

EDUCATION FOR VALUE ORIENTATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY:
THE CASE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The multicultural nature of the Nigerian society and the prevailing political and social unrest characterized by anti-social behaviour of different kinds and magnitude are indicators of misappropriation of values in our society. The unity and progress of our society is threatened because, core values that promote law and order, respect for elders, sanctity of human lives, brotherliness, honesty and tolerance are disoriented. The situation calls for urgent need for values orientation through our education system. Considering the place of education in societal development, it could be used to transform the society through values orientation to the teachers — the architects of the national development, leaders and the masses. This can be achieved through well articulated policies on values and education; and the incorporation of values education in the school curricula at all levels of education. Consequently, national and universal values emphasized against individual and ethnic values if progress must be made.

Keywords: Society, Culture, Education, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In this era of science and technology, scientific literacy is much emphasized in virtually all societies the world over. This is directed towards standing against the scientific and technological challenges posed to humanity. In the developing countries particularly in Nigeria, education is directed towards a desirable level of scientific and technological literacy and competence, hence the establishment of science and technology colleges and universities in all states of the nation.

In recent years, the relative political unrest in many countries, Nigeria in particular, resulting in insecurity of lives and properties, inter-ethnic clashes and in severe cases, records of civil wars are pointers to a missing link between education and societal values. The Niger Delta militants, the South Eastern kidnappers and the Northern Boko Haram help to widen the gap between education and society. The missing link is values education for peaceful co-existence. This paper borders on the types of values transmitted in the school/education system and the dire need for adequate orientation to be given to learners who transcend the school life in the larger society.

The essence of society is solidarity through the cohesion of ideas (values) and mutual understanding. This ensures order, stability, peaceful relationship, continuity, development and sustainability. These can only be achieved by using education as an essential tool. It is in the light of the above that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) acknowledges education as an instrument “per excellence for the actualization of her lofty goals.

Kosemani (2003:1) sees education as “a universal practice or phenomenon engaged in by societies at all stages of development. It describes the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, valuable skills developed and faculties trained.” In the view of Okoh (2003:13), education is “the activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another”. From whichever angle one may view education, certain features are common. Such features are, man, society, behaviour, values and transmission. It is in the light of this that Dosunmu (2006:5) posits that:

Whatever the case may be, the main goal of education is to prepare the right type of environment for the individual, to allow him grow physically, mentally and spiritually in order that he can develop harmoniously within himself and at the same time together with his fellow human beings.

Education and society are inseparable. Society equips education with the values to be transmitted while education exposes each generation of young people to the existing beliefs, norms and values of their culture (Schafer, 2000). This demands a careful selection of the values that would help to integrate the society and promote the mutual relationship between man and man and his environment.

Modern education systems are made up of people from different social classes, groups and cultural background. They are held together as a community by laid down rules and beliefs that guide, shape and direct the conduct of every member. The essence is to ensure harmonious relationship and peaceful coexistence among members in spite of their relative differences in social and cultural background. These cords of relationship are called values.

According to Aggarwal (2006), values stand for ideas that men live by. In other words, values stand for the philosophy of life of a society. In the view of Adeyiju, cited in it Bolerin (2009), “values are beliefs or ideas which individuals consider dear and acceptable... Values are part of life right from the period of infancy to adulthood.” To Kalusi (2006), values are essence of society.

Education is a value Laden enterprise directed to positively impact on the society practicing it. It is the heart of society. It prepares and feeds every facet of human endeavour with the needed personnel with appropriate skills and infrastructure needed (Dienye, 2004). It is necessary to note that education in itself is lifeless. It is the society that makes it lively. Thus, Maduagwu (1998) posits that society puts into education all that it (education) needs for effective transmission of the culture or values of the people. To him, whatever society puts into education, education gives back to society.

Nigeria, conscious of its multicultural nature, postulates lofty goals and objectives and make policies aimed at national unity and development. The same country cannot at the same time put into her education system bad values that would wreck the progress and effort of its founding fathers. Ironically, the civil unrest in the society, the rate of corruption, particularly by our leaders and public office administrators, the insecurity of lives and properties and the relative decay in moral discipline are indicators of values misappropriation. Religious,

ethnic/tribal and personal interest seem to overshadow national interest. The situation begs the question: Why? A possible answer to such intriguing question is lack of value orientation for national unity and progress.

EDUCATION AND VALUE ORIENTATION

Orientation, according to the New Webster Dictionary of the English Language, is to “adjust someone or something to the surrounding or situation... to turn or guide in a specified direction”. Roa (2003) sees values orientation as the process of directing the interest and passion of individuals to the desired socio-cultural values that promote societal development and good human relations. From the above, value orientation therefore is to influence people to adjust, turn to, or conform to specified values needed by the society.

Every school curriculum contains set values expected to be transmitted to the younger generation: it is the education system that does the transmission. Paradoxically, some of the values that promote honesty, transparency, tolerance and peaceful coexistence have no proper methods of transmission. This does not mean that such values should not be transmitted to the learners. A better way of disseminating the knowledge of such desired values is by creating awareness through the enlightenment and interpretation of what the values stand for. That is the orientation. There are yet to be formulated methods of teaching such values as peace, security, tolerance, sanctity of lives and peaceful coexistence. Orientation is the answer. There are a lot of jingles on radio, television and other media systems on the above but not much has been achieved.

In the context of this work, considering the prevailing political atmosphere, value orientation has to do with the process of disabusing the hearts of people; particularly the youths from seeing violence, fraud, corruption and other anti-social vices as the best ways of resolving issues and creating wealth for self.

Education can be used as an instrument for the orientation of values that foster national unity, obedience to lay down rules, tolerance and development in Nigeria. These can be achieved through the following ways:

Gbamanja (1997) sees curriculum as the totality of the experiences the child (learner) acquires within and outside the school premises. Experiences acquired over time form solid knowledge. When knowledge is not passed on to the younger generation, each generation would be compelled to begin the life of man all over (Suleman, 2009). The FRN (2004) emphasized the need for the inculcation of the right values for national development in the child. It is a policy statement that cannot be realized if not well incorporated in the school curricular — the bench-mark for the actualization of the above. Consequently, the school curricular should reflect the values needed for national transformation and development, and should be taught at all levels. To attain this, values education should be introduced and implemented in schools.

Leadership in the context of this work refers to anyone who influences the activities of others; be it in politics, religion, family, school, etc. The principal problem of Nigeria as a society as acknowledged by Achebe (1983) is leadership. Many leaders have no proper understanding of their roles as leaders. Some have no proper knowledge of the right values needed for the advancement of the society. Because of their ignorance of the position and role of leadership, such statements as ‘this is my turn’ and ‘lets share the national cake’ became their

over ruling philosophies. Enu and Esu (2004) advocated for the reorientation of leaders for purposeful leadership. Leaders in our society should be given leadership education through which, the right values expected and accepted by the society will be taught through enlightenment (orientation). This is necessary because one can only give he/she has.

The introduction of Adult and Non-formal Education in our school system highlights the rate of illiteracy in our society. In fact, Okorosaye-Orubite (2008) notes the illiteracy rate of Nigeria to stand at 65%. That is, more than half the entire population are illiterates. The problem is, how many of these adult illiterates are willing to abandon their businesses and go to school? By implication, these sets of people remain ignorant of the values needed for national development. What they expect from their leaders are self- driven needs that are ephemeral and inimical to the national policy on leadership. To reduce this level of ignorance, government should create room for educators to organize town hall meetings with the masses in their homes where they could be orientated on the right values needed for development and what they should expect from their leaders.

There is no doubt that non-professionals are in the teaching field. This probably informed the government on the need for the professionalisation of the job which gave birth to the Teachers Registration Council (TRC). Gbamanja (1997) posits that a bad teacher cheats while a non teacher kills. Non teachers are not well informed of the values to be transmitted. Even when they know, they lack the integrity needed for the success of the job.

Teachers prepare today the leaders of tomorrow. When teachers compromise the right values for leadership training for material gains, our future will be at stake. For instance, the monster of examination malpractice could not have come to stay without the support of teachers who trade the lofty values for selfish gains. There is therefore the dire need for teachers to be retrained in values education to enable them have a relative command and authority of the right values needed for national integration and development.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria as a society is noted for lofty developmental policies that ordinarily would have transformed the society into a developed nation. Regrettably, Nigeria is yet to find her way to the path of greatness. This is largely due to values disorientation. To get out of the wood, values that promote national unity and progress should be oriented to the masses. This can be achieved through education.

To ensure proper orientation of values through education, the following recommendations should be applied:

- Educational institutions should be engaged in an enlightenment campaign on the right values for national peace and progress outside the school setting.
- Values education should be introduced in our school system at all levels.
- Compulsory leadership training should be given to prospective leaders before assuming any leadership role.
- Citizenship and leadership training centres should be established alongside educational institutions.

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