

REINFORCING VALUE REORIENTATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The problem of Nigeria is wrong or false, values, wrong priorities and the materialistic outlooks which undergirds them. From the perspective of the educational system, the Nigerian problem is easily stated as the tragic failure of the Nigerian education system to produce right values and right priorities for Nigerian intellectuals and political leaders alike. This paper therefore examines the conception of values, traditional Nigerian values, the Nigerian and His values, education for value reorientation, discipline, self discipline, value system the way out for Nigeria and national development.

Nigeria is a nation with complexities. The composition of her citizens is complex, the life style of the citizens is so complex and contradictory that one finds it difficult to have a proper word to define them. The complexities that have developed with each passing year and the consequent problems arising there from seem insoluble. These complexities that bred insoluble problems emanated from value misplacement. Value misplacement has generated value crisis which is crushing the citizens. The greatest worry is that some of the value system pursued by many Nigerians, especially the leaders do not promote national unity and development, hence the need for a new value order or a better value re-orientation education at all levels of the system.

Today, Nigeria is riddled with chequered values in all spheres of life which is inimical to national development. Changes over time have eroded the earliest cherished values in Nigerian society in all ramifications such as cultural, social, economic, political, religious, education and family values. Values mean what represent the quality of worth which people place on what they have in mind for example, the slogan of “one nation one destiny”. Values are beliefs or ideas which people consider dear or acceptable. Noah (2003) in Okolo (2011) posited that values are the building blocks of the society.

The past glory Nigeria enjoyed after her independence in 1960 is now a history instead of improvement to solidify the earlier cherished values that ranked Nigeria high in Africa in particular and the world in general. Values are no longer regarded as principles or standard of behaviour (Ivowi, 2009). This means that Nigeria seems to be losing her love of the national (one nation one destiny) truthfulness, respect for labour and productivity, rich cultural heritage and honesty ascribed to her earlier by other countries in the world. Nigeria indulged in variety of misconducts in all ramifications such as bribery and corruption, lawlessness, kidnapping, trade in human trafficking, tribal and religious divisions, e-mail scammer, economic sabotage, that continued to tear the nation apart. The drastic shift from the slogan of “one nation one destiny” needs to be addressed to rebranding Nigeria to regain her lost glory through education.

The Conceptions of Value

Through the centuries, one of the most important problems confronting philosophers and educators is the problem of values, generally known as axiology. What is value? Value according to Bolarin (2005) is the worth, merit or esteem given to a person or an object or an idea. Values influence people’s behaviour and serve as a yardstick for evaluating the actions of other people in the society.

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In all societies of human beings –primitive, civilized or in-between, values exist in some perceptible manner. In primitives societies, they are unwritten values which exist in the social consciousness and which act as determinates of family and individual pursuits. In such societies, they are handed down from one generation to another by word and action. In civil societies, values are committed to writing.

In the domain of education, values are paramount, for they are tightly bound to the general idea of education and the operation of schools. Education must be something worthwhile and being worthwhile has value implication.

Cultural values are those collective conceptions of things that are considered good, desirable and proper in a people's culture (Schaefer, 2003) in Okolo 2011). The negative values include bribery and corruption, human trafficking, kidnapping, economic sabotage, tribal and religious division, ritual killing, rape, robbery, terrorism, cultism, wanton destruction of government and individual property in the society.

Denga (1983) perceived values as representing reasons, beliefs, convictions or virtues that guide people's action. The acquisition of good values will enable the individual to determine how reasonable, right or wrong, true or appropriate his actions, attitude as well as relationship with others are. Therefore, if all learning and training cannot make one of good value, then education is a failure. Education is expected to be a transmitter of worthwhile values (Olatunju 1990). Chuta (1999) posited that values are the indices of what a society expect of its members. Values are conceived of in term of what is accepted in any social system. Value is more or less a consistent body of standards which gives meaning or direction to an attitude (Umeh and Anyakoha 2007). Huit (2003) identified important value for successful living to include autonomy, benevolence, compassion, curtesy, honest, integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness and truthfulness. The value system of each society emanates from the environment and how the individual in such environment use that environment. It is also transferred to up coming generations of the environment as they act on the environment.

Traditional Nigerian Values

Before the coming of the white man with his colonialism, the people of Nigerian had their values. These values which fell out of favour with the imposition of western culture and values were in the main based on ethnicity and they are at variance with each other (Nwabuisi, 1986). Values are fundamental to all human societies, in human activities and actions all over the world.

Nigeria, inspite of the massive erosion of her values by the western colonizers, still has identifiable values. In his treatment of Idoma values, Ella (1992) identified respect for elders, chastity among women folk, dignity of labour, patriotism to one's community, hospitality, courage and self-reliance as the major values of Idoma people. Similar values were identified as dominant Nigerian values in "Dialogue 26" published by Obansajo (1993).

These dominant values include love and promotion for the family and the family name, filial piety, honour and respect not only to parents but also to all elders as well as men and women of honour. Attachment to and appreciation for the native dialect, language, folk lore, music, art, drama, song and dance were among the identified values. Respect for hardwork productivity, at least, the ability to feed oneself and one's family, identifying as farmer, trader, fisherman, hunter, blacksmith craftsman or artist or apprentice in any of these areas of human endeavour as well as being reasonably happy with one's situation in life came under the Nigerian values.

Added to the values identified in “Dialogue 26” are truthfulness and honesty, overwhelming respect for the sanctity of human life, hospitality, strong respect for leadership and authority and belief in God, Allah or Supreme Being.

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Nigerians, among other things, attach great importance to the family name. Every Nigerian works very assiduously to promote his family and the family name. He will do everything possible to avoid soiling the family name and image. After all, the family forms the inalienable base to which the Nigerian goes back.

Among other values important to Nigerians is the place of origin of the individual. These include the village, town, clan, ethnic or tribal group. In the hierarchy of belongingness, the family ranks highest, the village, the town, the clan and ethnic or tribal group.

Moreso, Nigerians place high priority on “filial piety, honour and respect not only to parents but also to all elders as well as men and women of honour” (Obasonjo, 1993). The respect and honour to the parent and the elderly in general, had been recognized all over Nigeria. The younger respected the older whether the old ones were related to the young ones or not.

Respect for hardwork, productivity and self-sufficiency in terms of providing basic for need self and dependents are vital values. This respect for hardwork explains why some Nigerian communities introduced the neonate to the instrument that would form her major tools for earning livelihood right from the beginning of his life (Nwabuisi, 1986). As the youth grows up, he is apprenticed to his father or one of those known as specialists in farming, trading, fishery hunting, blacksmithing, gold smiting, craft making or art work. In this way, the young man learns early in life how to be hard working in order to maintain himself.

Truthfulness and honesty were prized very highly. Stealing, dishonesty and moral laxity were abhorrent to Nigerians of old. In each community, strict laws guided the people against infringing on any of these highly held values.

Dishonest people, adulterers and people of dubious character were not admitted to take titles in the community. Hardwork honesty, generosity and heroism were well rewarded while individuals who violated these values were held in disdain and disrespect among the people.

Nigerians has great respect for the sanctity of life. Human life was held in a very great esteem. A violation of human life in any way was considered the greatest crime anyone could commit. Life for the traditional Nigerian was the greatest gift from God and therefore, should not be interfered with by anyone.

God and belief in God form the hub and pivot of all values for Nigerian. God has a central place in the life of any Nigerian of traditional orientation. His life is one hinged on the belief and worship of God. Reference is made to God in all occasions by Nigerians in those days. These values were and are still mediated to the children through the family.

The Nigerian and His Values

In thinking about how to re-educate the Nigerian or the sort of education that is relevant to him, it is perhaps more important to understand the kind of human being he is. For, some how, it seems easier to go from what “is” to what “ought to be”. Considering the Nigerian as he is, is a big step in reconstructing what he ought to be through educational process.

But what kind of person is a Nigerian and what sort of society does he project and which in turn, project him to the outside? It might be better to start with a brief characterization of the Nigerian society as a true indicator of the kind of values which dominate the individuals in it in both the leadership and followership cadres.

Among Nigerians, the dominant values which characterize the society as a whole are easily discernible. The most glaring one is excessive love for money. Naturally, money is highly valued for what it does and can do.

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According to Okolo (1993) in the Nigerian context, this is usually everything. The average Nigerian strongly believes that money is almighty and can achieve anything and everything. It is a key to paradise on earth, to prosperity, power, social importance, even national honours and so on. Its accumulation becomes a value, the more and even the fouler the means of accumulating it the better and indeed, the more powerful and important one with money is.

Another supreme value characteristics of the Nigerian is cheap fame or base honours. Naturally in a society like Nigeria where money and wealth are acquired with little moral scruples and means most foul, other mini-value are bound to surface such as unproductive spending, wealth exhibitionism, brandishing of wealth, power and so on. Speaking further, Okolo (1993) pointed that “the greatest enemy is the love of Ostentation”. To him, “no section of the society is free from the disease”.

In this question of values which savagely dominate the Nigerian, mention must also be made of what can be called love for material labour which can be defined simply as one geared for immediate material gain which in turn, leads to consumerism and mere accumulation of material goods and property.

Naturally, those jobs which fetch fast money and promise immediate material reward are highly valued, whereas those which promise nothing but sweat and tears without immediate gain are usually shunned. The jobs “famous with the Nigerian include business deals, contracts, distributorships, executive posts (white collar jobs where the real labour is often delegated to others) etc.

For the Nigerian, gain with little or no labour at all is ideal. He usually shuns creative labour which promises values other than material. His sole ambition is largely centred on being rich overnight. Consequently, it is no surprise to anyone to realize that drug-peddling, armed or pen robbery, knapping and the like evils are rife among Nigerians and by some twist of fate, have become values in themselves as sure means to instantaneous wealth.

Lastly, in this task of characterizing the dominant values of the Nigerian, which point to the kind of man he is, is the issue of clannishness or ethnicity. The picture of the Nigerian in his base values is complete when one adds nepotism. Clannishness, ethnic affiliations and nepotism become respectable values to the Nigerian because somehow, they are means of survival and hence, of material and social advantages to individuals and their families or relatives in this competitive open society, made up of a remarkable number of ethnic groups. A Nigerian in a position of power usually means a material life-line to his families or relatives. This is nepotism, a respectable art well-known and practiced in Nigeria to day. It is common knowledge that those in high positions in Nigeria give preferences in contracts, for instance, to their own relatives and friends, qualified or not. The point of it all is that ethnicity and nepotism are valuable in Nigeria because of the material and social favours they engender. They thus, become part and parcel of the people’s “survival kit” in their struggle for life. They consequently intensify rather than diminish people’s materialistic outlook on reality and life-expectations too.

It is to be noted that it is against this background of ethnicity that make politics in Nigeria a private gamble and not a service for the nation, a theater for competing selfish interests where the common good is often carted away as private property by individual politicians or groups.

Education for Value Re-Orientation

Education had been defined differently by different people. One of the greatest educational historians, Cremin (1978), defined education as “a deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and sensibilities” Fafunwa (1987) saw education as the human act of informing, forming and strengthening of the powers of the body and

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mind; a process for transmitting culture for the knowledge to ensure social control and guarantee national direction of society. He also holds that the purpose of education is to develop attitudes, abilities and behaviours considered desirable by society. Durkheim, (1956) a great sociologist, posited that education is a systematic socialization of the younger generation by which the latter learn religions. According to Okafor (1984), education is a process of the development of the potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self- fulfillment”

With the above definitions, one can deduce an idea of what education is. This shows that education is not and cannot be an end in itself. Education is used to mean the consciously planned systematic imparting or acquisition of knowledge in a system called schools. Many philosophers have articulated their individual reasons for education. Plato holds that “a good education consists in giving the body and the soul all the beauty and all the perfection of which they are capable” (Okafor, 1984). “While Mann (1990) stated that “education alone can conduct us to the enjoyment which is, at once, best in quality and infinite in quantity. Peters (1966) suggested that education “implies that something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner”. For Dewey, education is to be considered as intelligently directed development of the possibilities inherent in ordinary experience. He regarded education as a reconstruction of experience which aids a person to the direction of subsequent experience. His view is that education is a process of living and not preparation for future life. It is a continuous process of growth. For him, an experience is an educative experience only when it can be transferred. Education is a means to life and living. The implication of this is that the greater part of education should be functional. The ultimate end of education is man’s happiness.

Like philosophy, education banishes ignorance and liberally criticizes people’s values, life-options and redirects societal goals and pursuits. Plato, in his laws, for instance, decrees that it is education that determines whether man becomes the tamest or the wildest animal on earth. “if man lacks education” he maintained “he is the most savage of beasts”. As a matter of fact, the production and maintenance of a good society is the main objective of Locke’s theory of education. The great educationist, John Dewey, defined the task of education as “an emancipation and enlargement of experience”. Education frees individuals from the prejudices and irrational assumptions of every day life and enlarges their experience. It was also to emancipate the human mind from error, prejudices, false opinions and values that Francis Bacon advanced and classified his doctrine of the “idols” and gave “power” as the aim of knowledge. For him, knowledge is power to master and interpret one’s environment.

With reference to the Nigerian society, what the Nigerian needs as an important starting point is a relevant, dynamic educational philosophy, a certain-pedagogy which ultimately should give him a new life and value system. Ignorance is heavily at work in Nigeria. Encrusted prejudices, wrong values, wrong priorities, erroneous assumption, disordered and disoriented ambitions and goals are manifestations of ignorance, the results of false opinions in life and false philosophy of life. The new relevant education and its philosophy, in short, ought to make the Nigerian appreciate to be more (qualitatively) rather than have more (quantitatively). Some higher goals and values which this new education philosophy should indicate in the Nigerian is discussed as follow:

Discipline

This is a notion that is related to the very existence of any social order, structure or organization. In essence, it refers to the rigorous adherence to or conformity with laid down rules, procedures, values and patterns of acceptance behaviour within any specified context. This element of rigorous adherence or conformity with the required standard is a necessary element of system persistence and orderly change. The point is that no system can survive as an ongoing concern if

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there are no laid down rules of conduct or behaviour related to different aspects of its operation and if there are no minimal standards beyond which deviation will not be tolerated. Discipline thus is contextual. Each organization or social unit, be it the political system, the educational system, the employing organization, any other economic unit, the family or the community, possesses an understanding or definition of its order and the standard required to maintain and ensure it. This is the basis of discipline and it is a necessary aspect of the attainment of the goals of any of the unit mentioned above. At the wider national level, discipline is also an essential component of good citizenship. Through it, the various units of the society can individually attain their goals thus, contributing to the ultimate attainment of the overall national objectives. This is however said, with the understanding that the component units of the national society possess a correct and patriotic sense of direction.

Self-Discipline

Self-discipline is of course, among the absolutely necessary higher values which should form the basic educational philosophy for the Nigerian. It is singled out for the sake of emphasis. The Nigerian needs a new orientation in self discipline. He must be prepared to restrain his unruly desires, goals and ambitions which he generally defines in materialistic terms. In his eagerness to have more, display more, enjoy more, particularly since the oil boom decade, the Nigerian has lost all sense of self-control in his lust for money and what it can buy in and outside the country.

Infact, the very opposite, self-indiscipline, according to Okolo (1993) has characterized his way of life and it is an important root-cause of his past, and present economic and social woes. Continuing, on indiscipline Achebe, in Okolo (1993) asserted thus:

Indiscipline pervades our life so completely today that one may be justified in calling it the condition par excellence of contemporary Nigerian society. We see and hear and read about indiscipline in the home, in the school, in the public service, in the private sector, in the government and in the legislative assemblies on the roads, in the air.

He defined indiscipline as “a failure or refusal to submit one’s desires and actions to the restraints of orderly social conduct in recognition of the rights and desires of others”. This has been the problem with the Nigerian.

Value Re-Orienting-the Way Out for Nigeria

The big question before us is, what are the elements that would make any nation great? Any nation that would indeed be great must be established upon enduring national values that bind every individual in the corporate entity. National culture must be revisited as it influences national character and image. Corruption is referred as the bane of development in Nigeria but people often forget same does not exist by itself. What the nation lack is a system of values and nothing else.

Many do not realise that skills and interests are not enough to make a man great and indeed any nation. What determines how successful one would turn out in life is largely dependent on the values subscribe too. Thomas Edison was perhaps not the brightest scientist in his days but he stood out and invented the light bulb. After several thousands of failed attempts, Thomas reported that he

became the more persistent where his colleagues may have relaxed. What saw him through were not his skills nor his interests but persistence- his value-made him succeed. This is a reflection of the Nigerian experience, a nation so much talented and skilled yet, unfortunately unsuccessful. What the nation lacks is a value system. What must be done to restore Nigeria is the redefining of our national values. Nigeria need to take value most seriously and push the acceptance of same with the seriousness economic and public sector reforms enjoy. Nigerian youth must be told that there are things greater than money and that money is not the ultimate thing in life, Nigerians must learn to

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value hardwork, integrity, honesty accountability over financial gains. The social evils which include wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, science without Humanity, knowledge without character, politics without principle, commerce without morality, worship without sacrifice, which characterize the nation must be dealt with to ensure social sanity in the country.

National Development

Several attempts to specify this notion exist. A lot of these are sectoralist aspect of national development. Although, the economic aspect is of immense importance, national development should be seen as including economic, cultural, political and social relations issues as well. In its simplest sense, national development could be seen as the provision and creation of the conditions by which the citizens of a nation attain the fulfillment of their basic human needs. Here, attention is drawn on Maslow's position on the "hierarchy of needs" which includes both the lower order and higher order needs. There is however, the need for some caution here and this relates to the specific conditions and circumstances of the nation under discussion.

For instance, in the developed societies of the world, national development would be seen in terms of systems-maintenance of achieved standards coupled with the necessary incremental additions. In the third world societies like ours with our history and the various features of structural inhibitions and obstacles that exist, national development is as of necessity, transformative of systems. In such a context, national development would be seen as the qualitative and quantitative, positive and beneficial transformation of the lives of the people of a nation not only in terms of their economic activity and productivity, but also in terms of the existence of various institutions and provisions that ensure the fulfillment of their other needs as human beings. Important aspects of such other needs would be individual and collective dignity, liberty and integrity. This national development process should also be autonomous, that is, it is informed by our indigenous needs and propelled by our indigenous forces and will.

In the light of the above analysis of what national development is all about, what is important now is the re-education of the Nigerian and the consequent destruction of false consciousness in this matter. Thus, the federal government of Nigeria (2004) in recognition of the importance of character in the broad educational goals of its citizens incorporated character training through the National Policy on Education which states the broad educational goals to include:

- a) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian nation.
- b) The acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competence to achieve these goals. The NPE prescribe that the quality of instruction should include basic values among which are:
 - i. Moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations.
 - ii. Shared responsibility for the common good of the society.
 - iii. Respect for the dignity of labour and promotion of emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

. Likewise, in this question of national progress, self-reliance, and development of an individual or nation, the Nigerian should be made to know that the key lies in the "thrill of creative effort".

National development, material or otherwise, is not something spontaneous, not a gift from abroad or on a platter of gold but the result of creative effort and labour. Labour truly creative is consequently the main key to progress and national development. According to Okolo (1993) "it calls for initiative, patience, sacrifice, responsibility from Nigerians as from any other people".

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