

The coming of western civilization did not alter traditional African theatrical performance modes but made the people to incorporate western oriented new themes into the dramatic lexicon. While some other dramatic modes remained intact because they where complete in themselves as they satisfied the dramatic needs of the people. In furtherance of this view we see what makes theatre or what constitutes drama as culturally determined in order words, it will be misleading to maintain that theatrical 'analysis or experience that does not conform to Western theatrical canon is not theatre. Thus, we see the theatrical analysis of a festival within an African culture therefore having the capacity to share similarities with Western theatre tradition'' for it also presents its own unique aesthetic dramatic features. For drama is primarily a culturally oriented universal phenomenon.

Not understanding the cultural contents and context of African traditional theatre presents a blurred vision to the initial anthropologists and observers hence the study of African culture presents many problems to the contemporary creative artists. This is precipitated by the reason that they do not understand the culture they are recording or presenting. Thus, initial recordings of cultural performance and art forms of Africans were carried out mainly by European Anthropologists and Ethnographers who did not understand the dramatic context and content of the performance and already have a mindset that nothing significant can emanate from these primitive tribes.

Lack of understanding has led to a misconception of performance practices of African traditional theatrical performances, which need to be synergised, modified to suit contemporary trends, redefined and not appraised from a Eurocentric ideological and theoretical perception. To enlighten this school of thought on the universality of the dramatic experience from aeon of time Brockett and Hildy (2010:4) furthermore states that "as should be evident, much that is found in ritual is also present in theatre... there must be actors and those who exercise control over the performance."

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The differing forms of narratives and means of communicating ideas in society are imperative and conditioned by cultural contexts and concepts. The European performance divisions of between auditorium, stage and and the divisions between dance, music, visual arts are not applicable to the African concept of drama where dramatic arts is an integrated all-embracing process where music, dance, song, mask, elaborate costume, chants, ululations and drummed communication form the essence of theatrical performances.

### **CONCLUSION**

Institutions drive social cohesion and development. If Africa must develop, we need develop the institutions that will foster its growth. Theatre is an embodiment of the culture of the people thus we cannot separate theatre from culture so if we must develop, we must study our culture and put it in a performative mode transmitting it from generation to generation. Axworthy's desire to treat the issue of establishing a viable dramatic/ theatre culture in Nigerian society was his continuous attempt to find resemblances with his theatrical background and the cultural almost 'natural' drama which he already found existed in Nigeria. In his words Creative dramatics did not have to be taught at all, it fitted in with moonlight games, I found that the African mind had an endless zeal of imagining things. This was a natural gift for both the old and the young. (Yerima, 12) The practitioners of modern Nigerian theatre did not delve outside their culture to see the similarities existing between the dramatic cultures of various societies. That which did not exist in their culture did not exist in African society. Yoruba culture was seen as the yardstick of measurement as the premier university was cited in Yoruba land. The pre-recorded performances of Ekine, Ekong Obong players, Yakamachi, Hasua drama, Karipko the somersaulting masquerade of the Ogoni's and Aminikpo the Ogoni puppet masquerade, Okrika water Dragon etc., were not investigated to draw similarities with other cultures. The ministry of culture and education did not see drama as a compulsory subject in our educational curriculum as our drama was associated with various traditional productive festivals. Which Professor Adedeji in his keynote address lamented the exclusion of "creative arts from the universal primary education even though a panel had prepared such a syllabus adoption by the federal authorities?

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He asked what for instance science without vision is? What is technology without creativity, without design, without art?" Drama the people's core of life is practiced only as an extracurricular or co-curricula subject by student drama clubs or by staff in tertiary institutions interested in acting and production. The reason for this being drama not being a subject offered in primary and post primary institutions in Nigeria. What is offered is dramatic literature 'play texts. Professor Adedeji argued further that "if the Nigerian government was really serious about implementing its policies on cultural education, then drama must be given a prime place in our educational system, from primary through secondary to the universities, because the people are the ones to create what they want to see from nursery primary to the tertiary levels.

The modern theatre experience has embraced the old in some aspects but has distanced theatre from the people. The first with the use of sophisticated language with created a gulf between the people and the theatre. The experience of synergy was Ogunde, Ogunmola, Ladipo, Soyinka, Clark, Rotimi's etc., experience blended tradition with modern which is supposed to be a continuum at the institutional level for the children to create what they want from the synergy.

Theatre is life and life is theatre and it must be in the curriculum from the primary to the tertiary level for it to make an edifying meaning among the people's arts and crafts the most productive area of the people was neglected to intellectually, culturally and morally enslave them by using their own people from denying them of their cultural values which embraces their productive systems from being studied. Socrates (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) "'said' an-un examined life is not worth living.'

Self examination is the key to successful humanity as experienced in other colonized people like China, India, Japan, Korea etc., where children learn cultural values from childhood and studied western culture side by side with their own. With creativity unemployment in Africa will be a thing of the past. Arts and crafts are the science and technology of Africa and this Adedeji likens when he says "Drama as a subject by its very nature as an artistic discipline draws all the other arts into a dynamic synthesis and enshrines the corporate value of cultural education".

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The colonial masters knowing this have to excise it from their educational curriculum because arts and crafts is the creative base of the people which enhances self emancipation and human capacity development, thus studying it will be studying the people hence the rural areas will be more important than urban areas. To disorganize the people, they have to create an educational system shifting people away from their knowledge base of productive cultural education.

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**CHAPTER 3**  
**DIGITAL CULTURE AND THE RE-  
CONFIGURATION OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

Moses Adeolu AGOI<sup>1</sup>  
Oluwakemi Racheal OSHINOWO<sup>2</sup>  
Tola OLUJUWON<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lagos State University of Education, Lagos Nigeria, agoi4moses@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8910-2876

<sup>2</sup>Lagos State University of Education, Lagos Nigeria, oshinowooluwakemiz@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0568-6446

<sup>3</sup>Lagos State University of Education, Lagos Nigeria, olojuwontt@lasued.edu.ng

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The increasing incorporation of digital technology into education has turned learning centres into sophisticated sociotechnical systems moulded by data networks, digital platforms, and algorithmic control. Contemporary institutions, colleges, and training companies are no more limited by physical sites, set schedules, or hierarchical organizational structures. Rather, they are becoming increasingly digital mediated worlds where cultural values, organizational practices, and educational management methods are constantly generated and rearranged via human actors interacting with technical systems. This change is evidence of a general social move toward digitalization, in which computational infrastructures are deeply interwoven with social, cultural, and institutional processes (Orlikowski, 2007; Selwyn, 2023).

This change has created what academics commonly refer to as digital culture, a collection of shared values, customs, identities, symbolic meanings, and power relations arising from ongoing interaction with digital technologies (Deuze, 2022; Fuchs, 2021). Digital culture appears within educational institutions via platform-mediated instruction and learning, data-driven decision-making, online academic identities, and new modes of involvement and monitoring. Therefore, digital culture goes beyond technological adoption; it marks a basic change in how education is conceptualized, managed, and felt. Education's digital culture transforms the creation, verification, distribution, and control of knowledge.

Networking knowledge activities like open educational resources (OER), massive open online courses (MOOCs), academic social networks, and algorithmically curated content streams are progressively challenging conventional epistemic authority, historically vested in institutions, curricula, and certified specialists (Weller, 2020). These developments muddy the lines between formal and informal learning and challenge established differences between teachers and students, experts and novices, institutional and non-institutional knowledge domains. Educational tools concurrently incorporate certain cultural beliefs regarding learning, efficiency, and accountability. By means of code, metrics, and automated decision rules (Williamson, 2021), learning management systems, learning analytics dashboards, and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven evaluation tools operationalize pedagogical values.

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For instance, analytics-based performance measures favour measurable actions including log-ins, submission frequency, and assessment results, maybe marginalizing qualitative aspects of learning such reflection, innovation, and relational interaction (Selwyn, 2023). Institutional cultures therefore start to match data-centric philosophies that alter what qualifies as legitimate learning and accomplishment. This cultural realignment has been exacerbated by the embrace of artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, and platform-based services. Admissions screening, adaptive learning, plagiarism detection, predictive analytics, and student support services use AI systems now. Although these systems offer customization, scalability, and administrative efficiency, they also bring in fresh kinds of algorithmic control that modify power dynamics inside companies (Williamson, 2021).

Decisions previously made via expert judgment are increasingly guided by opaque algorithms, which begs questions of openness, bias, and accountability. Empirical research suggests that if trained on historically skewed data, algorithmic decision-making systems could replicate current social injustices (OECD, 2021). These events force school leaders and policymakers to rethink conventional management approaches and governance systems. Increasingly incompatible to digitally networked organizations defined by platform dependence, fast technical change, and worldwide connectivity are managerial techniques founded in bureaucratic hierarchies and standard procedures (Komljenovic, 2021). Educational leadership now has to negotiate conflicts between efficiency and equity, innovation and control, and automation and human agency. Thus, digital institution leadership calls for cultural intelligence and ethical sensitivity in addition to technical proficiency (Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, & Gardner, 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic very clearly revealed the frailty and potential of technologically supported educational systems. According to UNESCO (2020), school and university closures during the emergency remote teaching period affected more than 1.6 billion students worldwide. Although digital platforms helped to ensure instructional continuity, the crisis exposed extreme disparities in gadget accessibility, connection, and digital literacy. Students from low-income households, rural areas, and the Global South were unduly disadvantaged, so worsening already unequal education (Williamson, Eynon, & Potter, 2020).

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Governance issues stemming from data privacy, employee workload, assessment integrity, and student well-being presented difficulties for schools as well. Digital transformation is viewed in the post-pandemic period as a long-term institutional plan rather than as a brief answer to a crisis. OECD (2021) surveys reveal that most institutions of higher learning now want to keep hybrid learning models, increase digital infrastructure, and include artificial intelligence-driven technologies into their basic academic and administrative activities. As a result, awareness of the cultural facets of digital transformation has become most important for institutional sustainability, policy development, and educational management.

Digital transformation is becoming more and more understood to be more of a cultural event than just an engineering one. Technological systems not only enable institutional policies but also actively influence standards, identities, and power dynamics inside schools (Orlikowski, 2007). Institutions that neglect to consider the cultural ramifications of digitization run the danger of using technology in ways that damage confidence, equality, and instructional integrity. Conversely, organizations that foster inclusive and reflexive digital cultures are better placed to generate long-term innovation and stakeholder participation (OECD, 2021).

Against this backdrop, this chapter critically looks at how digital culture is reshaping learning institutions throughout structural, managerial, and pedagogical dimensions. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from education, information systems, and cultural studies, the chapter examines how digital technologies serve as cultural drivers transforming institutional practices, leadership styles, and policy structures. Six major parts divide the conversation: conceptual fundamentals of digital culture; institutional restructuring procedures; pedagogical management and leadership ramifications; technological infrastructures as cultural systems; ethical and equity challenges; and future courses of digitally mediated learning organizations.

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**1. DIGITAL CULTURE AND EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

**1.1 Conceptualizing Digital Culture**

Digital culture results from persistent contact with networked media and digital technologies as well as the collective standards, values, symbols, and daily practices (Deuze, 2022). In educational settings, digital culture includes patterns of online communication, data-driven decision-making, platform-mediated teaching and learning, and changing understandings of academic identity among students, instructors, and administrators. It shows not just how technology is used in education but also how digital tools change organizational meanings, expectations, and interactions. Modern study stresses the sociocultural embeddedness of educational technologies, in contrast with early models of integration of information and communication technology (ICT) that presented digital tools as neutral supports for teaching effectiveness. Within colleges, digital platforms actively mould the theory and application of governance, learning, and instruction (Selwyn, 2023).

Socio materially speaking, social activity and technological artefacts are mutually constitutive rather than discrete spheres (Orlikowski, 2007). Rather than just automate current processes, learning management systems, analytics dashboards, proctoring software, and AI-driven evaluation tools encode certain beliefs about knowledge, productivity, and responsibility, hence moulding institutional habits and power dynamics. For example, the standardization of learning analytics mirrors a wider cultural change toward datafication in education. Dashboards, predictive models, and performance indicators help to make student participation and achievement visible, therefore favouring what can be measured and compared (Williamson, 2021).

Though such systems provide personalization and early treatment, empirical research indicate they can also restrict instructional emphasis and marginalize qualitative elements of learning like critical reflection, cooperation, and emotional development (Selwyn, 2023). OECD (2021) claims that more than 60% of higher education institutions in developed countries now use learning analytics to guide academic decision-making, therefore highlighting the institutionalization of data-centric cultures.

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Digital culture also changes how learning institutions build authority and expertise. Networked knowledge generation via open educational resources (OER), academic social networking sites, and collaborative platforms defies established academic hierarchies and institutional monopolies over knowledge distribution (Weller, 2020). While teachers develop professional identities via digital scholarship, social media involvement, and open publishing techniques, students more and more turn to other sources of knowledge beyond official syllabuses. These changes cause conflict between openness and organizational control, innovation and standardization, and professional autonomy and corporate accountability. Therefore, rather than viewing technology use as only technical or administrative activity, schools must aggressively negotiate the cultural consequences of digitalization. Understanding digital culture as a dynamic institutional force is vital for fitting technology innovation with educational values, equity, and long-term sustainability.

### **1.2 Digital Culture and Knowledge Production**

The digitization of education has essentially changed the production of knowledge into a distributed, collaborative, and increasingly automated one. Digital infrastructures that allow for quick production, dissemination, and repurposing of educational materials across institutional and national boundaries are transforming traditional models whereby universities were main gatekeepers of genuine knowledge. Open-access publishing, massive open online courses (MOOCs), open educational resources (OER), and digital research repositories let students and teachers engage in worldwide knowledge networks beyond traditional institutional membership (Fuchs, 2021; Weller, 2020). Over 220 million students worldwide had signed up for at least one MOOC as of 2023, showing the degree at which digital platforms currently mediate access to knowledge (Shah, 2023). These changes promote participatory learning environments that support learner autonomy, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, and cooperation. By means of discussion forums, collaborative authoring tools, and academic social networks, digital platforms promote co-creation of knowledge, hence defying hierarchical divisions between knowledge consumers and producers.

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This change also begs important issues about institutional relevance, intellectual property, and quality assurance, though. Although open-access models democratize access, they exacerbate mechanisms for credentialing, peer review, and academic authority especially when content travels outside official accreditation frameworks (Selwyn, 2023). By adding algorithmic mediation into curriculum design, evaluation, and learner support, artificial intelligence (AI) and learning analytics further complicate epistemological techniques in education. While automated grading and predictive analytics affect judgments about performance, progress, and risk (Williamson, 2021), AI-driven recommendation systems shape the content learners see.

Often privileging efficiency, standardization, and behavioural measurability, these systems incorporate certain educational assumptions into software designs. Culturally and epistemologically speaking, this signals a change toward what academics call data-centric or computational epistemologies, where knowledge is progressively framed as something that can be captured, modelled, and optimized via data (Knox, 2020). Although algorithmic systems promise customization and scalability, empirical studies expose their drawbacks. According OECD (2021) writes that although learning analytics can improve targeted assistance and retention, overdependence on predictive metrics could limit complex learning processes to basic measures. Such behaviours threaten to side-line types of learning that are hard to measure, including critical thinking, invention, ethical reasoning, and culturally contextual knowledge.

Furthermore, algorithmic bias and transparency cause questions about justice especially for students from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups whose experiences might not match dominant data models (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Therefore, the remapping of knowledge production via digital technology calls for fresh consideration of epistemic values, educational intent, and institutional duty. Institutes of learning must examine carefully how digital technologies shape not only the way information is transmitted but also the sorts of information legitimized, appreciated, and sustained in digitally mediated educational settings.

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### **1.3 Cultural Shifts in Teaching and Learning Practices**

By fostering flexibility, interactivity, and student autonomy, digital culture changes teaching methods dramatically and reinterprets how learning and teaching play out throughout time and space. Strong pedagogical reactions to digital-centric landscapes are seen in educational models including blended learning, flipped classrooms, and adaptive learning environments (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013; Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Blended learning enhances flexibility and responsiveness to individual learning needs by means of a combination of face-to-face lectures and online activities that allows students to access materials, participate in discussions, and finish projects at their own pace (Means et al., 2013). By letting pupils interact with educational material asynchronously (e.g., via video lectures) and saving synchronous class time for problem solving, cooperation, and teacher-guided investigation (Bishop & Verleger, 2013), flipped classrooms invert conventional lecture setups. Typically driven by artificial intelligence and statistics, adaptive learning systems adjust content delivery in real time based on student performance data to provide scaffolding assistance and speed mastering (Baker & Inventado, 2014).

Beyond defined classroom schedules and locations, these instructional developments increase the temporal and geographic aspects of education and encourage ongoing learning environments beyond institutional boundaries (Picciano, 2019). A 2022 EDUCAUSE survey reveals that more than 75% of higher education institutions claim employed hybrid or blended teaching methods, with over 60% using adaptive learning technologies to enable customized instruction (EDUCAUSE, 2022). Such adoption is consistent with bigger structural changes aimed toward learner-centred learning and digitally enabled pedagogical design. But the move to electronically mediated pedagogies calls for considerable cultural adjustment among teachers, most of whom have to re-negotiate their professional identities and teaching power. Historically, teachers were seen as knowledge gatekeepers and main content specialists in classroom education. Instructors are usually expected to be facilitators, curators, and learning designers in digital enhanced environments, leading pupils through extensive digital resources and cooperative spaces (Selwyn, 2023).

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This job change entails not only picking up new technical skills but also questioning ideas of control, competence, and assessment. Many teachers feel stress in implementing digital pedagogies because of workload issues, institutional support shortage, and uncertainty about digital assessment validity (Graham et al., 2020). Furthermore, digital platforms with embedded algorithmic frameworks may unintentionally influence pedagogical decisions, hence stressing quantifiable student results above relational, creative, or critical components of learning (Williamson, 2021). These changes call for deliberate professional development, participatory design techniques, and institutional cultures stressing creativity, reflection, and interdisciplinary teamwork. In essence, whereas digital culture provides new educational opportunities, improving access, engagement, and customization, it also demands great cultural and professional changes among teachers who must constantly change to fit current digital environments of learning and teaching.

## **2. RECONFIGURATION OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

### **2.1 Structural Transformation of Institutions**

Driven by digital culture, learning institutions have been structurally realigned into hybrid companies that run concurrently throughout physical sites and online worlds. Normally, educational, administrative, and research activities were managed by colleges and universities within on-site infrastructure and internal IT departments. Core components of institutional ecosystems in modern contexts, however, are cloud computing, platform services, and contracted analytical systems (Kopljenovic, 2021). An industry study indicates that more than 65% of educational institutions worldwide are employing cloud-based systems, with millions of virtual classrooms holding hundreds of millions of live sessions monthly, evidence of the quick move toward dispersed digital activities (Market Reports World, 2024). Along with supporting hybrid and remote learning models, these technologies provide underlying architecture for data storage, communication, learning management, and analytics. Reliance on outside technology providers for services like learning management systems (LMS), cloud storage, and sophisticated data analytics presents fresh governance issues for organizations.

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Almost 99% of higher education institutions employ LMS systems, of which the bulk are hosted and kept by outside vendors (Wikipedia contributors, 2025). Although this outsourcing improves scalability and dependability, it also causes long-run reliance on companies whose goals might not always match those of institutional missions, intellectual freedom, or public accountability. These relationships with suppliers challenge the line between public education and commercial activity, therefore generating questions of institutional independence, data sovereignty, and sustainability. Usually without the leverage that big technology firms have, universities must negotiate contract terms pertaining to data ownership, intellectual property, service levels, and exit strategies (Kornbljenovic, 2021).

Higher long-term operating costs, vendor lock-in, and less control over core academic operations may result as universities move from entirely self-hosted systems to cloud and platform ecosystems. Moreover, questioning the long-term viability is the great reliance on outside digital platforms. With worldwide cloud expenditures anticipated to surpass \$100 billion in 2021 alone and market predictions predicting fast yearly growth throughout 2030 (Cloudlabs.ai, 2025), cloud computing in education is set to keep expanding. But growing platform adoption brings risks including data breaches, service outages, and integration difficulties that can interfere with institutional procedures and expose delicate information (Ponemon Institute, 2020 as cited in India Today, 2025).

These flaws point out the necessity of strong digital governance systems, deliberate planning, and internal capacity building investments that strike a balance between innovation with institutional resilience and autonomy. Embedding outside digital platforms into the core fabric of organizational practice, governance, and identity, digital culture is essentially transforming institutional systems. Although this restructuring provides scalability and educational agility, it also calls for proactive policy planning and thorough deliberation of long-term institutional objectives in a hybrid digital age.

## **2.2 Platformization and Institutional Governance**

The platformization of education is the increasing reliance on digital platforms to help not only to offer instruction and learning but also to facilitate administrative activities, institutional management, and scholarly processes. Deep within educational environments today, platforms include learning management systems (LMSs), video conferencing tools, academic social networks, and AI-driven assessment systems are shaping how universities allocate resources, interact with stakeholders, and generate performance insights (Williamson, 2021). EDUCAUSE (2022) estimates that almost 99% of higher education institutions worldwide reported using an LMS as core instructional technology; over 80% routinely utilize synchronous video conferencing tools for live lessons and meetings. These systems have evolved from emergency response techniques to become lasting infrastructure in hybrid and entirely online educational designs. Beyond simplifying content distribution and enabling communication, digital platforms include governance systems that influence institutional behaviour, policy priorities, and corporate culture.

The particular logic about efficiency, performance, and user involvement included in platform design affects how organizations view success, distribute resources, and assess results. Real-time data on student engagement, assignment submissions, click-through rates, and patterns of engagement generated by analytics dashboards inside LMSs are utilized by instructors and administrators to inform decisions on interventions, course modification, or student assistance (Siemens & Long, 2011). Although data-driven decision-making can improve responsiveness and evidence-based planning, it also typically gives quantifiable measures priority over sensitive professional judgment, therefore marginalizing context-specific insights not readily measurable. Often, the algorithmic designs behind these systems encode beliefs about what counts as significant education or bona fide involvement. Automated assessment tools depending on pattern recognition or rule-based criteria, for example, may reinforce limited definitions of academic accomplishment stressing correct answers over critical thinking, creativity, or socio-emotional abilities (Knox, 2020).

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Furthermore, the inclusion of artificial intelligence in platforms raises questions about openness, prejudice, and fairness as algorithmic models may unintentionally reinforce inequities if trained on historical data that reflect actual social disparities (OECD, 2021). Platformization also influences professional freedom and corporate standards. Faculty jobs are increasingly spread throughout both internal and outside digital settings, therefore requiring cooperation with third-party vendors, adherence to platform rules, and adaption to changing technological norms. As teachers are supposed to match their instruction with data-driven institutional objectives and platform-embedded workflows (Selwyn, 2023), this can undermine traditional pedagogical authority and craft methods. Although platformization presents chances for scalability, adaptability, and data-informed governance, it also begs important concerns about institutional agency, pedagogical diversity, and the cultural values directing educational practice in digitally mediated environments.

### **2.3 Organizational Culture and Digital Change**

The organizational culture of an institution is as important, if not more, than its technological capabilities for successful digital transformation in education. Investments in infrastructure, software, and technical abilities are required, but they are inadequate unless coupled with cultural systems that foster experimentation, group decision-making, and teamwork (OECD, 2021). A culture that honours trust, flexibility, and shared ownership enables stakeholders at every level, administrators, teachers, students, and support staff, to actively participate in change initiatives and to alter processes in response to emerging needs.

More sustainable and deeper digital transformation is usually found in organizations with inclusive digital plans and participative governance systems. Participatory governance includes faculty representatives, IT experts, instructional designers, and students in important decisions regarding digital investments, pedagogical redesign, and policy frameworks, that is, distributed decision structures (Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, & Gardner, 2020). Co-created digital approaches, those that reflect contextual realities rather than top-down commands, are more likely to garner widespread buy-in.

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For instance, the OECD's 2021 study of digital education governance in partner and member nations shows that organizations promoting collaborative leadership and cross-departmental coordination show more fulfilment with transformation results than those with siloed decision-making processes (OECD, 2021). Often mirroring not technical constraints but rather underlying cultural conflicts, opposition to digital change is Fear of more job load and role uncertainty is a typical cause of opposition. Particularly when professional development is restricted or poorly matched with practice, faculty and staff may see new technologies as increasing administrative burden instead of improving pedagogical effectiveness (Graham et al., 2020).

Furthermore, anxiety and mistrust can be created by digital systems incorporating surveillance-oriented elements like automated proctoring, data monitoring, and compliance monitoring, therefore impeding cultural alignment (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Professional autonomy is yet another major point of conflict. Educators sometimes worry that mandated digital tools and fixed platform workflows limit their instructional flexibility and undervalue professional judgment in favour of algorithmic measures (Selwyn, 2023).

Studies show that teachers who feel excluded from technological decisions are more inclined to practice surface compliance, that is, to only nominally apply tools without pedagogical integration (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2022). Successful cultural transformation plans give transparent communication top priority, develop trust, and incorporate ongoing learning possibilities. Leaders who model experimentation, offer reflective practice resources, and celebrate early achievements foster organizational cultures in which digital transformation turns out to be a shared path rather than a mandated effort.

### **3. EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND DIGITAL LEADERSHIP**

#### **3.1 Digital Leadership Competencies**

Leaders of education in digitally redesigned institutions have skills far above fundamental technological knowledge.

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Although internet-enabled resources, learning management systems, and AI-driven analytics are more and more fundamental for school activities, successful leadership in this setting calls for a holistic mix of cultural, ethical, strategic, and inclusive capabilities (Fullan et al., 2020). Contemporary research stresses that digital leadership involves visionary thinking, intercultural awareness, and ethical administration that guarantee technology serves rather than harms institutional values and equity objectives (Tarali, 2025; Hamzah et al., 2025).

Cultural intelligence, the ability to grasp, value, and negotiate varied cultural situations inside the learning environment, is a key leadership competency in digital institutions. Leaders have to handle cultural variety with sensitivity and strategic understanding as learning environments grow more multicultural and global, hence promoting inclusive digital ecosystems instead of strengthening digital divides (Akhmetshin et al., 2025). Intercultural competence fosters fair access to digital resources, fosters stakeholder group trust, and strengthens institutional resilience in the face of fast change. Equally significant is ethical consciousness. Digital transformation causes serious ethical concerns regarding data privacy, monitoring, algorithmic bias, and fair access to developing technologies (Tarali, 2025).

Leaders' sensitive to these ethical aspects create conditions where invention does not come at the expense of justice or human dignity. For example, research indicates that ethical leadership advances teacher agency in digital pedagogy by stressing equity, teamwork, and respect for professional judgment, counteracting technocratic models that give standardization over contextual responsiveness (Mphatsoane Sesoane & Jita, 2025). Aside from their ethical and cultural abilities, digital leaders have to balance innovation with inclusion. This calls for supporting innovation with new methods, such personalized learning systems or mixed educational approaches, while defending academic standards and guaranteeing that all pupils gain from technical developments. According to a literature synthesis, most (78%) of digital leadership research highlight the need of ethical, inclusive approaches that mix innovation with equity and institutional sustainability (Hamzah et al., 2025). Finally, good digital leadership includes change management and strategic visioning.

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Leaders have to forecast future trends, base decisions on data, and foster a culture of ongoing learning as digital ecosystems change. To support cooperative innovation, they must also empower teachers and staff, enable professional learning communities, and develop relational capital (Tarali, 2025; systematic assessments of digital leadership). To conclude, digital leadership in education is a complex ability fusing inclusive praxis, ethical awareness, strategic forethought, and cultural intelligence. These skills help human-centred transformation of teaching, learning, and institutional governance as well as technical adoption.

### **3.2 Data-Driven Management Practices**

Digital culture in education has greatly accelerated the adoption of data driven management practices, making real time monitoring of student performance, staff productivity, and institutional outcomes routine in many schools and universities. Learning analytics, educational data mining, and integrated information systems have advanced leaders the ability to constantly monitor attendance, participation patterns, assessment results, even behavioural indicators, so facilitating quick responses to performance problems and producing evidence-based decision-making procedures (Kaspi & Venkatraman, 2023; Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021).

Such abilities have obvious advantages: Institutes that use strong analytics frameworks show better matching of curriculum with student demands and, in some cases, quicker advances in teaching effectiveness than do their peers lacking such systems (Pujeda, 2025; Journal of Education, Humanities, 2025). These data methods, meanwhile, bring more strong management control that goes well beyond encouraging feedback loops.

The rising datafication of administrative and pedagogical practices, as Selwyn and co-workers see in their fundamental study on digital automation in education, often embeds algorithmic logics into daily institutional governance, therefore affecting what is evaluated, how success is measured, and who has evaluative power, therefore changing professional connections and decision-making hierarchies (Selwyn et al., 2023, p. 3).

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Similar studies in organizational sociology indicate that audit-oriented cultures, where performance metrics and rankings drive governance, can reduce teacher professional autonomy, weaken trust, and impose rigid accountability structures that favour measurable results over complicated educational objectives (Shore & Wright, 2015). This conflict between autonomy and responsibility goes above academics.

According to recent worldwide data, such as OECD's TALIS results, teacher participation in school level decision-making, including assessment policy and curriculum creation, has decreased in many systems even as data reporting obligations have grown, thereby fuelling professional dissatisfaction and a sense of disenfranchisement among educators (OECD, 2025). Systematic reviews of human centred learning analytics, moreover, bring to light continuing worries regarding stakeholder exclusion from data system design, therefore destroying trust and reinforcing views that analytics solutions address managerial imperatives more than they do educational ones (Alfredo et al., 2023).

Ethical and governance systems, such those advised by international organizations like the OECD, underline that data usage should be in line with fairness, privacy, and stakeholder trust to keep data activities from becoming oppressive or counterproductive (OECD, 2023). Therefore, although data driven management has the potential to improve institutional performance and accountability, without careful design and shared governance strategies it risks entrenching audit cultures that undermine professional agency, erode trust, and reduce educators' capacity to exercise judgement in service of holistic student development.

### **3.3 Strategic Alignment and Institutional Vision**

Effective digital transformation in education cannot be undermined. It calls for a strategic fit between the core purpose of an organization, its instructional objectives, and its technological execution; alone adoption will not be enough.

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The OECD's Digital Education Outlook 2021 points out that while new technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and advanced analytics provide chances to improve teaching, learning, and administration, successful digital transformation depends on how these technologies are integrated to support basic educational goals instead of merely mirroring market trends or uncritically adopting innovation (OECD, 2021). Institutional mission alignment implies that digital projects should be based in well-defined educational objectives, such as improving student learning experiences, fostering equity, increasing professional capability, and expanding access, rather than being pushed only by commercial EdTech products or outside influences. Research on digital transformation in higher education highlights this point, noting that technology policies must explain why certain tools are being used and how they are supposed to help with academic enhancement, institutional sustainability, and student-centred outcomes (Hashim et al., 2022).

Furthermore, connected with strategic alignment are instructional preparedness and institutional support. A mixed methods study on digital innovation readiness in education found that teachers often acknowledged the potential benefits of digital tools but struggled to integrate them effectively because of insufficient professional development and misalignment between digital initiatives and instructional design goals (Yulin & Danso, 2025). Digital technologies risk becoming secondary additions that do not significantly change learning in the absence of focused assistance and deliberate alignment. Recent surveys of worldwide digital education changes also highlight the need of policy consistency and institutional strategy in order to avoid fragmentation of digital initiatives. OECD's Shaping Digital Education report, for instance, says that coherent digital policies at system and school levels can promote quality, equity, and efficiency by matching digital objectives with wider educational policy goals and stakeholder expectations (OECD, 2023). Crucially, strategic alignment reduces the chance of technology replacing pedagogical judgment. According to Tony Bates's long-standing studies on educational technology, the main issue is not just whether technology is utilized but also how its implementation matches pedagogical priorities, student needs, and instructionally sound practice (Bates, 2005).

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Effective digital transformation in education therefore depends on harmonizing technological adoption with institutional purpose and pedagogical vision. Leaders have to make sure that digital projects match technical developments and support educational purpose, equity, and instructional quality. Technology becomes a catalyst for significant innovation instead of a distraction or a trend forced from outside when digital techniques are deliberately matched with mission and pedagogy.

### **4. TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURES AS CULTURAL SYSTEMS**

#### **4.1 Learning Management Systems and Cultural Encoding**

Far more than just neutral databases for educational content, Learning Management Systems (LMSs) encode particular pedagogical and managerial assumptions that actively influence the organisation of teaching and learning. From socio-material viewpoints, Orlikowski (2007) contends that technologies are co-constitutive components of organizational practices, material artifacts and human activities are inseparably intertwined in daily work life, including education, therefore the design and use of an LMS may influence how educators and students perform instruction and learning. From a functional point of view, the standardised course templates, built-in evaluation tools, and analytics dashboards seen in sites such as Moodle or Blackboard include assumptions regarding efficiency, predictability, standardisation, and control.

These design elements stress modular content delivery, organised assessment sequences, and measurable participation metrics, reflecting managerial logics that prioritise standardisation and comparability over open-ended inquiry or rich, context-specific pedagogical interactions. For instance, although more dialectical or constructivist methods may occasionally be educationally preferable, discussion groups, quiz modules, and rubric-driven assessment tools emphasize quantifiable participation and performance results. Critics have pointed out that such platform logics may accidentally restrict educational innovation and reinforce transmissive teaching paradigms when instructors lack the expertise or institutional assistance to use LMS tools creatively.

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Standardized interfaces and workflow arrangements can gently inspire instructors to structure their courses around the "course content + assessment" paradigm instead of more comprehensive or learner centric designs grounded in collaborative investigation and reflective practice. Furthermore, the existence of analytics dashboards emphasizes data centric objectives like engagement counts and completion rates, which might dwarf more nuanced qualitative elements of learning and result in supervisory policies that mould faculty behaviour more than pedagogical thought. Empirical research validates this theory: changes in LMS usage mostly relate less to the capabilities of the LMS itself than to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and expert design decisions.

LMSs can facilitate interactive learning activities and personalised routes where teachers embrace learner centred ideas and get focused professional development; where such supports are lacking, systems usually are employed superficially, as repositories for materials or tools for administrating assessments, without changing basic teaching methods. The socio material perspective also underlines how LMS capabilities reflect tacit values and standards that might affect institutional expectations regarding responsibility and teaching.

While much organised templates may give efficiency and uniformity over flexibility and pedagogical first design priority, interfaces that foreground analytics might influence faculty perceptions of "good teaching" in terms of measurable student behaviour. Therefore, designing, enacting, and sustaining digital learning in accordance with greater educational objectives and human centred pedagogies depends on seeing LMSs as active participants in the educational ecosystem interacting with institutional priorities, cultural norms, and pedagogical aims, not only as content containers.

### **4.2 Artificial Intelligence and Algorithmic Governance**

From admission screening and assessment scoring to predictive analytics guiding student support and tailored learning paths, AI-driven systems are increasingly mediating important educational choices. These systems provide efficiency, scalability, and the capacity to handle enormous data sets beyond human capability.

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Predictive models can alert students at risk of dropping out weeks before conventional indicators would surface (Bulut et al., 2024; Chinta et al., 2024), while automated scoring engines may swiftly assess hundreds of student answers. Still, this growth of algorithmic governance begs basic questions on fairness, accountability, transparency, and equity. One fundamental problem is that AI systems include assumptions, values, and biases from their development backgrounds. Algorithms learn on historical data that reflect past human decisions and social systems; when these data contain inequities, artificial intelligence can mimic or even amplify them (algorithmic bias), therefore creating discriminatory outcomes that disadvantage particular groups of students (Algorithmic bias, 2025; Chinta et al., 2024).

Among the most frequently reported ethical problems in artificial intelligence in education, especially by pupils and teachers who personally encounter these systems (ScienceDirect systematic review, 2025), bias, data privacy, and openness are revealed in a systematic analysis. This emphasizes that AI is not a neutral arbiter of decisions but rather a sociotechnical instrument moulded by human surroundings. Opacity, or the "black box" character of many artificial intelligence systems, adds to these worries. Educators and students frequently cannot grasp the rationale behind significant decisions, such as admissions recommendations or automated evaluation results, when organizations employ proprietary systems devoid of clear explainability mechanisms, hence making it challenging to dispute or appeal judgments influencing academic opportunities (ScienceDirect systematic review, 2025; Remian, 2019 as cited in ethical AI literature).

This lack of openness undermines confidence and hides who is accountable for skewed or incorrect results: the developer, the institution, or the algorithm itself (algorithmic accountability, 2025). Moreover, moral risk goes beyond openness and prejudice. Particularly for minors, artificial intelligence systems often analyse sensitive personal and behavioural information, which presents informed consent and data privacy issues (Chinta et al., 2024; brainzmagazine ethical AI summary, 2025). Students and families' autonomy and agency may be impaired if they lack relevant knowledge about what data are gathered, how they are utilized, and how judgments are made.

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These issues are not just conceptual ones. Students engaging with artificial intelligence helped to highlight the necessity of fairness, explainability, and human supervision as conditions for trust in artificial intelligence grading systems (International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 2025). AI-mediated decision making runs the danger of replicating structural injustices, undermining trust, and reducing teachers' professional judgement in the lack of clear ethical frameworks including participatory governance, explainable artificial intelligence (XAI), and accountability systems. This is how artificial intelligence in education presents great moral conundrums while also unlocks strong analytical ability. Dealing with these demands multihospital approaches that emphasize openness, justice, shared accountability, and fair stakeholder involvement so that artificial intelligence helps rather than hinders educational goals and justice.

### **4.3 Infrastructure, Power, and Dependency**

Reliance on proprietary digital platforms in education, including learning management systems, analytics services, assessment engines, and AI enabled tools, increasingly creates power disparities between educational institutions and the technology providers that design, control, and govern these systems. The change from institutions possessing and managing their own digital infrastructure to being reliant consumers of outside platforms whose design, operation, data governance, and future evolution are decided by commercial players lies at the core of this asymmetry (Komljenovic, 2021). Such dependence may constrain institutional independence as systems typically integrate particular pedagogic, managerial, and economic assumptions that affect what is feasible, and what is not, within teaching, learning, and governance procedures. (Komljenovic and Williamson, 2024) One main example of this imbalance is in data governance and intellectual property. Contracts between institutions and suppliers may provide platform operators significant rights over user produced data and instructional content, therefore allowing these companies to reuse, analyse, or monetize academic resources in ways not exactly expected by instructors or students (Komljenovic & Williamson, 2024).

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High switching costs cause some organizations to find it difficult to leave long term agreements, therefore locking them into proprietary ecosystems that influence curriculum design, data streams, and even pedagogical decisions without strong institutional control (Komljenovic & Williamson, 2024). This dependence also affects educational creativity; when institutions implement standardised proprietary platforms, instructors may discover their capacity to try various pedagogical designs limited by the architecture, templates, and integrated analytics of the platform (Kerssens & van Dijck, 2022). By arranging interactions, assessments, and instructional sequences in ways that restrict teachers' discretion and support standardized models of teaching and learning (Kerssens & van Dijck, 2022; Kerssens & van Dijck, 2023), research reveals platformization can challenge pedagogical autonomy. Rely on private platforms also opens organizations to outside governance influences that might not fit with their educational values or public accountability.

Because corporate firms acquire enormous volumes of educational data, considered as valuable assets, they can give product development, market expansion, and commercial interests' priority that goes against the educational goals of institutions (Komljenovic & Williamson, 2024). This interaction can cause what scholars refer to as "data colonialism," whereby data extraction and platform dependence reproduce systematic inequalities and restrict local decision-making (Coudry & Mejias, 2019, as cited in *Rethinking Schooling in the Age of AI*, 2026). Platform dependence therefore reduces institutional autonomy, academic creativity, and democratic control inside educational systems.

To reduce these dangers, experts propose building strong digital governance systems that give priority to openness, stakeholder engagement, and institutional capability to negotiate, control, and, when required, terminate platform agreements. Strengthening institutional digital literacy, embracing open standards and compatible systems (e.g., open-source solutions), and enacting strong data governance policies consistent with institutional aims and ethical values can all be part of governance techniques. These systems enable technology to support educational democratic aims rather than be swallowed by business interests.

## **5. ETHICAL, POLICY, AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Digital Inequality and Access**

By worsening long-standing educational disparities impacting children from marginalized communities, digital culture exacerbates current inequities in access to technology, connectivity, and digital literacy. Although digital tools and platforms have the ability to improve learning, unequal access to vital infrastructure excludes many students from meaningful engagement in digitally mediated education. UNESCO estimates that 2.6 billion people, about 32% of the world's population, still lack internet access, therefore severely restricting students' ability to interact with online resources and digital learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2023).

Sixty percent of primary schools and half of lower secondary schools have no dependable internet, adding to this. Low income and rural areas most clearly experience this lack of connection. Development data shows that throughout many areas, city inhabitants have far more internet use rates, approximately 85%, than rural communities, roughly 58%, thereby exposing a clear rural-urban digital divide (DevelopmentAid, 2025). Lack of connectivity not only limits access to real time learning experiences but also restricts access to digital tools that are increasingly required for homework, research, and collaborative projects.

According to research, pupils in underprivileged schools are frequently unable to fully engage in digital learning since they lack both home connectivity and dependable access to devices such laptops or tablets, exacerbated by poor school ICT provision and underfunded teacher training (International Journal of Social Science Archives, 2024). Apart from connection, digital literacy divides reinforce inequity. The ability to find, assess, produce, and convey information using technology, digital literacy, is not evenly distributed across social class. Research suggests that pupils from lower income levels and first-generation college students frequently have lower degrees of digital skill, which is related with lower involvement, motivation, and learning results in online settings (Springer Nature, 2025).

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Marginalized students also face obstacles in acquiring crucial information literacy skills, including navigating online learning platforms, distinguishing reliable sources, and using digital tools for academic success, gaps that further disadvantage them in an increasingly digitized educational scene (Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 2025). Socioeconomic and demographic disparities worsen these structural obstacles. Girls, students with disabilities, and pupils from low-income families often face more barriers to getting devices, connectivity, and customized digital support, hence restricting their capacity to participate fully in digital learning (International Journal of Social Science Archives, 2024). Furthermore, studies on the digital divide frequently reveal that education systems with weak digital infrastructure and little teacher development have trouble reducing these gaps, therefore producing unequal educational experiences and results mirroring larger social injustices (OECD, 2025). To tackle these intersecting injustices calls for whole-of-approach solutions that go beyond merely implementing technology. Essential to guarantee that all students, especially those from disadvantaged groups, can flourish in digitally mediated learning settings are investments in affordable devices, inclusive curricula, and targeted digital literacy education for teachers and kids as well as in broadband extension.

### **5.2 Privacy, Surveillance, and Trust**

Data-intensive educational technologies generate major privacy, surveillance, and consent issues, therefore transforming the landscape of student life and educational partnerships. Large volumes of personal data, including academic performance, interaction patterns, engagement, and behavioural indicators, are gathered, kept, and continuously evaluated as colleges and universities embrace learning analytics, artificial intelligence driven systems, and monitoring instruments (Koops & Leenes, 2019). Frequently without defined systems for students to comprehend or manage how their data is utilized, these methods go beyond conventional educational documents into real-time monitoring of pupils' digital and even physical behaviours (Johnson et al., 2019). Among the main moral questions is that ongoing surveillance could undermine students' faith in both institutions and one another.

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Students might feel they are continuously watched, which could cause self-censoring, limited freedom of speech, and changed behaviour just because their actions are being recorded (EdTechRCE, 2025). Rather than encouraging support, tools gathering precise interaction data, including keystrokes, time on tasks, participation in discussion, or even webcam-based engagement measures, can foster a pervasive feeling of surveillance. Students' faith in institutional data procedures deteriorates when they lack unambiguous knowledge about what data is gathered, how it is interpreted, and for what aims, hence weakening trust in educational authorities and lowering their genuine engagement with learning platforms (Educause, 2020). Issues of consent and control fall under privacy concerns.

Many modern systems are put in line with general institutional policies that deny students significant data-driven decisions. Because of technology integrated inside demanded learning settings (Johnson et al., 2019), students sometimes have little capacity to give informed consent or opt out of data collecting even for sensitive categories like behavioural flags or predictive risk scores. In several recorded examples, parents and pupils were unaware that third party companies, including artificial intelligence surveillance technologies deployed in schools, were accessing and analysing student data, sometimes leading to sensitive personal information being exposed such as mental health indicators or identity information (AP News inquiry, 2025).

This lack of openness and control underlines a power imbalance: students have almost no say in how their data is treated; instead, institutions and technology companies determine what is gathered and examined. Moreover, scientists underline that data extraction and surveillance have significant effects. Data practices that label students as "at risk" or profile behaviours might affect academic chances and interventions, therefore strengthening prejudice and unequal treatment if data models are imperfect or opaque (EdTechRCE, 2025). The lack of strong consent processes and open government aggravates these hazards, hence making ethical safeguards absolutely necessary. Dealing with these obstacles calls for educational institutions to use participatory governance systems that engage students in choices about data policies, privacy preserving designs, and clear informed consent procedures.

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Data intensive technologies run the danger of corroding confidence, a basic component of the educational relationship, and converting learning settings into sites of unchecked surveillance instead of friendly, equitable environments without such frameworks.

### **5.3 Policy and Regulatory Challenges**

From data-informed decision-making and better administrative efficiency to tailored learning and adaptive assessments, digital transformation in education presents amazing possibilities. These developments present difficult ethical, legal, and social problems as well, though, that educational policies must confront to guarantee that technological adoption supports educational objectives without sacrificing justice, rights, and confidence. Effective policy systems must hence balance creativity with strong ethical protections, with particular focus on accountability, transparency, and equity (OECD, 2021).

The OECD's Digital Education Outlook 2021 highlights how smart technologies like artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and blockchain can help education and learning, yet their advantages depend on governance policies that promote ethical values rather than just fast technological deployment. Policies must have provisions for data protection, privacy, and fairness as well as explicit instructions on how students' information are gathered, stored, used, and distributed. The report, for instance, advises governments to establish thorough regulatory systems that guarantee technologies are used none discriminately, fairly, openly, and auditable, therefore protecting basic educational rights and human dignity. Maintaining stakeholder trust calls for transparency.

Policies have to guarantee that students, teachers, and families may clearly see and understand the logic, restrictions, and decision criteria of these systems whether educational institutions embrace algorithm- or AI-powered tools for early risk detection, tailored learning pathways, or digital assessments. Opaque systems can erode trust, produce false information, and hide responsibility for results without openness. Similarly vital are systems of accountability.

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Policies should specify who is accountable for the ethical consequences of digital tools, ranging from data abuse and monitoring to algorithmic bias and unfair results. Oversight agencies, adherence criteria, independent audits, and well-defined channels for redress upon injury fall under this. Integrating responsibility into digital governance helps avoid damage and brings educational technology use in line with democratic principles. Policy development has to have equity at its core. The broad digital divide, differences in internet connectivity, device access, and digital literacy, means that inventions could aggravate inequities if there are no safeguards.

Ensuring that inventions help all students rather than favouring only those already well-served, policy frameworks must give inclusive access to infrastructure, development of digital skills, and culturally relevant material top priority. Recent OECD research also emphasizes the need of cooperative policy creation including educators, pupils, families, and business partners. This participatory approach promotes mutual knowledge of risks and rewards, develops ethical standards, and helps policies change along with technological developments. Educational policies must therefore deliberately combine ethical safeguards with innovation to ground digital transformation in transparency, responsibility, and equality. Technological developments run the risk of aggravating inequities, weakening trust, and compromising the fundamental goal of education without this equilibrium.

### **6. FUTURE TRAJECTORIES OF DIGITALLY MEDIATED LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

#### **6.1 Hybrid and Post-Digital Institutions**

Rather than just within brick-and-mortar classrooms, future learning establishments are increasingly supposed to operate as hybrid systems combining traditional physical campuses with digital ecosystems that facilitate learning anywhere and anytime. This change mirrors more general changes in education's conception of information, place, and involvement. Combining online platforms, digital collaboration environments, virtual simulation tools, and flexible physical spaces, hybrid learning ecosystems let schools adjust to varied learner requirements and surroundings (Hybrid learning ecosystems framework; eduresearch.com).

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Post digital education provides a helpful prism through which to view this change. Post digital perspectives highlight that rather than seeing technology as an outside disruptor, digital technologies are now normalized and intertwined with educational practices, entrenched in daily institutional culture and pedagogical routines rather than serving as extras or inventions distinct from "real" campus life (Fawns, 2023 based on Jandrić et al., 2018). Post digital thought hence refutes the dichotomy of physical vs. digital, demonstrating how educational areas are fundamentally hybrid: learning environments are "dynamic entities moulded by interactions between people, tools, and activities" (Future Classroom study).

Emerging hybrid learning settings clearly combine in person contact with synchronous and asynchronous digital tools demonstrate this convergence. For instance, educational research has suggested architectures integrating pedagogy, space, and technology to enable synchronous hybrid peer learning, where pupils in physical and online settings engage simultaneously in group projects (Plants et al., 2025). Empirical results show that, when carefully constructed, such hybrid models can boost academic performance and involvement, hence underlining how digital ecosystems can enhance existing campus infrastructure without supplanting them (Hybrid impact study in Kazakhstan).

The post digital paradigm also acknowledges that hybrid learning means a rethinking of the role and function of physical campuses, not their termination. Post-digital approaches view learning as situated across a range of contexts and activities all mediated by technology and human interaction (Lamb et al., 2024) rather than regarding online and in-classroom learning as opposites. While virtual environments offer flexibility, scalability, and access especially for remote, part time, and worldwide students, physical campuses still need community building, embodied interaction, and experiential learning. In this post-digital future, institutions will give integrated learning ecosystems that blur the line between physical and digital first consideration: smart classrooms outfitted for hybrid participation, cloud-based learning tools that unite student resources, and linked areas promoting collaborative, student centred, personalised learning.

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This development requires reassessment of instructional approaches, infrastructure expenditure, and institutional attitudes so that technology is integrated into the foundation of learning rather than viewed as independent or additional, hence supporting more inclusive, flexible, and resilient educational experiences.

### **6.2 Sustainability and Cultural Resilience**

Rather than just technical acceptance or efficiency improvements, sustainable digital transformation in education calls for culturally sensitive, human-centred, and ethically anchored governance models. Governance structures must give human development, inclusion, and moral accountability top importance as digital systems become key elements of educational infrastructures, from e-learning platforms to analytics driven decision support, to guarantee that innovation encourages fair learning results and upholds varied cultural values. Research on digital governance emphasizes that technological transformation without ethically grounded control can reproduce or worsen social inequities, marginalise underrepresented groups, and erode institutional trust (Digital governance review, 2025).

A culturally responsive governance approach understands that educational contexts are enmeshed in complicated social, cultural, and political conditions that affect who participates in digital ecosystems and under what conditions. Governance models in digital education that, for instance, ignore language diversity, local pedagogical traditions, or community values risk imposing foreign standards that may be at odds with the lived realities of the pupils.

Studies showing that ethical aspects, such data privacy, algorithmic justice, and contextual relevance, are sometimes forgotten when digital tools are exported without local adaptation, especially in rural, indigenous, and multilingual environments (Cultural and ethical dimensions of LMS adoption, 2025) echo this criticism. Furthermore, foregrounding inclusion and human development, culturally sensitive governance fits Sustainable Development Objectives (SDGs) like decreased inequality (Digital inclusion and institutional effectiveness review, 2025).

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This calls for policies that promote widespread access to infrastructure and connectivity, strong digital literacy programs, and participatory decision-making procedures involving teachers, students, households, and communities. For instance, participatory design guarantees that a range of stakeholder voices influence the selection, implementation, and evaluation of technologies, therefore improving openness and fostering trust in digital systems (Digital citizenship and sustainable governance, 2023). Ethical responsibility also calls for transparent data practice reporting, algorithmic tool audits, and explicit human supervision criteria, that is, mechanisms for accountability. Unsecured digital innovation runs the danger of valuing market values or efficiency measures over educational quality and student rights (Sustainable education in the age of AI, 2025).

Including ethical frameworks into governance, for instance, embedding fairness, dignity, and agency as basic criteria in digital strategy creation, allows institutions to make sure that technical change promotes rather than hampers human development. Practically, culturally sensitive governance connects digital transformation with community values, social justice objectives, and institutional missions, therefore allowing technology to be utilized for academic purposes while respecting cultural diversity, protecting rights, and fostering shared flourishing. Such administration redefines change as a cooperative, adaptive process that strikes equilibrium between innovation and closely held human values.

### **CONCLUSION**

Emerging as a transforming force, digital culture is radically changing learning institutions' organization, administration, and pedagogical techniques. Unlike conventional education reform, which usually centres on gradual upgrades in curriculum or infrastructure, the integration of digital technologies reflects a cultural revolution that changes how schools define their identity, manage resources, and engage with stakeholders. Learning management systems, AI-powered analytics, collaborative digital platforms, and internet communication tools alter the values, priorities, and norms of institutional life in addition to simplifying administrative or educational procedures.

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Digital platforms, for example, often include assumptions on efficiency, standardization, and quantifiable results, which affect not just instructional methods but also views of accountability, evaluation, and student engagement (Orlikowski, 2007; Selwyn, 2023). This cultural transformation affects also organizational governance. Real-time monitoring of student engagement, staff performance, and operational results enabled by digital technologies creates a data-rich environment for decision-making. Though such abilities help to improve strategic planning and resource distribution, leaders also must negotiate difficult ethical, social, and educational issues. Institutions must reconcile the potential for data-driven insights with the need to maintain professional autonomy, protect privacy, and foster an environment conducive to critical thinking and creativity (Williamson, 2021; Koops & Leenes, 2019).

Institutions risk letting technology needs define human-centred educational ideals if they do not follow culturally informed approaches to governance. Digital culture calls for a change in pedagogical practice from teacher-centred education toward more flexible, participatory, and learner-centred strategies. Online and mixed learning environments, adaptive learning systems, and interactive digital content provide personalization at scale; however, they also need teachers to critically examine how technology influences learning experiences, social interactions, and knowledge building (Fawns, 2023; Selwyn, 2023). Moreover, paying attention to equity and inclusion is vital since the advantages of digital innovation may not be evenly distributed across socio-economic, geographic, and cultural divisions (UNESCO, 2023).

Organizations that deliberately foster inclusive digital cultures, that is, including accessibility, multilingual support, and culturally sensitive content, are better positioned to lessen participation and learning outcome gaps. Ultimately, institutions can negotiate uncertainty, build trust, and stay relevant in a fast-changing educational environment by developing inclusive, ethically based, and human-centred digital cultures. Leaders and legislators have to accept a whole view that sees digital transformation not as only technical projects but also as a continuous bargaining of cultural values, ethical obligations, and strategic priorities.

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Educational organizations can guarantee that digital technologies foster not just operational efficiency but also the growth of empowered, reflective, and socially responsible students by combining innovation with equality, accountability, and community involvement.

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