

The Need for Values Re-Ordering in Contemporary Nigerian Society

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ABSTRACT

This paper “The need for Value re-ordering in Contemporary Nigerian society” seeks to examine the challenges associated with values re-ordering in contemporary Nigerian society. The researcher employs the philosophical methods of enquiry, viz, critical reflections, analysis and speculation. The paper is relevant to stakeholders in education, namely, Government, Ministry of Education at various levels, Educationists, Teachers, Managers and Planners of school as well as Parents. Given the numerous contemporary issues in Nigeria, it is the position of the researcher that values should be re-evaluated and re-ordered to help save Nigerian nation from total collapse despite our academic and technological progress.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary Nigerian society, Learning is exalted and character degraded. This is erroneous and misleading. In political, social and educational spheres, a lot of immoral behaviours have impeded the right orientation, re-evaluation and re-ordering of values. In the educational sphere for instance, majority of school learners use their enhanced intellectual capacity to engage in armed robbery, classical “419”, ritual murders, agency for assassinations, thugery, cultism, yahoo-fraud, et cetera. Their values and attitudes are negatively influenced because of their materialistic valued re-ordering. Their lives are negatively patterned because they want to get to power and political popular positions. Thus anything that stands on their ways toward the realization of this goal must be eliminated. This is what Philosophers call “Machievellianism”.

In the midst of material prosperity, a large majority of Nigerians are under the grip of

immorality, poverty and corruption. Thus, such unsatisfactory situations have arisen due to crises of values. Obviously, we need to re-evaluate our values; we need to re-pattern our values and attitudes; we need to reorder our values. Nigerian schools at all levels should emphasize among other things, the importance of inculcating in the students moral and spiritual values which form a part of our culture, viz, honesty, kindness, charity, tolerance, courtesy, sympathy and compassion. It is imperative on the part of the teachers to understand the school situation and the potentialities of school activities in promoting the values in schools. Obviously, suitable values should be re-ordered to promote equality, social justice, national cohesion and democratic citizenship.

THE CONCEPT OF VALUES

The concept “value” has been used to connote different things to various people. Values could be viewed as things that we believe to be important in the way we live and work. They are beliefs, attitudes and opinions that people hold regarding specific issues. They are standards of behaviour about what is important in life such as integrity, compassion, sincerity, kindness and honesty. For some, values are subjective and may change in the course of time. In a narrow sense, value is something we desire for, something that is important, useful, good or worth. They are the ends to which we act and come in many forms. Dewey (1916) a renowned philosopher and educationist perceives value as primarily to prize, esteem and secondarily, to estimate. Value can be said to be something worth having and appreciative. Okafor (1984) refers to value as the basic understructures in all matters of choices and decision-making. Often we hear people denying that this or that is their value. In a broader sense, value implies all knowledge of rightness, beauty, virtue, obligation and truth. Value is a totality of all attributes that harmonize life or nature. Values are seen as present in all life experiences. Values as universal as they could be, cuts across all human experiences. Okeke (1989) opines that value connotes importance and something qualitatively cherished.

In ethics, value denotes the degree of importance of something or action, with the aim of determining what actions are best to do or what way is best to live, or to describe the significance of the different actions.

Amaele (2000) asserts that values are standard of conduct, efficiency or worth which a society endorses, maintains and ever transmits to her members-present and future generations. Values are moral conducts and code of behavior that motivate members of a certain culture or society to act and behave in the way they do. Generally, people are predisposed to adopt the values that they are raised with. People also tend to believe that those values are “right” because they are the values of their peculiar culture.

For Denga (1983), values represent reasons, beliefs, convictions or virtues that guide people’s actions. Values are also philosophical considerations which help an individual personally to judge how reasonable, truthful and appropriate his actions and relationship with others are. Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine that which is good and important to us. Values describe the personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions and behaviours.

Uduigwomen (2001) identifies so many values. These include: social, religious, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, political, economic, technological, material, cultural, intellectual, etc. According to him, survey reveals that 40% of Nigeria, both youth and adults still grope for values. The fact that they cannot identify their values shows that their conducts and actions are not guided by any value system.

CORE TYPES OF VALUES

There are ten basic types of values identified by universal value theory. These include; achievement, power, stimulation, hedonism, self direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security. Beside the above ten basic values, Rokeach, M.(1973) identifies two types of values, viz, terminal and instrumental values. Whereas, terminal values are most desirable to humans, instrumental values are views of how human desires should be achieved. The terminal values are desirable end-states of existence, the goal which an individual would like to achieve in his/her life time. Such may include among others, happiness, inner harmony, prosperous life, recognition and professional excellence. On the other hand, instrumental values focus with views on acceptable modes of conductor means of achieving the terminal values. These include, being sincere, honest, ethical and ambitious. Such values are more focused on personality traits and character.

Beside this, we also have material, human and spiritual values. Material values focus on materialistic things. Such include food, shelter, money, wealth and any other sensual pleasures. Human values are inherent in every human being. The five human values are love, peace, truth, right conduct and non-violence. Spiritual values focus on ideal things such as sincerity, love, truth, righteousness, goodness and kindness. The Christian Bible has many parables addressing material and spiritual values. The parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:16-21) teaches us God's position on people valuing material things over the spiritual things of God. The parable of the ten virgins (Mtt 25:1-10) teaches us the importance of putting our spiritual beliefs and values into action. The parable of the talents (Mtt 25:14-30) teaches us also to seek God and act on our spiritual values.

The relevance of values

In Nigeria society, values should be give adequate and prompt attentions. Let us briefly assess the importance of values.

The future of our great country, Nigeria is in the hands of our youths. In other word, youths are the future of the country and to a very large extend the good future of this country, depend upon the positive values imparted and cultivated to them during their youthful life. Therefore positive values should be properly imparted to the youths as great leaders of tomorrow.

Values are the basics and fundamentals in the life of all Nigerian citizens. Without values, human life has no meaning and importance. Values therefore reflect integrity and humanity. It teaches us more than any teacher or textbook could do. It is more beneficial to cultivate positive values at young school age. A young student who has no sense of wrong and bad, good or right has lost absolutely the sense of moral in life. These directly influence the personality of a child.

They can condemn evils and crime in our society. Teachers are the source of inspiration for students. Our School curriculum may include the study of life biographies of great personalities who followed the right path in life. It is important that the students have sound base of strong values. This calls for much caution and observation from school and college authorities.

THE NEED OF VALUES RE-ORDERING IN COMTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Generally, values have been taken to mean moral ideals, general conceptions or orientation towards the world. Moral values, therefore, are basics and fundamentals in the life of any Nigerian citizen. Without good moral values, human life has no meaning and importance. Moral values basically reflect integrity and humanity. It teaches us more than any teacher or text. It is more beneficial to attain moral values at young school age. Any Nigerian citizen who has no sense of wrong or bad, good or right has lost absolutely the sense of morality in facing the realities of life. A good sense of value gives us the decision-making ability to choose good moral action.

Good life foundation is inspired and formed by good and positive values. Values show the real identity of a person. Ones' character and spirituality is determined by his or her sense of values. Values guide us to learn and show what ought to be, and what should be done and how it should be done rightly. Values are keys to building good relationships with one another. In practicing good positive values, one would have moral mental strength to overcome many problems and difficult time. Positive and good values are the building blocks of people and they build a better character of a person. One who has a good positive value has a great part of his life to achieve something big in the future. It lasts a life time and molds ones character to the betterment of the society at large. Let us briefly examine some values that affect the Nigerian contemporary society.

VALUES FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND PATRIOTISM

God fatherism, tribalism, ethnicism and any negative sort of patronism must be abhorred and removed from the youngsters' expectations. Conversely, Nigerianism, patriotism, altruism, tolerance, compassion, personal merit, achievement and productivity must be emphasized without reference to ethnic, religion or other irrelevant discriminatory considerations.

VALUES FOR HARD WORK

Most developed and wealthy nations built their wealth through a system which proffers proper remuneration for excellence, dedication, efficiency and productivity. But in Nigeria, the averaged Nigerian has a very poor attitude to work in general. This affects particularly our manual and technical work. This situation must be re assessed and properly turned around through the educative process. It must be emphasized that indolence and lethargy stultifies the human person and delimits his dignity. Conversely, attention to work, dedication and the spirit of responsibility must be re ordered through education.

VALUES FOR EXCELLENCE

Taking into consideration the supersonic excellence of most of the developed nations, Nigeria

should strive for excellence in educative process. Sloppy work, ineptitude, inefficiency, lethargy, imprecision and imperfections of all sorts should be discredited. Conversely, emphasis must be laid on the importance of attention to details and cultivation of the mentality of thoroughness.

VALUES FOR RELIGIOUS AND MORAL LIFE

Any educational system that does not give proper attention to religious and moral life of the educands is bound to fail. Thus the merit of the learners should not just be determined from the size of his materials or even intellectual acquisition, but also from the quality and content of his character.

In the hierarchy of values, material wealth should be subordinated to the wealth of the spirit. For, the one is in the natural order of reality, and the other in the supernatural order of reality; the one is temporal and transitory, the other is eternal and permanent. Some of the inevitable concomitants of this awareness are: disciplined behaviour, love for one another, altruism, and compassion and above all, the realization that God is man's eternal partner. Hence, for the security of the individual and the nation, God is the most important factor.

CONCLUSION

The Nigeria contemporary society seems to value things that are material to the detriment of human and spiritual values. There are incessant cases that indicate a play down on moral ideals. In a bid to become affluence, powerful, influential and wealthy, many Nigerians have indulged themselves in fraudulent acts such as armed robbery, classical "419", ritual murders, agency for assassinations, thugery, cultism, yahoo-fraud, et cetera. Most of our national problem is a resultant effect of misplaced ordering of our values. Therefore, values reordering should be given much more attention in our ethical orientation. This is rightly point out in the Nigeria National Education Goals that education should inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individuals and the Nigerian society at large (National Policy on Education, 2013; 2). The inculcation and nurturing of beneficent positive values should be part and parcel of every levels of our education. Hence, positive values that promote equality, social justice, national cohesion and democratic citizenship should be reordered, encouraged and inculcated in our behavioural patterns.

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