

# BOOK OF READINGS IN SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

**Edited By:**

Dr. K.O.A. Noah

Dr. M.N. Sule

J.O. Balogun

A Publication of the Association of Sociologists  
of Education of Nigeria (ASEN)



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# THE NEED FOR VALUE RE-ORIENTATION THROUGH ENHANCEMENT OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Before the advent of colonial administration in Nigeria, Nigerians had their own kind of education, which was indigenous. In this system, every member of the society displayed the value of the system. Thus, honesty, respect, patriotism, communalism, hard work and so forth became characteristic hallmark of every member of society. This paper, therefore, examines the need for value reorientation through enhancement of indigenous education in Nigeria. It canvasses the need for rebranding education through value reorientation by revisiting the curriculum and involving parents as well as stakeholders in inculcating positive values into the Nigerian child.

## **Introduction**

In every given society, education, be it formal, non-formal and indigenous is as old as existence. Sociologically, education plays a significant role in every human life. For an individual to be useful in society, every member of society must be equipped with a specific education in order to be a useful member, a role model and to portray the concept of Omoluabi (a man of good character).

There is no universally acceptable definition of education. Many definitions of education exist as a result of different schools of thought. However, education can be described as a complex process and network of activities through which society familiarizes the new born with acceptable norms of the society (Noah, 1997). In the same vein, Bolarin (2007) defines education as the process of transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of society. In other words, it is a social process which neither ends in the classroom nor with formal schooling. That means, education requires value reorientation process which an individual needs to acquire through her life time for effective adulthood in the society.

## **The Concept of Value Reorientation**

In every society, value becomes a hall mark to an individual. The concept of value may note what a society considers as 'dos' of the society. In other words, value is what the society an individual likes and cherishes most; failure to uphold the value may lead to chaos for an individual, group of people and the society. Again, value is something one considers to be important, good and worthwhile. Although, what X may consider as value may not be the same as Y; thus, such value becomes personal value. The personal value may include honesty, reliability and trust which denote the character of every individual. Values also cut across group



of people. For instance, it is expected that everyone should 'respect' one another. Here, in every community, 'respect' as a form of value cuts across every member of the community and it is something everybody must uphold. In view of this, Udofot (1998) defines values as acts and practices which individuals and social groups in a society choose and regard as worthwhile to them. For instance, Ehman, Mehlinger and Patric in Ndan (2005) maintains that:

*Without values, men are not human and cannot take decisions that can be of benefit to the society. (p. 55)*

In a similar vein, the concept of 'OMOLUABI' in the Yoruba language and GBETODAGBE or MEDAGBE in the OGU language mean a man of good character (Noah, 1997). In every society, good character is a value every member of a society must possess. Thus, Bolarin (2009) sees values as traits, practices, acts ideas, beliefs, attitudes, principles, merit that every member of society considers to be worthwhile, acceptable, right or appropriate. Esu (2009) explains values as principles or standards of a society, which implies a society's judgement of what is desirable and important. In the same manner, Urevbu and Omoifo (2009) argues that value can be characterized as a term or concept about what is right and wrong or what is important in life or decision about how good something is, based on personal opinion and not facts. In view of all the definitions and explanations, the writers see value as principles, standards, attitudes, beliefs considered as right, good, appropriate by an individual and the society. In other words, values should be tenable and considered appropriate before an individual and the society at large. Thus, value reorientation can be described as the ability to inculcate positive values into an individual in order to uphold what is right, good, important and appropriate in the society. Mills (1961) submits an ideological explanation on value orientation in these words:

*An element of shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation may be called a value.... (p. 25)*

Society consists of criterion of values impose on individual members of the society as a standard of appropriate ways of life expected in society – the standards, which are the values of society are in symbolic terms to be recognized by every member of the society. These values are also guided by the norms of the society. Perhaps, a fundamental sociological question one needs to ask from the point of value orientation of Mills may be; does our student at all levels of education system understand what values are? Why does indiscipline of various forms abound in all school?

#### **Indigenous Education and Value Reorientation**

The type of education being practised all over Africa before the arrival of western education was basically referred to as indigenous education. Kanga Kalembu-Vita of Zaire in Fafunwa (1974) defines indigenous education as:

*The preparation of the youths, their insertion and complete Integration into the life of the community (p. 15)*



The system consists of teaching and learning which every individual undergoes throughout their life time (Aderounmi & Ibeh, 1984). It was a life-long process, related to the environment, to assist individuals with saleable skills practical and functional. Indigenous system of education took an unorganized setting, with no classrooms and the curriculum was unstructured. In other words, the learning activities took place everywhere and every adult was a teacher to the child. Significantly, the system emphasized humility, human dignity, respect, honesty while communalism was the basic principle of everybody in the society.

The indigenous or informal system of education assisted a growing child to have interaction with several people, acquire a vast amount of knowledge and function in a given society. The child learned the value of the society as well as the 'dos and don'ts' of that society, and that assisted the child to become a useful member of the society and at the end, the same child reorientate the young ones with the values acquired in the society.

In furtherance, indigenous education is expected to produce an individual who will be honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative and a conformist to the norms and values of the society. Fafunwa (1982) outlines the following seven cardinal goals of indigenous education:

- (1) To develop the child's latent physical skills
- (2) To develop character
- (3) To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority
- (4) To develop intellectual skills
- (5) To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
- (6) To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
- (7) To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

However, Africa traditional system of education has a wide curriculum for the realization of its objectives in order to produce a well nurtured individual who will be useful to himself and the community at large. Thus, practical orientation and functionalism are the hall marks of the system. Sociologically, the growing child is prepared to be honest, respectable, acquire skills, cooperative and so on. In doing this, it prepares the child for his/her adulthood and make him/her to become a useful member to the society at large. Thus, the concepts honest, respect, patriotism are values that must be upheld, perhaps to be reintroduced in the curriculum. In the indigenous system of education, every member of the society is expected to display honesty, respect, transparency, accountability, patriotism and failure of all these may not be regarded as a man of good character. Thus, the concept of OMOLUABI is valued in the indigenous society. On the aspect of respect as a way of value reorientation, Fafunwa (1982) posits thus:

*Respect for one's elders, which is important part of character raising, includes respect for all who represent authority: village chiefs, religious leaders, soothsayers, uncles, relatives and neighbours. Styles of greeting play an essential role in the expression of respect. Salutation is a complicated affair in Africa, with different modes of addressing relatives, elders, equals, chiefs and so on and special greetings for morning, afternoon and evening. (p.14)*

We must channel our value reorientation commitment to every Nigerian in order to uphold what is right and to transmit positive values to the coming generation. One basic sociological question



we need to ask is does this type of respect witnessed by Fafunwa and some elders exist in contemporary Nigeria? Respect, integrity, honesty, communalism, patriotism, discipline, self-discipline, humility, obedience and many others which constitutes the indigenous education are also cherish and important to members of the society. Bagudo (2000) submits that emphasis on respect for and obedience to one's elders or constituted authority is fundamental to Africa's traditional education. Thus, Bagudo (2000) remarks:

*The traditional system of education, through its formal and informal methods of instruction aimed at the preservation of African cultural heritage, initiation of the younger generation to the environment, development of the child's latent physical abilities, character training, development of healthy attitude towards honest labour and above all, the production of an individual who is honest (p. 21)*

Such values also take in form of orientation being transmitted from generation to generation. The writers observe that, even in the University environment where one may expect total submission or respect as a way of value, such value is degenerating. For instance, some University undergraduates will remain adamant not to accord respect to some Lecturers because they failed the course of those lecturers. Here comes in the importance of teaching indigenous education at all levels of educational system so as to have a complete useful member of the society. The crisis in the society today especially in the schools is as a result of undermining our African values all in the name of civilization. Thus, honesty, love for one's country and neighbour, respect, indigenous language, food, mode of dressing becomes primitive.

#### **Rebranding Education for Value Reorientation**

Prior to the advent of Western Education in Nigeria, the people had a form of education aimed at preparation of the individual for effective role in the society (Akudolu, 2009). Formal education is an organized and a well structured system that takes place in the classroom. Its pedagogy lays emphasis on the ability to read and write (literacy testing). Formal education consists of nursery, primary, post primary (secondary) and post secondary (tertiary institutions) schools. Formal education serves as a key to the development of every nation. That is, for a nation to develop politically, economically, culturally, and religiously every individual must be well equipped with the transmission of formal education which will enhance individual capability to become a useful member of the society. The purpose of education could be it formal or informal is to transmit, from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom knowledge of the society and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society for effective participation and development. Formal education is a congruence which assists the growth of human potentials as well as the development of a society in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the people (Hinzen, 1979). Formal education process is a cornerstone for innovation which helps to liberate man. That is, it is a vital process in the intellectual and material development of man. In other words, it is an indomitable urge for progress, freedom and happiness. However, National Policy on Education (2004) postulates the following as Nigeria's philosophy of education:

- (a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen;
- (b) The full integration of the individual into the community and



- (c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

The national education goals which derive from the philosophy are:

- (a) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- (b) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- (c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
- (d) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

In consequence, the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

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

A cursory look at Nigeria's philosophy of education, goals derived from the philosophy and the quality of instruction at all levels lay emphasis on values expected to be achieved by every Nigerian child. The values enumerated in the National Policy on Education focus on total reorientation as a way of rebranding our western education; inculcating respect, dignity of the individual, patriotism, honesty good human relationship which will totally reshape our perception of thinking about Nigeria in terms of our economy, education, policy, religious institution and so forth. Rodney (1972) sees value disorientation in African society and submits as:

*In the final analysis, perhaps, the most important principle of colonial education was that of capitalist individuals in Africa, both the formal school system and the informal value system of colonialism destroyed social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility (p. 19).*

The country has also witnessed lack of discipline among our students especially at post primary and secondary levels. It has also become the order of the day to think of how to engage examination misconduct, impersonation during the conduct of examinations, threatening teachers and lecturers if he/she dares to fail students, cases of cultism and gangsters abounds in Nigerian schools. It is also a common knowledge that the students also engage in the so called 'ojo! Yahoo! In order to be enriched in dubious ways. As a result of these values disorientation in the Nigerian contemporary society, Nigerians abroad who are graduates are required to write a qualifying examinations either for job or an admission. We must reorientate individuals in the society especially the young generation on the basis of values – of what the Nigerian society considers good, right, important in the society. On the ground of value reorientation in Nigerian society in order to rebrand the western education, Elechi (2003) submits



*A critical examination and re-education of traditional African values becomes of great relevance as black Africans confront reality in the search for moral freedom. When traditional values are studied, analysed and challenged, then can we lay a solid foundation for African education (p. 49)*

And finally, we also agree with the prognosis of Amucheazi when he submits that:

*education, among other things is supposed to inculcate discipline, integrity, hard work and other values, including patriotism among its recipients (p. 3)*

But over and above these, there is need to recommend that we need to revisit the National Policy on Education and the curriculum laying much emphasis on the importance of values in which the indigenous system of education should be corroborated in the curriculum. Parents, teachers as well as stakeholders should also inculcate appropriate values into their wards.

Also, the content of some subjects such as studies, Christian and Islamic studies, Government have been recognized to reorientate the younger ones in the different tiers of education sector. More so, sociology of education be incorporated in the three tiers (primary, secondary and post secondary) of education and which should be a compulsory course for all undergraduate students as we have General Studies being compulsory in Nigerian Universities. Similarly, teachers, lecturers, politicians and leaders in different professions must present themselves as role models. Take for instance, a society where accountability is not cherished and corruption at different levels become normal culture; then, it means there is an absence of value in the society. The remedy therefore, calls for education for value reorientation where everybody would begin to appreciate what the society considers as good, right, tenable and acceptable. In rebranding our education, each tier of the school should give scholarship to students who shows trait of good character as a way of value reorientation to others.

### Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been, made to examine the need for value reorientation through the enhancement of indigenous system of education. In our discussion, we have noted that society without values, such society will fall apart. In view of this, education for value reorientation in all schools is the answer. This type of education will help the learners to value their culture, adhere to the principles and standards of the society – this can also be, achieved through inculcating indigenous system of education, which will be useful to the citizens in all spheres of life.



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