

LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY



ISSN 1597-0280

Designed & Printed by:
Seyi Ventures
E-mail: Habeebatoba1@yahoo.com

LASU EDUCATION REVIEW

VOL. 1

2003

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY
EPE CAMPUS



LASU

EDUCATION

REVIEW

VOL. 1 2003

REVIVING NIGERIAN VALUES THROUGH EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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V

RELEVANCE OF VALUES IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Pernede, Oluwatobi

Department of Education Foundations,
Lagos State University.

Oni, A. Adedeji

Department of Teacher Education,
University of Ibadan.

Abstract

This paper discusses the relevance of values in Nigerian Education System. The paper broadly examines the concepts of education and values, and education as a social institution, while the relationship between values and schools is as well discussed with reference to the importance of values in the National Policy on Education. The need to educate Nigerian learners for social and national development is also discussed. The paper then suggests some measures that would make our education valuable and relevant to the needs of the society for which it is meant.

Introduction

The advent of the colonial masters ushered in literacy (ability to read and write). However, before the British set their foot on the shores of the African continent especially in Nigeria, we had our own system of education (traditional though it may be) that enhances inculcation of values, attitudes, norms or what such a society considers as important in order to keep the society moving (Omokhodion and Pernede, 2001:2,4,5).

According to Akinpelu (1981), the question of value arises everywhere in the educational process - whether in the classroom, in the school at large, or in respect of the role of education in the society. Wrinski cited in Ogunyemi (2000) argues that whoever thinks we can avoid values in the classroom is committing an educational felony, and Nigerian Education is not an exception.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) also places a high premium on the development of human values through schooling. For example, the NPE (FRN, 1981) lists the following values as desired ends for educational activities in the country:

respect for the worth and dignity of the individual; faith in man's ability to make rational decision; moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations; shared responsibility for the common good of society; respect for dignity of labour and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

To attain these values, the NPE recommends that Nigerian education be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (FRN, 1981; Abimbola, 1993).

The Concept of Education

The question 'what is education?' has been variously answered by philosophers, sociologists and educationists down the ages. Definitions and analyses of the concept have been largely belaboured, and so this paper will not be adding to myriads of works on the concept of education. Following Frankena (1975), the definitions or conceptions of education shall be grouped into two: the social science and the normative. However, we only consider that of social science.

The social science concept views education as a process of 'enculturation' or 'socialization' of the younger generation by the older. Among many others, Fafunwa (1974) expresses this view when he says that education is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth, and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. The social science concept seems to describe and analyze what the process and activities of education involve. By this, the process of education involves the society or its representatives transmitting certain dispositions that are regarded as desirable by society (adults) to the younger-members (of the society) through methods regarded as satisfactory to society.

Education therefore, in its broadest sense, provides the backdrop against which development acquires its meaning. It is the most fundamental and vital aspect of social engineering and the harnessing of human resources. To Cecilia (2000) "education seeks to refine man by developing his potentials and equipping him to live a meaningful, productive and responsible life in society". Education therefore is life and life is education. Education is also recognized as the mirror of society and education institution as society in miniature. That is why the education given by any society to its children can be expected to be in keeping with the view and the way of life of that particular society. If the society in question should be a cattle rearing one dependent on cattle for its livelihood, the children whose work will be to tend the cattle will be taught all that is known about cattle. They will live with the cattle and the herdsmen, and they will learn their lessons in real situations. They will be aware of the purpose in their education. Similarly, if the society in question should be a fishing one the children will

be brought up to understand all that is known about the habits of fish and the ways of catering for them. In relatively simple societies such as these, where all that is expected is a subsistence level of living, the question of education is also simple. Education is preparation for life as it has to be lived and is therefore directed towards the problem of supporting life. Such education is purposeful and understandable. There is no uncertainty, no ambiguity. One learns how to live or one dies prematurely.

Education As A Social Institution

To sociologists, education is important because the way of life of any society is not naturally inherited and for the fact that the human infant is completely dependent from birth for a long period of time upon other people, the right human personality would only be developed through education. Balantine (1989) cited in Omokhodion *et al* (2000) listed four major functions of education thus:

Socialization: This is a process whereby the society provides the mechanism for teaching each generation the "three Rs" - their rights, their roles and responsibilities.

Selecting, training and allocating positions in society: Education prepares, sorts, and places people. It prepares by teaching needed skills and knowledge. It sorts by testing and controlling. It places by tracking, credentialing and filling vacant positions in society.

Change and Innovation: This is done by expanding knowledge and adapting to changing environments. Culture is the main tool of change and adaptation in this respect.

Introduction of children to expectations of the outside world through social and personal developments: This is done both formally and informally through some agencies such as the home, the school and religious organizations.

With the foregoing we could see that education is the deliberate and organised transmission of values and skills. For this to be made possible, schools are established to give formal learning to people.

This formal learning complements the informal education that human beings (learners) receive at home. Thus, the school is a social institution formally set aside for preparing learners for their future intellectual, professional as well as social roles in the society. Like religion, it shares the social origins of man, and for many societies, the school started at an informal level of family socialization and career apprenticeship before evolving to the modern formalised structure of learner preparation both for social

living and for employment. This explains the school as the primary formal agency of education, and why it is of great importance and interest to the sociologist of education.

Firstly, it is a social unit with its own loves, mores and culture. It therefore significantly influences the social behaviour of the student both inside and outside the school. Finally, educational attainment is a status symbol of some sort. The type of school and level of educational attainment reflect the roles on the family social status and can be predictive of the learner's future roles and status in the society. It is as well established to promote/transmit the relevant values of the society or inculcate these values in learners who would later on graduate from the school to work for the needs of the society. What then is value and what are the values expected of the school to inculcate into the learners? And, is there any relationship at all between value and education?

Home And School Relationship

Education is a vital social process, and schools are very important institutions. Also, a teacher is an applied social scientist. The scope of sociology for teachers according to Kobiowu (1994) is to place the school within the framework of the society as a whole. This is where the home comes in.

From sociological point of view, the school has two principal functions. These are:

- a. to transmit the main cultural value of society, and
- b. to facilitate social mobility, and promote social change.

The teacher and the school are making a significant contribution towards eventual quality and, in a sense, the longer the general educational process goes on, the fewer the differences between individuals at the cultural and behavioural levels.

The school therefore has no clear-cut objectives or objectively demonstrable product. What emerges at the end of the long process is a person. What kind of person is the school expected to produce for the society? Or, what kind of a person has emerged and how can one know whether this is mainly the outcome of school influences or the product of many other conditioning factors?

The home-school relationship, therefore, is one of the most fundamental relationships in society. It is a relationship between the primary socializing agency of the family and the inducting agency of the school. The relationship provides a background against which many of the battles between private and public interests are fought, a context within which occupational roles are assumed and social character built up.

Therefore, the fundamental questions that need to be asked about this home-school relationships are neither sociological, psychological, nor biological; they are political and moral, in the sense that they are concerned with the means by which the individual is inducted into the wider society through the inculcation of the norms, mores and cultural values of the society.

What are values?

The etymology of value is the Latin word 'Valere' which means 'to be worth'. Angeles (1981:30) defines value as:

the quality of a thing which makes it desirable, desired, useful, or an object of interest.

Values thus have relevance to those objects we cherish, appreciate, want, desire or need. Value connotes something that is qualitatively cherished, something that provides satisfaction or sense of achievement. Issues of value have often been part of human experience. There is hardly any human action that cannot be traced to a value base explicitly or implicitly. Values are the yardsticks by which individuals validate their actions, express beliefs, and they provide meaning and give direction to life. There is hardly any society that can hold together for long without a comprehensive set of values jointly shared by its members. Values are therefore the standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endorses, maintains and transmits to future generations (Wokocha, 1995).

Values can also be conceptualized as elements that guide a person's life choices in a definite direction. Ipaye (1980) believes that "both adults and adolescents confuse their values and so misunderstand themselves". Nzewi (1986) adds that "uncertainty and contradictions have replaced traditional values".

Similarly, values refer to standards of judgement in human behaviour. They are intricately related to what the individual has come to accept as guiding principles of living (Palmer, 1964 in Ogunyemi 2000). Values develop mainly from experiences that individuals have from the influence of people, and from conditions around them. Ehman *et al* (1974) contends that values constitute a bridge between the 'knowledge world' and the 'action world'. Therefore, in education generally, and most especially at the primary level of education which is the foundation upon which others would be built, and in order to act intelligently and responsibly, people need both knowledge and values.

However, actions may be regarded as right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or

ugly, moral or immoral and desirable or undesirable. All these are value judgements. Out of the things that seem to distinguish human beings from other beings in the world is the human's desire and ability to value things in the world or make value judgements. Indeed, the process of socialization is premised on this. Despite the importance of values in the human society, there is no unanimity among the philosophical and sociological school as to what constitutes the highest societal value.

Relationship Between Values And Education

There is a position which maintains that the school cannot and should not seriously involve itself in value education and that learning is the intellectual function for which the school primarily exists. For instance, Nwosu (1980) quoting Philip Hanber, a sociologist, takes the position that value judgements have no place in either social research or social science instruction. Here the argument is that basic traits of values and value orientations are formed in the early socialization process so that it is very hard, if not impossible, to change them deliberately in the school learning situation. But, Wokocha (1995) contended that values and value orientations the individual holds are certainly an outcome of learning. Every concept of education, positive as well as normative, must contain a moral component, in that sense of 'moral' in which it means concerns for the welfare of persons other than the agent himself.

Following Frankena's method, the dispositions which are regarded as desirable must be so regarded in so far as they are to source extent for the good of the recipients or learners (Y) themselves and not only for the good of the agent (X). And the worthwhile disposition (D) is not determined by X and Y only but by the society as there is a significant positive correlation between societal value and educational goals.

The philosopher, President Nwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1967) once posits that:

the purpose of education is to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of the society...to enable the young live in one, serve the society and to prepare them for the future membership of the society...it involves the active participation of the young in the maintenance and development of the society.

An analysis of the above definition of education reveals the descriptive and prescriptive elements in Nyerere's concept of education. In the first place, education is described as an instrument or institution of society. It has a set programme, which is the preparation of the young for the future membership of society. Then there is the

prescriptive injunction that education ought to equip the young to participate actively in the development of society. As a theory of education, Nyerere's education for self-reliance is to promote a sense of responsibility, creativity, integrity, broad-mindedness and initial thinking among other things. Education thus aids the individual to acquire the disposition and to be initiated into the traditions that are needed for him to lead morally good life in relation to others and to have himself the best life he is capable of in the society in which he is living.

The morally educated personality according to Maqsd (1983) is therefore expected to have:

- a. a good deal of factual knowledge;
- b. a positive commitment towards the value of morality;
- c. an ability to communicate with others;
- d. The ability to understand the feelings of others and those of his own.

From the foregoing exposition, it could be observed that no school system can be totally devoid of intentions to values in education and that one of the important tasks of education is to assist the pupils develop appropriate skills and dispositions to cope with the various moral choices they have to encounter in the complex world of today.

National Policy on Education and Value Education

The Federal military government of Nigeria in 1977 promulgated a national policy on education, which created a new system of education known as the 6-3-3-4 educational system. In this policy, which was revised in 1981 and 1998, education was "to help develop in the youths a sense of unity, patriotism and love of the country (FRN 1981). According to Nwabuchi (2000) what was envisaged here was to use the emergent education system to achieve radical changes in the outlook of the Nigerian youths, so that these youths would begin to live and act no more from the hitherto ethnocentric and tribalistic perspective but as true compatriots and citizens of our Nigeria.

Some of the measures designed in the policy to achieve the desired objective include:

the study, by every school child, of the social norms and values of the different communities in the country; inter-state visits and school excursions by student; the establishment of 'Unity schools' at the Secondary school level throughout the country; and the orientation of tertiary educational institutions as instruments for consenting national unity and creating national consciousness e.g. through N.Y.S.C. (FRN, 1981:12, 13, 20, 24).

This National Policy on Education (1981) also makes provision for what is regarded as the duties and responsibilities oriented towards the inculcation of such positive values which include:

1. Respect for the Worth and Dignity of the Individual;
2. Faith in Man's Ability to Make Rational Decisions;
3. Moral and Spiritual Values in Inter-personal and Human Relations;
4. Shared Responsibility for the Common Good and Society;
5. Respect on the Dignity of Labour, and
6. Promotion of the Emotional, Physical and Psychological Health of All Children.

It is therefore necessary for Nigerian teachers to become aware of these values and the afore-mentioned traditional African 'core values'. They should be able to inculcate in their pupils the right type of values so that they can function effectively within their social milieu. Jonah-Elet (1990) in Wokocha (1995) contends that the general aim of a course or courses in values in Nigerian schools should provide a solid, viable, ethical base. Specifically, it should:

1. enable learners to identify and recognize values from indigenous ethical systems and prevalent culture that are important for the continuity of the nation;
2. enable the learners identify and recognize ideas and behavioural actions that will make for the just survival of the nation;
3. provide opportunity for the learners to practice the necessary values at all times and in relevant situations;
4. provide opportunity for the learners to encourage others to practice the necessary values at all times;
5. provide opportunity for the learners to shun ideas and actions that will not guarantee the just survival of the nation and mankind, and
6. provide a base and opportunity for the learners to develop the ability to resolve conflicts between self and others and among others.

Lesson objectives for teaching and selected content for any level of the learner could be developed from these. And, as to what to teach, the course or courses should be designed in such a way that desirable values could be analyzed, clarified and practiced.

The above therefore suggests that when the people (learners) know and understand one another's way and life, there would be less ignorance of one another, less

suspicion of one another, greater national unity and national awareness, and perhaps pave the way for nationalism and patriotism.

Education for Social and National Development

Education, according to Omokhodion *et al* (2000), is a vital key for social well-being and national development. The social value of education cannot be over-emphasized in contemporary Nigeria. It is stated in the National Policy on Education (1981) that, the Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par-excellence for effecting national development. This is due to the fact that education offers a logical conclusion and solution to the various social, political, cultural and economic problems of national development. The development approach is therefore adopted to explain and interpret these various relationship in the society and also to explain the relationship between education and social change, socialization, the culture of the people and most importantly the values of the society.

Writing on the role of education in national development, Curle (1970) stated inter alia:

in order to develop, a country must have a very considerable proportion of trained educated citizens not only to act as doctors, engineers, teachers, agriculturists, scientists and the like but must create a new class sufficiently large and hence sufficiently strong, to establish its own value of justice, selection on merit, flexibility, empiricism and efficiency.

With the foregoing, we could see that if development entails a free release of the energy of a people, education, particularly, the right kind of education and in its widest sense, is the only means of bringing about such a release and at the same time facilitating the emergence of a political structure that will throw up the right kind of leaders. We have seen education as an instrument for national development and the degree of its effectiveness in doing this depends upon how well our education content is being made relevant to promote the values of the society for which the end product of the education is meant. Thus, education for development must be recognized as a veritable agency in the arduous task of democratic learning and adaptation. To this end, value must be emphasized in all facets of our education.

Conclusion

The message in this paper is that human society, socialization and development show qualitative progress and the means and ways through which people's heritage is preserved, transmitted and internalized. This is especially so with regards to learning

(education) system. When man had not fully awakened his consciousness, leaning was done by simple systems of verbal and signs, but later these become codified in forms of writing.

In contemporary times, the computer has been developed into a valuable training tool. It is these various means of transmitting values and the contents of these social experiences that constitute 'education', which may be formal, informal or both. Since every society has its own distinct culture, norms and practices, educational content is normally dependent and/or aligned with the people's peculiar mental spectacle and worldview.

From the foregoing, it has to be restated that there is some relationship between values and education and that value education is possible. The Nigerian school system, could of necessity therefore embark on effective values education. This is because we cannot escape valuing and making value judgment and decisions values an essential part of human awareness and human life.

More effort should be put in teaching and learning of social norms, mores, culture and values of our society, so that our educational system would be tailored towards preservation of these values, socializing or educating the students about their society and as well making education relevant to the needs of the society in which it is meant for.

The Nigerian philosophy of education should be anchored on its own pristine, existential background, for it is what forms Africans' principles of understanding and their worldview. Consequently, the right to education of Nigerians must start on a mental level where the people and their leaders begin to liberate themselves from values and systems particularly that of education to which they have been indoctrinated by their imperial masters. In other words, a radical restructuring of our educational base is called for and should take some of these factors into consideration, such as investment funding of manpower development, provision of infrastructure facilities, functional and product requisite labour for the Nigerian society. Similarly, there should be greater political commitment on the part of government to revolutionize and improve educational standards in the country.

More funds should continue to be allocated to the education sector to rehabilitate decayed and decaying facilities /infrastructure to create enabling environment for learning. Both per capital expenditure and relative government investment on education should be increased significantly.

Finally, since the teacher is central to education delivery, teaching should be professional with attractive remuneration and better conditions of service so as to make the teachers show more commitment to the job and teach effectively for value.

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