

'EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RELATIONSHIP' AND TEACHER/STUDENT INTERACTION

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Abstract

Human relationship is one value which every level of Nigerian education is expected to bequeath to its recipients. Yet the Nigerian society is replete with incessant and diverse cases of 'man's inhumanity to man'. Has the school played its role as expected? This paper aims at identifying lapses in the teacher/student relationship that constitute obstacles to the imbibing of the human relationship content of Nigerian education by learners. While issues beyond the school are not the focus here, the paper calls on the school to embrace certain philosophical propositions which are believed could enhance human relationship content delivery.

Most societies around the world direct their educational systems towards creating communities of friendliness, amongst other objectives. This air of friendliness manifest itself in individuals' acquisition of such values as consideration for fellow human interests, respect for constituted authorities, spirit of hard work, co-operation, patriotism, peaceful co-existence and selflessness in which case, the individual can be said to possess good human relationship. African traditional education adopts the inculcation of human relationship in individuals as one of its cardinal objectives. Attesting to this fact, Itedjere (2005) notes that one aim of indigenous education in Africa is to inculcate in the individual desirable values such as respect for elders, humility, obedience and solidarity, and to develop a sense of belonging to his environment by actively participating in family and societal affairs.

The Christian missionary education had its human relationship content. As one of its objectives, Itedjere (2005) indicates that Christian missionary education laid emphasis on the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood and also concludes that as an achievement, the education encouraged regards for human life, suppressed evil practices and directed the minds of its recipients towards the cultivation of desirable values. On its part, Islamic education is also directed towards human relationship. Lemu (1983) stresses that Islamic training is designed to inculcate in the Muslim (among others things) integrity, consideration for others, peace and responsible relationships with the family and fellow beings and good citizenship. The need for school education in Nigeria to transmit human relationship has long been identified. The National Curriculum Conference of 1969 upheld 'Education for human relationships' as one of the eight cardinal principles of Education in an independent Nigeria (Ukeje, 1979).

The current educational practice in Nigeria also stresses the need for Nigerian education to bequeath some sense of human relationship to learners, hence Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) states that Nigerian education inter alia shall:

At the primary level, mould the character and develop a sound attitude and morals in the child.

At the secondary level, raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, and respect the dignity of labour.

At the tertiary level, develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.

The foregoing highlights are indications that education in whatever form places premium on the imbuing of an appreciable level of human relationship in learners. The underlying assumption here is that once an individual undergoes any level of education, he ought to internalize a good measure of human relationship. Thus Whawo (2005) concludes that for a man to be said to be educated, the acquired education should guide him to respect fellow human beings as equals and comrades in progress, and contribute positively to the improvement of the society.

In the Nigerian society however, there is the preponderance of poor human relationship which is knowledge common to all. In Nigeria's electioneering, election results are generally adjudged not

credible - a greater percentage of the voting age is disenfranchised, election results are manipulated, candidates are imposed on fellow party members, voting materials never arrive their destinations, thuggery which results in maiming and killing of citizens reign supreme and so on.

On the economic and social fronts, Nigerians witness situations where persons charged with public responsibilities defraud the society of public funds, public utilities are vandalized or pilfered for personal gains,

lives and property are lost to incessant armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, frequent strikes by essential and non-essential service workers alike, militancy, religious and ethnic clashes, child labour, human trafficking, corporate prostitution, discrimination against persons with disabilities or infirmities and the less privileged and so on. These are indices of poor of poor human relationship which need to be nipped in the bud. It is pertinent to state here that the foregoing unhealthy tendencies cut across recipients of all levels of Nigerian education. Who pilfers or vandalizes public utilities? Who announces fraudulent election results? Who promotes or encourages corporate prostitution?

Even though there are other factors that contribute to inform the level of human relationship disposition of Nigerians, the focus of this paper is the identification of lapses in the school system that interferes with inculcation of human relationship.

The Concept 'Education for Human Relationship'

Man is born into an environment where he depends on fellowmen for optimal survival. And if the individual must get the best out of his existence, the need for others to be well-disposed to him cannot be over-emphasized. A citizen can be said to be responsible if he performs his civic duties as a member of the group and for the welfare of the group rather than for selfish ends. Hornby (2001) in one of his definitions of 'human'¹ associates the word with an individual who shares the same feelings and emotions with the generality. Hornby (2001) further explains relationship as the way in which two people or groups behave towards each other. Human relationship therefore implies sensitivity to the fact that as an all-time member of a group, one's conduct should be guided to conform to expectations of the group. Commenting on social order from the human relationship perspective, Fayemi (2006) stresses that social order is indispensable to human existence. It is a state of harmonious relationship among individuals and groups in a society. It calls for co-operation for the common good of the members of a society through balancing of conflicts of interest among individuals or groups. Virtues constitute the cornerstone of human relationship and thus it is inseparable from internalization of moral values such as sincerity, dedication, cooperativeness, selflessness, impartiality and so on.

Education for human relationship connotes an awareness prompted by education that one is born into a human society where one's action may affect others in the group positively or negatively (Ukeje, 1979). This means that right always implies responsibilities, that freedom always implies some duties; that the right to participate implies the responsibility to participate in accordance with accepted principles and rules and the responsibility to see that others participate. One's freedom or rights stop where the neighbours' start and the freedom to act imply the responsibility to protect the freedom of others. Lending credence to the foregoing argument, FGN (2004.8) states that the quality of instruction at all level of our education has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values: . respect for the worth and dignity of the individual. . moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations.

Education for human relationship is also interested in extending the frontiers of the learner's empathy beyond his immediate society or environment. Realizing this, FGN (2004) stresses that Nigerian education should train the learner's mind in the understanding of the world around. It is in this perspective that Ukeje (1979) associates 'Education for human relationship' with the development of mutual understanding among all peoples. It involves the development of an attitude of appreciation for all people - their customs, traditions, ideas, and ideals. It is an awareness that 'different from' does not necessarily mean 'better than' or 'worse than'. Thus, it is an education that encourages recognition and preservation of differences as necessary components of understanding. It is an educative process that focuses attention on people of other groups, cultures and nations for the purpose of mutual understanding and appreciation.

The issue of human relationship is an emotive one. Thus, while there may be factors based on individual differences that inform the individual's level of relationship with his fellow men, a question that one may unavoidably ask is 'Has the Nigerian school system been able to inculcate an appreciable level of human relationship in its recipients?'

Human Relationship and Teacher-Student Interaction.

The closing sentence of the last sub-topic asked a question which constitutes a guide to the discussion hereafter. The focus of this paper is the identification of lapses in the teacher/student relationship. Amahala (1979) writes that the teacher traditionally is the radiator, or at least is supposed to be the radiator of authority while the students are the recipients of authority. The questions (hat arise from the above statement are: Do teachers exploit this advantage to achieve personal gains or ends? Are teacher/students interaction governed by the spirit of human relationship? Are teachers inculcating human relationship in learners through leading a life of honour and respectability in the school and in the community around the school?

Meanwhile, the public holds teachers accountable for all the woes that befall students in the school system. Ezewu (1999) remarks that in parts of Nigeria, many teachers find it difficult to impart subject matter as well as other values. Ellah and Umanah (2000) maintain that teachers this day are not sufficiently prepared to meet the complex demands of teaching process in our schools. Hence, Nigerian pupils, parents, government officials and lay people blame teachers for turning their hopes into disappointments. (Akinbote, 2001). Are teachers really found wanting? Do teachers uphold the ethics of the teaching profession in their relationship with students? Itodo (2005) asserts that on the average, Nigerian teachers engage in a number of ethical abuses which can be adjudged capable of impairing the sense of human relationship in learners. These include:

- a. Teachers' insensitivity to the plight of students and parents, whereby teachers insist that what they do or think is the best in their own way.
- b. Sale of textbooks to students on terms of the teacher such as making students purchase a particular textbook from the teacher at his price, and a condition for continuous assessment, success or failure.
- c. Receipt of gifts from students under the guise of hospitality. Students are not happy about the so-called 'hospitality' because it is burden and uncalled for.
- d. Financial extortion and sexual abuse of students.
- e. Manipulation of continuous assessment grades, and aiding and abetting of examination malpractice to the disadvantage of unwilling and constrained students.

Itodo (2005) points out that teachers who perpetrate ethical abuses are rarely brought to book except on extreme cases of those we may call 'scapegoat'. In a situation where the foregoing forms of interaction exist between teachers and students, the growth of human relationship as an attribute of learners undoubtedly becomes inhibited. After all, Ingwu and Ekefre (2006) conclude that the poor performance of our various school leavers in all facets of life is reflection of the productivity of Nigerian teachers.

Conclusion

Uchendu (2000: 87) quotes a former American President, Lyndon Johnson thus: in the classroom of America, our children's lives will be shaped, our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the furthest reaches of thought and imagination. The lesson derivable from the foregoing sentence is that the school and teachers should live up to responsibility of helping society to achieve her goals. Consequently, adherence to earlier discussed philosophical propositions by the school will go a long way to imbue in learners that desirable value of human relationship.

Recommendations for Enhancing Human Relationship Delivery in Nigerian Schools

Societies outline their national goals which are considered achievable through education in conjunction with other institutions. Teachers are charged with the responsibility of bringing up individuals within the framework of society's stated goals. Thus, the training which is supposedly earned by the individual is not to cater for his welfare only but also to ensure that others benefit from his training. But can the learner sufficiently imbibe those attributes which are not employed or demonstrated in his training? Itedjere (2005) writes that since preparation of the youth for war was one of the goals of Athenian society, the education consisted of physical drills, wrestling, gymnastics, and the use of arms as well as training in military movements. If good human relationship is considered expedient by the Nigerian society and education is looked upon as an instrument that can be used to achieve that objective, then the school must brace up to the challenge by employing humane tendencies in all facets of relationship with learners. Accordingly, this paper recommends the adoption of the following philosophical propositions as the pivot around which all activities of the school must revolve:

1. I - Thou relationship - Buber (1958) discusses the I - Thou relationship where he stresses the need for mutual respect and dignity among all human individuals. In contrast, Buber (1958) also identified an I - it relationship where individuals manipulate fellow beings for their selfish ends. In the I - Thou relationship, the individual is recognized as one with intense feeling and a personal world of meaning. Respect for the person of the individual is based not only on the sacredness and uniqueness of his personality but also on the worth of the individual as a centre of consciousness. Accordingly, the school is enjoined to embrace the I-Thou relationship so that teachers and students can share values and knowledge on equal footing with regard to their humanity. Consequently, Oroka (2009) infers that the teaching/learning processes become a life of dialogue that is mutual and reciprocal and leads

to change of behaviour.

2. Utilitarianism - All actions of the school must be geared towards the promotion of peace and harmony which are essential for the development of teachers and learners alike. This is the gospel of utilitarianism which holds that the goal of every action should be to promote the greatest welfare of the greatest number of people. Teachers should bother to determine the entering behaviour of each learner and address any identified deficiency. Students come to the school with language undernourishment (Morrish, 1972), as well as emotional and cultural deprivation (Schofield, 1972). It is the responsibility of the teachers to reckon with these deficiencies in his dealings with his students so that the greatest number of his pupils will benefit from class activities. A moral act is one which is done out of a sense of duty rather than because of one's natural inclinations or dispositions (Maduka, 1998). Thus, the teacher should be concerned with the welfare of every learner.
3. Universalizability - Universalizability is a philosophical proposition which charges individuals to act only on that maxim whereby they can at the same time will that it should become universal law. In other words, any action should be undertaken under a maxim or a subjective principle or a rule which has popular acceptability. Universalizability does not command one to do something which is a means to another end; what it commands is good in itself (Omogbe, 1993). Can such actions as examination malpractice, financial extortion and sexual harassment be classified 'worthy relationships' between the school and learners? If so, can the actions be publicly recommended or advocated for all schools? The implication of Universalizability for education is that schools should engage in actions that can be unimaginatively universalized or generalized. If actions cannot be universalized without adverse effects, they should be considered 'unworthy'.
4. Role Reversability - In whatever action one may wish to take, one should imaginatively reverse the role, place oneself in the position of the would-be recipient and see how pleased or otherwise one would feel (Akinpelu, 2005). Would the teacher be pleased if his ward is financially extorted or sexually abused? Would he have preferred to obtain his certificate through examination malpractice? If the answer to the last question is in the negative, how would he have felt if teachers in his days failed to prepare him adequately for his examinations? In other words, 'do unto others what you wish should be done unto you'.

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