VALUE ORIENTATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

All men have inclinations towards making choice either as an “opportunity cost” or “scale of preference”. Whichever one that is applicable is as a result of value system. Thus, value is embedded in every decision a man make. This is why it is asserted that value is the determinant in a man’s life. This work centred on value orientation and its attendant implications to national development. A philosophical perspective is the focal point. The work is discussed under the following sub-headings, introduction, conceptual framework, relativity of value orientation to national development based on philosophical insight and finally summary and conclusion.

Most philosophers have at various times made postulations concerning the nature of man. Man, of all creatures created by God is set apart because of his constitutions namely, the way he conducts himself and how he goes about his businesses. Based on this, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologist and philosophers have said that man is both a Homo Sapiens and a homo erectus being. Homo sapiens, because of the development of his reasoning faculties, and Homo erectus, because of his upward position (technically rationality, and the dexterity of his fingers).

The rationality of man so distinguished him from other lower brutes who operate by instincts. Man does not operate by instinct but by reasoning occasioned by intelligent drives. This intelligent drives are propelled by his desires. His desires are not products of accidents or fatalism, but “likings,” preference, or the worth attached to what is desired or chosen.

All issues or matters pertaining to choice and decision making (which are influenced by desire) in a man’s life are grounded on preferred values which of course, vary from one individual to another, one society to another and since this demarcations exist, if all people must behave in a more comprehensive way that will be of benefits to all, there must be orientation. This is the essence of this work.

To handle this work efficaciously, the following are considered: (a) Conceptual framework, (b) The relativity of value orientation with national development based on philosophical insight (c) Summary and conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

Value: In philosophy like other related disciplines, topics or concepts are discussed under different sub-headings. The concept of “value” is discussed under “axiology”. Axiology etymologically is derived from the Greek root “axios” which literally translated means an entity that has “worth” or “that which is of like qualities”. In Latin, it was coined from the word “valere” meaning to be powerful so as to influence the behaviour or attitude of people.

In this work, we must note, the term is used in its wide sense to cover not only those things which people (in this sense, Nigerians) actually like, but also those things that they ought to like.
whether as ends-in-themselves or as means to further ends (intrinsic values or good s and instrumental values or goods) (Okolo, 2004).

In furtherance of the above, Okoro (2002) is of the view that the concept “value” is a human concept making meaning only to human beings. They are qualities and attributes human beings associate with things they admire. This motivates their actions or conducts. This is why Ategwu and Udey (2012) opined that values are determinants in man that influence his choices in life and thus decides his behaviour. This stand tallies with what Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1966) noted that, “out of experiences may come certain general guide to behaviour. These guides tend to give direction to life and may be called values”.

In realization of this, the Nigerian government stated unequivocally in the National Policy on Education (2004:2) section 1, sub-section 8, that, “in consequence, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented toward inculcating the following values:

a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
b. Faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions;
c. Moral and spiritual principle in inter-personal and human relationships;
d. Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
e. Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
f. Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance.

From the foregoing, a lot of issues are involved. This makes the definition of the concept of value by Encarta Dictionary (2007) relevant. Accordingly, it defined value as “the accepted principle or standard of a person or a group; to rate something according to its perceived worth, importance, or usefulness”. Furthermore, the idea of getting people to be aware of this accepted principles or standards has to come in, according to these writers, hence, orientation.

Orientation: As identified by the Nigerian government that the instruction at all levels has to be oriented (emphasizes by capital letters ours) towards inculcating the afore-mentioned values. What does orientation entails?

The concept of orientation is pregnant with a lot of meanings. For the purpose of this work, we shall look at it from this angle as put forward by Encarta Dictionary (2007). Orientation is “a meeting or series of events at which introductory information or training is provided to somebody embarking on something new such as a course of study”. Put in another word, it implies the direction in which somebody’s thought, interest, or tendencies, lies”, or the process of becoming accustomed to a new situation or set of surroundings.

In this light, the concept of orientation as used in this work implies the process or modus operandi of making Nigerians become aware of relevant values that can lead to national development.

National Development: National development involves two different phrases or words that need different explanations in order to have focus. The word “national” as explained by the Longman Dictionary of contemporary English (2007) means a thing, event, or issues related to a whole nation(s) as opposed to any of its parts. In this context, it refers to the entity called “Nigeria”.

On the other hand, development as espoused by the same book (dictionary) refers to either the gradual growth of something, so that it becomes bigger or more advanced or a new event or piece of news of information that is likely to have an effect on the present situation. In this case, it is value orientation that will help or lead to the inculcation of the need for value dissemination that can enhance the growth of Nigeria either economically, politically, socially, religiously or otherwise.
Philosophy: The concept of philosophy has undergone a lot of definitions. Authorities in the field tend to define it the way it will suit their circumstance. This is why Alu and Ugwu (1999) held that “the nature of philosophy is better described than defined”, because an attempt to define it poses so many controversies. Be this as it may, one sure way of looking at it is via etymological root. Etymologically, the concept “philosophy” is derived from Greek “philosophia” meaning “love of wisdom”. It has also been regarded as an academic discipline or personal ideology.

Plato sees it as the “criticism of criticism”, while Aristotle says it is the “science of ultimate reality”. This definition could continue ad infinitum if we want to consider the views of different authors. But the definition of Kneller as cited by Ategwu (2004) is pertinent in this context. Accordingly, the above author Kneller (1992) defined philosophy “as the fundamental assumptions of all other branches of knowledge”. Thus, if philosophy focuses on mathematics, we will have philosophy of mathematics, on education, philosophy of education, etc.

Philosophy thus has interconnectivity with other branches of knowledge. Individuals as well as nations need it. This is why Russell in Ategwu (2004) opined that “any man without the tincture of philosophy passes through life imprisoned in his self ignorance”. Philosophy is not merely committing to memory dead bodies of letters, but it is an activity such that the man who questions the relevance of philosophy is inadvertently engaged in philosophical activity.

Philosophy is so relevant to the development of any nation that the ancient philosopher Plato avers that “the societal ills can be overcome or minimized if rulers become philosophers or philosophers become rulers. Philosophy is therefore important in the development of any nation especially through value orientation.

The Relativity of Value Orientation Vis a Vis National Development: Philosophical Insight

We live in an era of a rapidly changing society, and man, in his quest to know, understand and explore the world, is seen performing one activity or the other, making one choice or the other, preferring one thing to the other, all in the bid of meeting the enormous challenges imposed on him by the changing trends in the society. People tend to engage in different dimensions of consciousness or activities in order to acquire views and attitudes from others or the society to which they belong through the medium of education (either formal, or informal). This is why Onwuka (2002) stressed that education entails the transmission of worthwhile ideas that can lead to the development of an individual or the society or nation at large thus the value of education.

Through education, the modern man is exposed to a wide variety of sources for values or value orientations. According to Okafor (1998), the issue of value orientation is not a new phenomenon. An American, Otto Dahlke had brought out a typology on value orientation. Although this study was made in American context, the delineation can apply to all countries across the globe (Nigeria inclusive). For each value, Otto Dahlke attaches or assigned what he call “ultimate ends” which when adhered to, can lead to national development and man’s fulfillment. According to him, the following are “value orientation” and their “ultimate ends”.

i. The religious value orientation with its ultimate ends as: God, Christ, salvation, immortality and other worldliness.

ii. The Nativist value orientation with its ultimate ends as: the national culture and/or the state, power, glory, honour, greatness, and sovereignty.

iii. The market value orientation with its ultimate ends as: goods, wealth, profits, money, power, conspicuous consumption, prestige and fame.

iv. The common man value orientation with its ultimate ends as: collective action, mutualism, and dignity of workers.

v. The humanist value orientation with its ultimate ends as: knowledge, creativity, experimentation, man as the measure of things and the intelligent ordering of life as based upon knowledge.
From the above taxonomy of Otto Dahlke, it becomes evident that value is embedded in every facet of a man’s life as well as the society in which man lives. In furtherance of the above, Harold (1970:224) avers that:

Life forces us to make choices, to rate things as better or worse, and to formulate some scale or standard of values….Each individual man has some sense of values and no society that has been found that is devoid of some value system…. To ignore the role of value is to have a very distorted or one-sided view of man and his world.

From the foregoing, it is evidently clear that man is a valuing being. The big question is how can this value be transmitted from one generation to another. It is therefore the thinking of these writers that it has to be through constant orientations which in turns implies education. Orientation as earlier stated means a process of series of events that can lead to knowledge or information dissemination.

In the educative process, the teacher must therefore be abreast with the problem of value and the various postulations or theorization by eminent scholars. In line with this, these writers choose philosophers positions.

Among the philosophers, there are divergent opinions concerning the nature of value and how this can assist man to live in the society and in turn contribute to national development.

**The Idealists:** The idealist philosophers are of the view that values are stratified and organized into fixed hierarchy namely material and spiritual. These values are related to man’s natural order and the supernatural order. In assigning hierarchy to these values, the idealists primary consideration is in terms of the degree to which each set of values will assist man realize his ultimate objectives or goals in life. The idealist stand is that, the spiritual will enable man have good rapport with his creator or the absolute good. It is there contention also that the spiritual value if adhered to by man will lead to eternity.

Placing side by side the idealist stand with Otto Dahlke’s value orientation will tantamount to what Dahlke calls religious value orientation. If the two postulations are matched together, it means that man will live a righteous and upright life that can lead to national development. National development in the sense that vices like assassination, kidnapping, armed robbery, embezzlement, bribery, and corruption, etc will seize. Where these vices do not exist, there is bound to be unprecedented development. Okoro (2002) added impetus to this when he said that if Nigerians can practice religion the way it is supposed to be practiced as stated in the holy books, Nigeria will indeed be the giant of Africa in all ramifications.

**The Realist:** There are various types of realism namely Aristotelian realism, scholastic realism and scientific realism. Our focal point here is on scholastic and scientific realism because the Aristotelian realism is subsumed into the scholastic realism which has Christian under-tune or characteristics. The scholastic realist, unlike the core Aristotelian realist, which have dramatic opposite news with the idealist philosophers as far as value is concerned, have congruent view to that of the idealist as far as the nature of value is concerned. This stand by the scholastic realist is not surprising because most of them where doctors of the church who were out to reconcile religion to philosophy namely (Thomas Aquinas, Saint Augustine, Saint Anslem and Saint Bonaventure).

Like Aristotelian realist, the scholastic realists are more concerned with the practice of virtue which according to them is divided into two intellectual and moral virtues. These two gave birth to philosophic wisdom and understanding, practical wisdom like prudence and art, moral virtues like temperance, justice, fortitude etc.
All the aforementioned, if properly inculcated in Nigerian citizens, the issue of national development will not be a problem. This is because leaders with prudence would not bring policies that can hinder development. Our resources will also be judiciously managed. No nation can develop well where injustice abounds because injustice breeds hostility among citizens. A morally upright leader will not embezzle public fund, execute substandard projects. The youths that have philosophic wisdom will shun politician who give them peanuts and illicit gin to go and commit murder for their selfish interest. Morally upright youth will desist from cultism, gangsterism, examination malpractice, rape, armed robbery, etc.

Scientific Realism or Pragmatism: The principal tenet of this school of thought is on the problem of good conduct. They have little regard for spiritual matters on like the idealist and scholastic realist. The interest of the scientific realist is on the analysis and description of experiences – particularly to the problem of knowing and conduct. On the issue of values there is a division amongst them while some of them are of the view that the fundamental values are permanent and constant, because of the constancy in human nature and the nature of the physical universe, the experimentalist, hold contrary view. For the experimentalist absolute principles diminishes human dignity. In view of this, there assert that man is the architect of his values and that man is a progressive being and is distinct.

Due to the practical inclination of the scientific realist, anything that “works for man” or brings satisfaction to man should not be individualized but should be generalized to the public. In the light of the foregoing, Ayantayo (2009) and Asira, Ogar, and Okeke (2012) aver that human actions or intention connotes deeds, effort, endeavour, enterprise, exploits, undertaking, work and activity that a person or group of persons would perform that would bring development to the society.

As far as the scientific realist and their contribution to national development is concerned, the Nigerian government has “cash” into this by emphasizing education that is pragmatic and can lead to self reliance. In the era of science and technology, the contribution of pragmatism as far as value is concerned is very important because for them anything that can being satisfaction or work outright for man should be encouraged.

The Existentialist: “Values, for the existentialist are neither absolute nor determined by external (outside) criteria. The individual person, by virtue of fee choice, is the sole determinant of value” Idang (2009). What this suggest in an educative process is that curricula should be activity base, bearing in mind the interest of the learners. Furthermore, the learners should have freedom of choice and choose the subjects or courses they think suit them best. This will rhyme with NPE (2004) values number (1) one: faith in man’s ability to make national decisions. If this value is constantly instilled in learners in Nigerian schools the problem of child abuse, imposition on courses of students whom on graduation hate what they have studied will minimized.

Conclusion
Man by nature is a purposive animal. He does not operate by instincts, but reflectively take decisions. He judges carefully before embarking on an enterprise. Whatever, enterprises he embarked upon, are not product of accident, but a matter of worth and choice. Thus, to make value judgment is an everyday habit of man. This is why valuing occurs for most persons almost constantly and whenever anything, a physical object, a way of acting or a person, is preferred or chosen. This is why it is often asserted that values are determinant in human life.

Consequently, we often talk of the value of human life, the value of patriotism, value of hard work, value of godly life, etc. As important as the concept of value is at time, advertently or inadvertently, it is neglected. This work is an attempt to buttress the necessity of constantly remembering Nigerians of the need to pursue and/or uphold national values as well as personal values for the development of the country.
In this work, having x-rayed the concept of values, showing that the issue of value orientation is not akin to Nigeria alone, we brought philosophical postulations to buttress how Nigerian citizens can be oriented on how to uphold values that can pave way for national development.

It is hereby concluded that the most potent medium to get Nigerians acquainted with good values is through constant orientation (bringing to the consciousness of citizens value judgments as condition precedence for national development). School curricula should be saturated with value related issues right from pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher institution. Values like peace, hard work, patriotism, justice, sanctity of human life, etc.

Recommendations
In view of the foregoing, it is hereby recommended that:
1. A more pragmatic approach should be adopted in the inculcation of value orientation in school curricula.
2. The rebranding saga in Nigeria that has to do with value orientation should not end on newspaper pages or television and radio announcements concerted afford should be made to take the message to the grassroots.
3. Primary school curriculum should be saturated with value laden issues.
4. Leaders should set good examples by living honest and upright life.
5. Negative values like bribery, amassing of wealth through false means etc should be discouraged.

References


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