

VALUE FUSION RELATIVISM, IMPROPER USE OF E-LIBRARY AS IMPEDIMENT FOR CHARACTER BUILDING AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: AFRICAN UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Dr. Ugbagir Nancy Ngunan
University Library,
Benue State University, Makurdi,
Benue State.

Terngu Nathaniel Demekpe
Department of Political Science,
Benue State University, Makurdi,
Benue State.

And

Ngusha Simeon Abele
Department of Educational Foundations
University of Jos, Jos,
Plateau State.

Abstract

Value fusion relativism, improper use of e-library are some of the common attitudes particularly among African undergraduates that obstructed character building and good governance; a hindrance to meaningful development in Africa. The indispensable ethical values that remained resilient despite all efforts by the occident and orientalist to jettison African moral value system and replace it with their own are gradually eroding away as a result of ethical value fusion relativism emerged mostly by poor use of e-library – one way of cross moral value interaction and exposure to alien values. These alien moral values undermined the African ethical value system that is in consonance with her environment and conditions and efforts towards replacement had rendered the society backward. This paper found out that, moral values are deep-rooted attitudes that have a significant influence on people's behaviour, world view and socio-political mindset through analytical method. The paper therefore recommended that, African undergraduates should be made to believe that Africans had indigenous moral value system that is worthwhile and is the source of our pride.

Keywords: Value, e-library, character building and good governance.

The indispensability of African ethical values presuppose that Africa has value system that is relative in consonance with her environment and conditions, and any attempt to replace it will be allowed by the society. According to Ogbonmwan (2008), every society has rules, principles and norms that regulate the conduct of its members. Despite the fact that we have different communities in Africa, and different people (i.e. undergraduate) with distinct customs and ethical values, the rate at which they learn new moral and ethical values is fascinating. With the aid of electronic library, the African undergraduates learns beyond the social boundaries of the institutions, undermining distance. Though, the electronic library is an advanced technological device for easy and effective learning, it can be used improperly, evoking unhealthy results, capable of impeding effective character building and good governance.

It is however, important to note that; ethical values are the basic foundation of any culture in any country, and so “the fusion” distorts the foundation of any culture – thus, hitherto, a new culture is “created” either consciously or unconsciously. The ethical values are deep-rooted attributes that have a significant influence on the African undergraduate’s behaviour and express their attitudes towards the most important topics in life, such as their roles in society, attitudes toward relationships, time and nature. It also influences how they feel, think, behave, and reflect our cultural background.

The ethical value fusion is an obvious social behaviour. This is obvious because, any ethical position which denies that there is a single moral standard which is equally applicable to all may at all times fairly be called a species of ethical relativity. There is merely no one moral law, one code, one standard. There are many moral laws, codes and standards, so the tendency for fusion is high in a flexible social atmosphere that is existing in the universities in Africa with unlimited access to electronic library. The fusion is a dangerous social process that is an impediment to character building and good governance. This paper explores the ethical value and its relative attributes, its link with electronic library as well as its impediment on character building and good governance. However, the paper focused on the African undergraduate experience.

Conceptual Clarification

There are two key concepts or expressions that need to be clarified in the context of this paper, this is because these words or expressions could be misconstrued if they are not limited or restricted to the scope of this paper. They are: ethical value fusion relativism, electronic library.

Value Fusion Relativism

Different schools of thought therefore consider values to mean trait, practices, acts, ideals, beliefs, attitude and principles that a group or society acknowledge to be of merit, worthwhile, clear, acceptable and right. Values are therefore deep seated beliefs that influence people's actions and behaviours. The value relativism is not "action relativism", but standard relativism. Ethical standards are in some situations correct and in some situations incorrect. There are some ethical standards which claim that certain acts are always wrong, such as "Thou shalt not kill", though to some, some circumstances justify killing, yet the standard does not shift but relative. It is in view of these that undergraduates "fused" the various ethical standard together. Thus, *ethical value fusion relativism* here means fusion of the various moral laws, codes and standards. This is because, what morality ordains in one place or age may be quite different from what immorality ordains in another place or age. Any morality is therefore, relative to the age, the place, and the circumstances in which it is found, so the tendency for ethical value fusion is prominent among African undergraduates.

Electronic Library (e-library)

A library is seen as a place where books and other information materials are kept and made available to readers. According to Ejeh (2013), a library is the home for all free inquiry where citizens of all races and ages, creed and political interest will have knowledge and truth. E-library is an example of university libraries where information, books, articles, etc. are posted for public use. In the broad terms, they are termed academic library – it serve the library and information needs of the students and staff of the institutions where they are located. Therefore e-learning as used here comprises both the audio-visual materials in the transmission of information. The full benefit of these materials is received when the user implores both listening and viewing skills. Resources or materials that are audio-visual in nature include television, motion pictures (sound films), video films and video discs. Advanced Information Communication Technology (ICT) has provided other audio-visual materials such as computer aided compact discs (CD and video compact discs (VCD). Equipment required to use these materials include film projectors, video players, compact disc players and computers. Therefore in simple terms, it is the non-printed materials.

The Link between Ethical Value Fusion Relativism and Electronic Library

The general link between ethical value and e-library begins with their function. According to Burr and Goldinger (2004), whether something is good or bad can be relative to a person or group of people, something may be good for some people, bad for others, and get indifferent to others. Ethical value relativism holds that the same is true of moral values and moral norms. According to ethical value relativism whether something is morally good, right or just is always relative to a set

of moral standards, a certain moral point of view, to learn about the various moral outlooks - with different standards of right and wrong, through the e-library. According to Ejeh, D, Oche, N.A. and Adejeh, M.O. (2013) students are exposed to varieties of subjects, cultures, norms, customs and ethical value standards with the aid of e-library.

The specific link between ethical value fusion relativism and e-library is using the e-library as a source of information and posting the “fused Ethical Values” together for other users. There is also a link when African undergraduates make the connections between their individual lives and social conditions with those learnt through the e-library that redirects their moral outlook, thus affecting their attitudes. These attitudes are in turn posted online for other users (i.e. African undergraduates). Creating a distinct ethical value system that is not in strict sense indigenous nor foreign. These creation of ethical values ranging from standards, codes and laws that are relative according to the local circumstances they find themselves. The pluralistic nature of these “creation”, that is largely determined by local circumstances and mostly learnt through e-library suggested that, prior to the advent of e-library, the bud of exposure was low as compared to what is obtainable now that there is.

This link itself is a healthy relationship but the output is harmful to character building and governance. If moral or ethical standards are measured in respect to moral framework, then, the number of moral framework determines the number of ethical standards – thus, the exposure to various moral framework increases the tendency to fuse the various standards, either from two distinct moral frameworks or even more to produce a “unique” standard from the fused standard.

Ethical Value Fusion Relativism and Improper Use of Electronic Library: its Implications

It is appropriate at this point to examine the moral and ethical value system that is informed by value fusion and improper use of e-library that to a large extent bedeviled the African continent. In line with this, Olanlokun, (2003:46) argued that, one of the major problems affecting Nigeria in particular and Africa in general is the problem of identification of value and norms. Most of the African undergraduates have lost value for human dignity; they no longer regard hard work and duty as value. This ill-defined ethical value system has some negative implications on almost all human spheres, however, in this paper, only its implications on character building and good governance is stressed.

Character building: character building is in multifaceted direction aimed at making a patriotic and responsible person in the society. Education as a tool for character building particularly in African context, gives wisdom, morality and spiritualism are the essential components of wisdom. Education is the penance to all evil and values are essential in all fields of education, religion, economics, politics and society. For restructuring of the society and the nation, ethical value based

politics and value based socialization and economic processes are highly essential. However, Africans are living in such a society where politics are floating with inhuman nature without ethics. This results in outcome of meaningless work, characterless education, trade without any honesty, and even worship without sacrifice. The entire socialization process is badly affected by these odd behaviours that is heightened by endless ethical value fusion inclinations and overtures.

Owing to the multifaceted nature of these implications, science too has lost its temper for wellbeing of human, politics are done even among the students for personal gains. Kahinde(2015), explains that, education has become a process for acquiring a degree for professional purposes. In sharp contrast, in African context, education is aimed at providing education not only to the mind but for the building of character. As a result, an average African graduate should have a worthy character style and discipline if they are to build a meaningful and good society. It is sad to note that, the student's output had grossly shown their unwillingness to build the desired society. The odd trend driven by endless inclinations, high tendency for ethical value fusion manifested in material values, social values, cultural values, spiritual values and intrinsic values.

The character building as a process is termed “value education”, the basic need of the African youth. Youth play a pivoted role in good governance and nation building. It is said that youths are the backbone of a nation. Against this assertion, the spirit of youth (i.e. undergraduates) may continue till the last breath of life. Irrespective of age the student who possesses innovative thinking for any developmental process, missionary spirit, mental strength to do anything at any cost may be termed as youth in this context, undergraduate students. This is value education and values can be reflected though one's character. Therefore, values are very much significant for rebuilding the nation and everyone should be conscious for the realization of true values not only for the societal development and good governance but also for their own personal development for a balanced personality.

Good governance: is an exhibition of good characters towards fellow man manifested in political perspective so, good governance is the conclusion where the leaders and managers of a nation provide an atmosphere for an inclusive and participatory decision making in the governance of their affairs. Good governance as stipulated by Ibrahim (1989) and Jega (2007), cited by Gowon (2015:23), is the process through which a state's affairs are managed effectively in the areas of public, financial, administrative and political accountability and transparency; responsiveness, which the leaders must show in the interest of the governed. Hence to achieve good governance, there is an ethical value based character. By this, it means that if there is no well-defined ethical value system that is capable of standing the taste of time, there will be no good governance.

Jiga (2007:68), highlighted some elements of good governance as accountability, transparency, adherence to the rule of law, equitability and

inclusiveness, effective and efficient running of the government, participatory and responsiveness. In a strict sense, the total or partial absence of these elements entails bad governance – a sharp contrast of good governance.

Ethical value fusion relativism and e-library have tremendous implications on good governance, some of these implications are endless strive to strike a balance on standard relativism among undergraduate who are the backbone of any good governance, the misuse of e-library by undergraduates that spanned beyond the boundaries of sound and effective learning. For instance, for the purpose of objectivity, accountability and transparency are weighed by the use of philosophical lenses. These are behaviour traits displayed by man whose assessment and evaluation are done through effective and sound value judgement. In either case, it is learned through printed, non-printed materials and so on. Thus, the level of value education one has acquired determines the soundness of his value judgement whether one is accountable and transparent or not.

Again, the ethical framework which formed the bases for ethical standard is easily distorted as a result of the un-quenching tendency for ethical value fusion always heightened by wide range of exposure to varieties of ethical standard with the help of e-library.

According to Abele (2015:46), good governance is hanged on ethical value. As such where the ethical value is fused, yet well define and suitable for a given period irrespective of the moral pluralism, the art of good governance in Jega's sense will emerge as a mere result of worthwhile value.

Some Antisocial Consequences of the Implications to Universities in Africa

The historical evidence point to educational institution particularly the universities as fertile ground for character building for desirable results. However, these institutions are fast becoming breeding ground for social unrest and indiscipline. The factors responsible for these deadly trends are numerous. The indicators point to ethical value fusion relativism as one of the internal factors and the improper use of electronic library by the students is another internal factors. It is sad to note that, educational institutions that were supposed to be the custodians of the cherished values have been invaded and are contaminated by vices; some of them are explained below.

Examination Malpractice: It sows seed of fraud and criminal values in our society. This social vice cannot allow us Africans to realize our future greatness because it is capable of rendering our certificates useless. It also destroys our foundation for assessing our skills and capacity. Examination malpractice, therefore promotes breakdown of moral and ethical standards in our society and presents, or delays the achievement of meaningful development as it was seen from the uneven achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs).

Drug Abuse: Commonly, there are certain drugs, which users including adolescents, become easily addicted to and therefore abuse a lot. For Azene (2014:224), these drugs, African undergraduate abuse a lot include mostly central nervous system stimulants, central nervous system depressants, hallucinogens, tobacco, alcohol and narcotic analgesics. Alcohol is one of the social drugs that when taken in excess causes undesirable effects in the individual's ability of making sound ethical value judgement capable of building sound characters. All the drugs mentioned when abused produced deadly resultant effect.

Sexual Promiscuity: This is an antisocial behaviour commonly seen among African undergraduates. Sexual promiscuity among students of educational institutions, particularly the universities in Africa is another serious social vice that calls for urgent attention. Most of the students engaged in nocturnal activities they sleep almost throughout the day time in their hostels or even when in lectures to be able to keep appointment with their lovers at night.

Its deadly consequences cannot be overlooked since it is capable of destroying the entire continent socially. For instance, it could lead to getting rid of an unwanted pregnancy, complications, and subsequently conspicuously absent from lectures. Some of the students are so morally bankrupt that they rely absolutely on their glamour as a means to an end. In their seductive overtures, their fellow male students fall prey, sometimes even examiners too are seduced and tamper with their scores in their favour.

Indecent/Obscene dressing: Most of our educational institutions of learning in Africa have been bedevilled with indecent dressing particularly by female students, become half-nude. According to Litwange (2004) in Azara (2014:225), this indecent dressing constitutes sexual harassment. This seductive dressing has profound negative effect on both the students and lecturers alike as they can hardly concentrate on their academic work under such socially unhealthy environment.

Cultism: These are secret cult groups now created in almost all the university campuses and are indeed dreadful. Due to their secret activities and ascribed mysticism and power, members enjoy an aura of fearsomeness especially from non-members. Some of the most noble of these secret cult groups common in Nigerian university campuses include the Sea Dog, Black Axe, Vickins, Amazons, etc. Its attending results are in all senses evil, cultism leads to the destruction of lives and property. The frequent destruction of cult related fighting in some campuses have generated feeling of fear and social insecurity among students and lecturers. The unhealthy rivalry among secret cult groups often intensifies acts of terrorism and hatred among students on campuses. These sometimes result in the closure of some

universities for quite a long time, which has negative effect on implementation of academic programme.

These are some of the antisocial behaviours that constitute consequences for the students, and the society. However, all hopes are not lost, since there are ways forward identified in this paper, the way forwards are strongly believed to be workable solutions to this ugly trend.

Conclusion

We conclude that, well defined value systems that are capable of standing the test of time and are indigenous to a large extent are very significant for rebuilding a nation and ensuring good governance. It is appropriate that everyone should be conscious for the realization of true values not only for the societal development and good governance but also for personal development for a balanced personality. As a result of this, all hands should be on deck to achieve these noble goals. In this regard, the un-quenching quest for ethical value fusion-relative as the case may be should be checked. The African indigenous ethical value system should be promoted, protected from “ethical value invaders” cherished by all for all.

The Way Forward

Fundamentally, a good moral foundation is an indispensable and absolute factor for social, economic and political developments anchored by sound moral character of the citizens. As a result, a way out of this menace geared towards good governance, sustainable development must start with the human capital-particular the undergraduates.

This means that the role of sound and well-defined ethical standard in the society for meaningful development cannot be compromised. Primary attention should be given to the acquisition of moral values among the undergraduate and protect it from undue interferences. This is the fundamental tool for social, economic development. In this regard, no nation can grow or develop if morality is extricated from the body polity. In this regards, these practical suggestions are the way forward if carefully and effectively implemented by the appropriate authorities or bodies. In the case of examination malpractice, the deplorable value system be re-defined and re-articulated. Those involved in the examination malpractice should be punished accordingly. The laying of overwhelming emphasis on certificate should be checked. There should be a systematic shift of emphasis from certificate to performances.

For drug abuse, the need for education and public enlightenment of parents, students and general public cannot be overemphasized. Education about the danger of drug abuse should be provided by parents, teachers, traditional rulers and religious leaders and the mass media, punitive measures be taken against any student found wanting in this regard as a deterrent to others and by this, others will be discouraged.

Sexual promiscuity is gradually assuming the position of normalcy and ideal social life cycle. However, it is regarded as a gross misconduct, particularly among Africans. Therefore, parents, moral instructions and well-defined ethical standard should be inculcated to the youths, particularly the females. The religious institution should do everything possible within their reach to frown at this behaviour as gross immorality is punishable by eternal condemnation.

One of the causes of indecent/obscene dressing is the failure of the family to instill strict moral values on their children at tender age, fellow undergraduates cajoling the upright students to astray as they study and read non printed materials on the e-library and even watching movies that portray American and Europeans culture as a model. Most universities in Africa have been fighting obscene dressing. Some professionals have dressing code, but let there be a general dressing code for all the undergraduates. The lecturers should be given constitutional backing to insist that the proper dressing code be taken serious by students. Students found wanting should be expelled from the university. Parents and religious leaders should also join in curbing this menace through appropriate and effective counselling by guiding the young ones even before their university days. Where the need arise, the services of professional counsellors be employed for desirable result.

Concerning drug abuse, proper moral upbringing of children and wards by parents and guardians is recommended as the way forward to cultism in African universities. The students should be properly counselled on peer group relationship and the proper use of the e-library. Materials posted on the university e-library should be carefully checked using “moral scales” to safeguard the users – particularly the undergraduate.

Finally, though our university graduates are awarded certificates on the basis of character and learning. However, the character aspect of assessing a candidate before conferring a degree or any certificate by the university should be given a serious attention. This is because, the African value system has been seriously eroded and infected with gross immorality and loose prominence among university students. There should be a systematic way of assessing and evaluating their characters and find them worthy before awarding degree/certificate to such students.

References

- Abele, S.N. (2010) “*The Age of Information Technology: An Age of Morale Crisis among the Tiv People of Benue State*”, An Unpublished Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of Jos

- Abele, S.N. (2015). "Critical Thinking and Creativity as a Synergy for Good Governance. The Philosophical Analysis" in *Book of Abstract on Critical Thinking and Creativity for Sustainable Development. 30th PEAN Conference, University of Jos*
- Amaele, M.A. (1990). *Foundation of Education Onisha*, African FEP Publishers Limited,
- Azena, S.J. (2014). "The Challenges of Value Re-orientation in Nigeria's Tertiary Education System" in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 5 (14)* MCSER publishing, Rome-Italy 221-227
- Burr, J. R & Goldinger, M. (2004). *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*. New Delhi. PHI Learning Private Limited
- Dzurgba, A. (2000). *Principles of Ethics*. Ibadan; Agape Publications
- Ejeh, D., Oche, N.A., & Adejoh, M.O. (2013). *Introduction to the Used Library in Tertiary Institutions*, Otukpo: OroduLeko Process.
- Gown, R.P. (2015). "Critical Thinking: Creative and National Issues" in *Book of Abstract on Critical Thinking Creativity for Sustainable Development: 36th PEAN Conference, University of Jos*.
- Imo, M.O. (2015). *Philosophy of Education: Introduction*: Calabar University of Calabar, Press.
- Isokun, M.I. (2003). "Towards a Solid Technological Base for Nigeria: The Case for Religious Values in National Development" in Dopamu, P.A. & Odumuyiwa, E.A. Religion
- Jega, A.M. (2007). Evolution of the Concept and Institution of Democracy: Good Governance and development in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://nigerianmassess.com/politicaldetails.Abuja> on 27/5/2013.
- Kayode, A. & Adeyinka, A. (2009). "Pursuing Discipline and Ethical Issues in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria" African Research Review. *An International Multi-disciplinary Journal Vol. 3 (1)*, 294-300
- Ogbonmwan, S. "Reflections on African Traditional Value System" available at <http://etee.facebook.com/topic.php?vid=9288378191&topic=4784> assed on 12/05/2017