

Homogeneity of Values and National Integration in Nigeria Education: The Need for Reform

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Abstract

This paper explored the possibility of value consensus in Nigeria to enhance national unity and solidarity. It pointed out the multicultural and multilingual nature of the Nigeria society as part the problem of value heterogeneity. The existence of a state of heterogeneity of values all over the country was highlighted. This was posited as a factor in the lack of patriotism, nationalism and statehood as well as disunity in Nigeria. In order to promote and inculcate value consensus in children, youths, and adults in Nigeria, the need for a National conference on reforms of moral values and moral education was suggested. It was however, pointed out that the teacher and school will be major stakeholders in the implementation of the curriculum reforms. It was therefore, suggested that the schools must be made conducive for this role while the teacher must be re-breaded to regain his lost glory.

Keywords: Homogeneity, Values, National integration, Education, Reform

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual and multicultural nation-state. Again, the concept nation-state also reveals that Nigeria is made up of several nations. There are 36 states and a federal capital territory in Nigeria. There are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. These are the Hausa/ Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. Each of these ethnic groups can be identified with distinct language. Groups of related languages and dialects can also be identified within major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The same can be said of the minority groups such as the Ijaw, Efik, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Igala, Isoko, Urhobo, Edo, Idoma and Esan to mention a few. Ethnic groups are characterized not only by languages and dialects but also by cultures. Culture is a totality or complex of traits or elements such as values, belief, ideas, knowledge, religion, technology, science, dressing, dancing, music and architecture of a people that are transmitted from one generation to another. The culture of a society is best expressed in their languages. Culture is material and nonmaterial. The material dimension of culture refers to the physical creations of a people while the nonmaterial is mental and implicit. Examples of nonmaterial culture are ideas, beliefs, knowledge and values. Both the material and nonmaterial culture can be transmitted between and within societies.

On the whole, the nonmaterial consisting of values, belief, ideas, and knowledge appear to have the greatest impact on the behaviour of members of a society. This is based on the fact that ideas, values and beliefs undergo some form of mental processing which inform a particular behaviour. For example, values are related to issues of right and wrong actions or behavior in society. Right and wrong actions could be justified by the actors and society in turn. In other words, they could be subjective or relative and objective. However when individuals and groups within a country such as Nigeria begin to perceive what appropriate behaviour is differently, there is bound to be disagreement, misinterpretation and disunity. The disagreement over meanings of appropriate action or behaviour could be culturally induced and therefore culture specific. With a plethora of ethnic groups and languages, Nigeria could be an embodiment of different cultures and corresponding value. This could be dangerous to national unity and integration. The educational institution could play the function of pattern maintenance and integration for a country such as Nigeria. This paper discusses amongst others, the role the schools could play in promoting value consensus among the various ethnic groups and cultures in Nigeria. It is expected that this would enhance national unity, patriotism and nationalism within the citizenry.

2. Values

Value is derived from a Latin word Valere or the French word Valoir, which means to be worth. Values are abstract standards of goodness which can be expressed as worthy goals and actions. Consequently actions which express the importance to what is taken as good or worthy are viewed good, (Macionis and Plummer, 2002). To provide a meaning for the concept values, Okeke (1989) first had to define the word value. Okeke (1989) asserts that values means importance, and also something qualitatively cherished. This definition agreed with that of the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary which perceives value as “worth of something compared with the price paid for it.” Oludipe (2002) also identifies two distinctive meanings of value. These are personal preferences and objective principles. She explains that preferences and principles are opposite, and that preferences are subjective while principles are objective. Values that are preferences, are something ‘to have’ while values that are principles are something ‘to be’. Value is also the quality of being useful or worthwhile or important (Amaele, 2000: 76). Amaele (2000) in turn defines values as standards of conducts, efficiency or worth which a society endorses, maintains and even transmits to her members in both present and future generations.

2.1 Types of Values

From the philosophical division called Axiology, values can be placed in three schools of thought. The realists perceive values as relative and therefore have no existence outside the thoughts and actions of man (Amaele, 2000). Accordingly whether something is worthwhile or should be cherished depends on how man sees it. This makes values very individualistic and self centered because values in this case would depend on our interest and desire. The idealist, another group of philosophers, perceive values as having existence outside of man’s experience. For the idealists values can be objectively determined by the generality of people. They however submit that certain values exist outside the world of the senses and that deliberate efforts must be made by man through reasoning to discover them. The third school on values is a middle position between the first and the second. This appears to be the position of the pragmatists. Amaele (2000:77) explains the position of the third school of thoughts;

Taking from both the subjective and objective perspectives, the middle – ranger insists that something becomes of value or valuable only when it is experienced and or used. Hence it is argued that objective values do not exist by themselves. Rather, through the interaction between persons, subjective values and society’s objective standards, values emerges. However, the pragmatists position is akin to that of the realist ‘cos the basis of their claim is subjectivity.

On the other hand, Macionis and Plummer (2002) has reported that Inglehart (2000) has produced a cluster of societies in 60 different countries across the world over the past 20 years based on two prominent value dimensions. These are what he refers to as tradition versus secular- rational and, survival versus self expression. Inglehart (2000) explains that survival values characterize what in recent times are called post – modern or post materialist societies while individualistic values are normally characteristic societies that are secular and rational. Both Amaele (2000) and Harrison (1993) had given some examples of values. For Amaele, (2000) they are: hardwork, sincerity, honesty, obedience, respect, charity, selflessness and patriotism. Harrison (1993) gave them as education, time orientation, frugality, work, merit, community, ethnic, justice and fairplay, and authority. Other examples of values are patience, truth, perseverance, discipline and responsibility, chastity, marital faithfulness, sanctity of human life, patriotism and nationalism.

3. The State of Value Orientation in Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation suffers moral decadence. It appears to have a confused value system that is self centered, individualistic and ethnic biased. A major factor may be a failed education system and ethnicity in the post independence era. There is a high level of indiscipline and corruption in Nigeria among the high and low. Nigeria as a nation made up of about 125 million people witness poor value orientation at almost all levels of human organization. Corruption and stealing of money is official, youths disrespect the elders as it is common in the Niger Delta, there is no longer dignity in labour, and therefore hardwork is abhorred as it is observed in our attitude to work and the numerous cases of cheating and malpractice in examinations. On the breaking down of moral values in Nigerian society, the Oputa panel report in the News 2004:39 and the Week 2005:25 had this to say:

We note the near total breakdown of the moral fabric of our society with much pain, sadness and regret. The impact of this breakdown can be felt right across the entire spectrum of the Nigeria society. Children in schools have no qualms in cheating in their examinations, school

leavers have taken on to armed robbery in frustration, business and social life of the nation are weakened by the weight of intense corruption.

Asiegbu (2000:4) also described the persistence of breakdown of moral values in Nigeria over the years, while discussing "Nigerian Education Today". He said:

In the public and private institution of other nations, all human actions that are traditionally unacceptable, those things naturally frowned upon by humanity in general a abomination or desecration of the land have remained so since the beginning of time. In our country on the other hand, everything goes.

Asiegbu (2000) was right in what he said. We should not forget the efforts of some past Heads of state of Nigeria to fight against indiscipline, lawlessness and corruption in the society. Citing Gbulie (1981:6), Obasi (1998:1) revealed that the "five majors" who set the stage for military rule in Nigeria, gave reasons for the January 15th 1966 coup d' etat "as rampant incidence of indiscipline act like ethnic politics, elections rigging, financial mismanagement, bribery and official corruption. In 1975, General Murtala Mohammed did also justify his take over of the Government of General Yakubu Gowon on the grounds of wide spread indiscipline and corruption in Nigeria (Ikegwuoha, 1994.) In this vein, widespread corruption and indiscipline in public and private life in Nigeria was seen as a major reason for the overthrow and takeover of the Government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 31st December, 1983 by General Muhammadu Buhari. This malaise was to be fought using War Against Indiscipline (WAI.) Obasi (1998) reports that General Sani Abacha Administration adapted the War Against Indiscipline strategy with the addition of 'C' (WAI-C) to be called War Against Indiscipline and Corruption. This Strategy was launched on 4th May 1994 with the following objectives:

- i. To mobilize the nation to fight against corruption and economic crimes
- ii. To create a better and more human society through the inculcation of such basic values as honesty, integrity, patriotism, respect of the sanctity of human life and respect of the rule of law.
- iii. To develop appropriate work ethics that would produce efficiency, effectiveness, high productivity and strong commitment to culture of excellence in public service within the context of a just and fair reward system anchored on the principal of "dignity of labour".
- iv. To instill in the business and industrial class, the value of honesty, trustworthiness, efficiency, patriotism, fairness and compassion.
- v. To inculcate in the Nigeria youth, the values of patriotism, nationalism, integrity, honesty, positive work ethics, respect for elders and constituted authority and,
- vi. To promote a just, fair and peaceful society and place immense value on the dignity and sanctity of human life.

The WAI-C of Gen Sani Abacha was elaborate and clear on the values to be inculcated in everyone in Nigeria for a good society.

3.1 The Need for Value Consensus in Nigeria

Haralambos and Holborn (2004: 940) states that 'value consensus is the basic integrating principle in society. It is the position of Haralambos and Holborn, drawing from the views of Durkheim (1947) that members of a society share common identity which will lead to solidarity and cooperation if they are committed to the same values. A value consensus is realized through a collective conscience. The collective conscience otherwise called the generalized other is the prevailing patterns of agreed moral issues, values and beliefs in the society and constraints individuals to act in terms of the requirements of society (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Durkheim opines that the collective conscience has a moral force that inhibits and narrows self interest in members of the society which promotes cooperation and reciprocity that is required in social life. The result is the absence of conflict and disorder in society. Durkheim's position is clear. He posits that people must not only be inculcated with the same values but must be made to see such as morally obligatory. He insists that the worthwhileness and desirability of a particular conduct or behaviour should be the same to everyone despite the circumstances of birth, sex, race, class and color. He further argued that when values have the same meaning and interpretations to all, common goals and means would result. As a point of emphasis, this paper posits from the above that an individual's sex, birth, circumstance, race, color and class should not distort his interpretation of and reaction to

the generally accepted meaning held by everybody in the society about values such as truth, practice, discipline, honesty, merit, hard work, time-orientation, patience, perseverance, responsibility, respect and obedience. In Durkheim's (1947) opinion, indiscipline must mean indiscipline whether it is observed in one's child, brother, sister, wife, husband and tribesman. The same goes for all the other known values of the Nigerian society.

3.2 The Need for Curriculum Reforms for Value-Orientation and Consensus in Nigeria

The foregoing, no doubt has shown that the Nigerian educational system has failed in terms of the inculcation of generalized values to every child of school age, the youth and adult. However before teachers in schools can succeed in the transmission of a set of generalized values in Nigerian schools, the extent of their acceptability by everyone in this country must be ascertained. This would call for a curriculum conference on moral values to be taught in our schools. Participants must be drawn from all the ethnic groups, religious bodies, Government officials, law makers, the academia as well as members of the public. This reform envisaged in the curriculum should draw enormously from the cultures and religions of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Mostly in the area of moral value this is an imperative. This view is supported by Okoh's (2005:5) indicators of miseducation in Nigeria. He said that we have:

An education system which is very high on utilitarian criteria (based on prospects of a job, profession, income generation) and very low on good character. An education system which has neglected the traditional, cultural and spiritual values that forms the matrix and psychological element in which the African lives.

The Oputa panel report of 2000 also noticed a general state of miseducation among Nigerians and recommended a Human Right and Civil/ Moral Education in Schools. the report states:

We recommended a teasing out of the results of the commission's work, including some of the discussions suggested above and making them part and parcel of the curriculum in schools. We also recommend an urgent return to civic/moral education from Nursery to primary, secondary school and Tertiary levels anchored on the principle of oneness and indivisibility of Nigeria. The News (2004: 28) & the Week (2005:25).

4. The Role of the School in Promoting Value Consensus

Both Durkheim (1947) and Parson (1951) identified the education system as one of the institutions that would bring about pattern maintenance in any society.

The teachers are saddled with this responsibility in the schools. When curricula reforms have been effected, it is the teachers in the schools that would implement them. The school therefore is an important factor in the socialization process for value orientation and consensus in Nigeria. It is the schools through the teachers that ensure that the collective conscience is present in every individual. In recognizing the role of the schools, the government would then see them as the ideological apparatus of the state. However, this role of the school would be jeopardized if teachers are not motivated and the environment in which they perform their roles is not conducive. Their role performance would also be hampered if the society that assigns them the socializing role live in manners that are contradictory to what they inculcate in the children, youths, and adults. To effectively perform their functions, the Nigeria teacher needs to be rebranded. The Nigeria teacher had suffered personality, image and social problems due to non payment or delayed payment of a very meager salary. His efforts to instill merit, hard work and discipline in the children were made ineffective and fruitless by a society that celebrates corruption, material wealth, paper qualification and ethnicity (Asiegbu, 2000). The working environment of the teachers is ridiculous while the learning environment of the student is dehumanizing and debasing. Moral values which are worthwhile and desirable behaviours and attitudes will only be effectively inculcated if these situations are changed.

5. Conclusion

This paper believes that there is heterogeneity of values in the Nigerian society due to its multilingual nature. This, the paper thinks is a factor that would affect the country's unity and solidarity. It equally affects its statehood. It affects the extent to which persons would be patriotic and nationalistic. The paper further pointed out the need for value orientation and homogeneity, arguing that, that would bring about national integration for the promotion and realization of value consensus. The paper reasons that a national curriculum reforms conference on moral values guided by the cultures and religions of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria be convened with the value consensus educator as the teacher in the Nigerian school. It was pointed out that the teacher would need a rebranding while the schools generally would require total reconstruction involving provision of equipment and materials for learning as well as development of infrastructure.

6. Recommendations

The following are recommended for a value consensus education to succeed in Nigeria.

- 1) The convening of a national curriculum reforms conference on moral value.
- 2) Such moral values which would be acceptable to all should be enshrined in the syllabus of all Nigerian schools for implementation.
- 3) The school environment for the implementation of the value consensus education should be made conducive for teaching and learning. This could be done through the provision of adequate classroom blocks.
- 4) The Nigerian teacher must be re-branded since a value system that does not see teaching and the teacher as important will militate against the implementation of the programme.
- 5) The larger society should not indulge in behaviours and attitudes that contradict what is taught in the schools.
- 6) The curriculum reforms should draw enormously from the cultures and religions of the different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

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