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Evaluation of Value System and Its Effects on Nigeria Education: A Philosophical Approach

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Abstract.

This study concentrates on the evaluation of value system in Nigeria and its effect on education, using the philosophical approach. It employed the logical inference and ideal statements. The work was guided by four axiological questions: (a) Are values extrinsic or intrinsic? (b) Are values subjective or objective? (c) Are values relative or absolute? and (d) Is there hierarchy of values?. In order to answer the above questions raised, the various theories of moral values were therefore explained. Furthermore, the value situation in the Nigerian society and its effect on education were vividly x-rayed. Finally, the writer focuses on the Renewed Hope for the Nigerian Education. It is the writers' opinion that values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endorses maintains and transmits to future generation. The failure of the Nigerian education subsector is to a large extent caused by the subjectivity and relativity in which values are treated in the country. No society in the author's view can achieve its target if its values are left at the mercy of the individual's situation, circumstance and time.

Introduction

In all aspects of human endeavour, value dictates the choices man make. And, choice influences the behavior of every man. The need for evaluation and orientation is therefore important especially as values have much implications on human conducts and actions. It is therefore important to evaluate the value system of the Nigerian society vis-à-vis the prevailing social situation particularly in the business of education.

Value as a pivot of human behavior, is seen by different people in different ways. The varieties in opinion concerning what values are and what should be valued are contingent upon the answers given to the following axiological questions: (a) Are values subjective or objective? (b) Are values intrinsic or extrinsic? (c) Are values relative or absolute? (d) Is there hierarchy of values?. It is on the basis of these axiological questions raised and the resultant arguments between the Absolutists and the Relativists that this work intends to evaluate the value system in Nigeria and to see its effects particularly on the Nigerian system of education.

The basic approaches

There are philosophers who believe that values are intrinsic, objective, absolute, and that values have a hierarchy. This approach is referred to as the Deontological Approach. They include the Idealists and the Scholasticists. In their opinion something good or something of value cannot be subjective or relative but must be objective and absolute. They maintain that certain things are of values in themselves and, are to be obeyed irrespective of time and circumstance. Those rules are valid without further explanations. On the other hand, the Pragmatists, the Utilitarians, and the Emotivists present values as something extrinsic, subjective, relative and without hierarchy. This approach is known as the Teleological Approach. In their view nothing would have values if there were no human beings to value them. In other words, man is the maker of his own values through the consequences of his actions. What is of value is relative, depending on the circumstance, time or situation.

What are values?

The concept, 'Value' fall under a branch of philosophy called the Normative or Prescriptive philosophy. It is precisely on the account of its prescriptive nature that an ideal statement is subject to varieties of interpretation and application. The word value has multiple and often complex interpretations. This is because values are usually understood within different socio-cultural

contexts. And secondly values relate to persons, and persons are different and unique (Okoh 2003:79). The concept of value therefore eludes every definition. Okoh(2003:79) further has it that, "value connotes importance, something that is qualitatively cherished : something that provides satisfaction or sense of accomplishment". If the above definition is something to go by, it means that anything considered to be valuable, admirable or that which provides satisfaction cannot be played down on. An imperative statement, 'Thou shall not kill' is amoral value. But value considerations perceived from either legal, natural and religious views do not prove or tell us why the action should not be done. They afford no reasons against the action. But as Nwigwe (2003:95) puts it, "You should not kill your neighbor and take away his property, is an imperative, a command. For this, it requires no further self-justification, because is self-evident".

Moral value is a matter of conscience. It is the conscience that makes an individual considers the effects of what he/she is planning to do on the other people. In other words, conscience makes you think yourself into the position of other people affected by what you are doing and further, to think whether they would be likely to agree to what you are doing. In this process, the rights of others are considered before any action is taken. Kant in his categorical imperative agrees with the above analysis. According to Albert, Danise, & Peterfreund (1980:240) "His first explicit formulation of the categorical imperative requires an individual to obey a maxim which can, without contradiction, be willed to be a rule for everyone". In essence, Kant is saying that in order to know whether a particular action I intend to perform is morally right or wrong, I should according to him, test it by means of universalization; that is, I should try to see whether it would be desirable if all men in a similar situation as I am were to perform a similar action as I intend to perform. Moral values therefore operate in our conscience. Conscience varies from one person to the other. While some people's consciences are sound and functional, others have dead conscience. This inevitably, affects our value system.

Types of values

Okoh (2003:79-80) identifies the following types of values: Religious Values, Moral Values, Aesthetic Values, Social Values, Cultural Values, Intellectual Values, and Economic Values. Religious Values mainly deal with salvation, God, beliefs, the next world, sin, failure and success, etc., while the contents of Moral Values are honesty, liberty, justice, brotherhood,

neighbourliness, etc. These values guide man's conducts towards his fellow man.

Aesthetic Values are concerned with the sense of appreciation, creative expression, etc. Social Values are values that deal mainly with the acquisition of power, glory, sovereignty, patriotism, loyalty, etc. Cultural Values focus on the custom and ways of life of a people, the do and don't morals, etc. These values ensure the continuous existence of every society.

Intellectual Values are values that deal with truth, wisdom, integrity, tolerance, creativity, etc. And finally, Economic Values deal with money, wealth, profit, fame, economic power, and material achievement in human activities etc.

Theories of moral values

Our emphasis in this work is however, on moral values. What norms of conducts are proper to man or is man subject to every wind of change? Are there no norms that ought to guide human action or is every one free to pursue his own arbitrary decisions regarding norms of action? These underlying questions are attempted by the various value theories and in so doing they give reasons why one set of principles is better than the other. Some of these value theories are:

Pragmatism –Pragmatism relativisms' moral values. That's, no one value but many depending on different interest. The theory sees the issues regarding good or bad as involving what produces good or bad /evil. What to them is to be valued is what produces good results and what is not valued is what produces bad results. In other words, the consequence of every action, good or bad is what determines what should be valued.

There are no absolute or objective values in the views of the pragmatists. Something is of value if it produces the desired result or performs satisfactorily for self and the community.

Utilitarianism - This theory holds that something should be of value if it is capable of bringing about the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. By utility, the utilitarian means pleasure or happiness. According to them, utility is the criterion or yardstick for valuing. It means that those actions which produce or tend to produce pleasure are good and valued and vice-versa.

Utilitarianism is a teleological principle which subjects values to relativism. What gives pleasure to one person might however, not give to another. For instance, alcohol consumption may be valued by one person and not by the other. Furthermore, what is of pleasure to one individual might not necessarily be of good value. A man who derives pleasure in sleeping with other people's wives is not doing so because adultery is good and or socially acceptable in the society. Bentham Jeremy and J.S. Mill are proponents of utilitarianism. Bentham claims that man is by nature a pleasure-seeking and pains avoiding animal, that pleasure and pains are the two guides of all human action (Omeregbe, 1993:223). In Bentham's ethics, pleasure and pain are the determinants of what should be valued.

Emotivism - Emotivism is a form of subjectivism which reduces value statements to mere expression of an attitude or feeling. The theory denies that value statements are factual statements which convey information about actions. A moral statement about a particular action tells us nothing about the action which can be true or false. According to this theory, if I say that stealing is not good, I am only giving information about stealing; I am expressing my attitude towards it. I am also trying to make the values of other people conform to my own value judgment in the matter. For the emotivists, the statement means nothing than to make somebody disapprove stealing as I do. Emotivism is unacceptable because it reduces value statements to pure subjectivity and removes completely objectivity from it.

Idealism - This theory also known as absolutism was propounded by Plato. The theory rejects the position of the relativists .The Idealists contend that values are objective, eternal and unchangeable. Values such as truth, honesty, goodness are objective irrespective of human preferences.

Values for the Idealists remain the same today as they were years ago and will remain so in future. For instance, regardless of race, class, creed or sex values such as charity and honesty are good for all men and at all times. They believe that values are based on the nature of things. However, even though values are culture bound, human beings have similar needs such as those for survival, procreation, love, security, hunger and friendship. If this is so and human beings seem to value these things, then are values really relative? (Wokocha, 1991:58). It is in the nature of value that things are taken the way they are. If one knows the value of one's life, one will also know the value of and need to preserve one's neighbor's life.

Intuitionism – This theory maintains that, if one’s faculty of valuing is in good working order, one can simply look at a phenomenon and see that it is good or bad. One does not need a lot of information about the consequences of the phenomenon and its effects on human happiness. It is possible to prove the value of the phenomenon on the basis of such information.

Intuitionism falls between subjectivism and objectivism. Its objective nature lies in the fact that it envisages value judgment as an objective feature that can be seen in good objects. But in practice, it is subjective because there is no objective way of distinguishing a correct intuition from an incorrect one. This is because; one man’s intuition is as good as another’s. G. E. More, Pichard, and David Ross are some of the proponents of intuitionism.

Value system in the Nigerian society

The value situation in Nigeria is subjective and relative. It creates a situation in which everyone acts according to his or her own personal conviction, often without reference to any operating natural and universal principles. Objectivity in Nigeria is dead. This calls for total moral and ethical orientation.

The moral condition in all aspects of the nation’s life is dominated by indiscipline, lack of respect for law and order, greed, cheating, stealing, fraud and corruption in all forms, including the most lucrative of them all, electoral malpractice. There is no surprise why Transparency International continues to rate Nigeria high in terms of corruption in the countries of the world.

It is a common thing to hear and read on the pages of news papers in Nigeria, some notable steps taken by every government whether military or civil, including the state governors. For instance, the late General Muritala Mohammed’s government promulgated the Corrupt Practices Decree in 1975, President Shehu Shagari’s Ethical Revolution came up in 1982, General Buhari / late Idiagbom’s War Against Indiscipline(WAI) 1984, General Babangida’s Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery(MAMSER) and National Orientation Agency1993, late General Abacha’s War Against Indiscipline and Corruption(WAI-C),1994 and President Obasanjo’s Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences(ICPC) 2002, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission(EFCC),2003, etc.

Obviously, these are evident that leaders of this country are all aware of the Nigerian ethical problems. But what then has been the result so far?

Experience has shown that these steps have not yielded any positive result. They can at best be described as mere lip's-services. The offences that are supposed to be punished by law are rather hailed, acclaimed and defended by the people especially if the offender is a friend, townsman, a relation, or if there is some material gain that accrues from adopting the inobjective instance. It is in line with this that Iheoma(1995:14) quotes Achebe as saying that "Nigerians are corrupt and, the system under which they live makes corruption easy and profitable, they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient." Corruption is noticeable in all facets of the Nigerian society. It is very unfortunate that education which is supposed to transmit worthwhile values to the younger generations is one of the spheres that receives the consequences of the unethical practices.

Value system in Nigeria and effects on the education system

The high hopes raised by Ashby Commission Report (1960), the Universal primary Education (UPE) Programme (1976), the National Policy on Education (1977) (Revised 1981, 1994,2004) and similar blue prints have largely dashed. The Nigerian educational system in recent time has been characterized by certificate forgery, examination malpractices, campus cultism, incessant strike actions by education workers, brain drain and so on. Objectivity has given way to subjectivity. Consequently, Osundare in Anikpo(2005:19) puts it that:

Our Universities can no longer guarantee that necessary peace of mind for the student in her hall, the researcher in the library, the scientist in the laboratory, the philosopher under the tree. Nowhere in our once serene campus can poet now afford to stand and share. And this, the epidemic of noise and nonsense, the loud crusades of evangelical groups who have turned students hostels, classrooms, staff quarters, and virtually every open space on campus into screaming arena for survivals and miracles

It is disheartening that amidst the oil boom, the economic fortune of the country is doomed while Nigeria remains a beggar nation. Corruption is the bedrock of Nigeria's underdevelopment. As Omoregbe(2006)puts it, "the greatest obstacle to the development is immorality, corruption, dishonesty, fraud, embezzlement of public funds, selfishness ,etc." The Nigerian

education system has suffered a lot of setbacks as a result of immorality. This high level of immorality has affected the country's education in many ways:

In the Universal Primary Education(UPE) Scheme for which the sum of N636.03m was allocated for the construction of 150,955 classrooms during the 1975-80 Third National Development Plan, only 63,000 classrooms were completed and yet, an additional N120,000,000 was incurred at the end of the plan period.(Report of the Political Bureau, (1989:66).

An aspect of subjectivity is also noticeable in terms of funding of the Nigerian education. Events have shown that the rulers of the country are interested in the death of education itself. This is evident in primary level of education. At the secondary level, the public secondary schools are made shadows of their old selves. This has paved way for their private secondary schools. The inability of the poor masses to send their children /wards to the high fee paying private institutions becomes a matter of concern. The latest onslaught is targeted at reducing the government Universities to that of primary and secondary institutions. This is a selfish motive at ensuring that their Universities thrive.

UNESCO in one of its reports suggested that to meet the challenges of era of globalization, "Governments of Nigeria must spend 26% of their annual budget on education. This will enable Nigeria to attain the threshold of having one thousand scientist and engineers per million of population" (National Forum for Policy Development). But both the civil and military governments in Nigeria have demonstrated lack of interest and political will in the business of education. For instance, for about 15 years of military rule in Nigeria (1984-1999), the military governments were budgeting up to 40% for Defense at the expense of education. Consequently, the period witnessed a mass exodus of Nigeria's best brains in academics. As Jones-Esan (2009:9) puts it,

Most of human that were trained in the best universities in UK and the USA in the 1960s and 1970s via government scholarships, were forced to relocate back to the Western World where their talents are better appreciated and rewarded.

The most recent of the strike actions in the Nigerian Universities was as result of the Federal Government's reluctance and intransigence to sign the agreement reached between her and the Academic Staff Union of the Nigerian Universities (ASUU). ASUU having waited since 2004 when the agreement was due for renegotiation, having negotiated with government for more than two years, and having been dishonestly tricked on the date for signing of the agreement, resolved to proceed on a total strike between June and October, 2009, after a two week warning strike. The strike was comprehensive and total. During this period there were no academic activities in the Nigerian Universities; a situation which led to the withdrawal of some students from the Nigerian Universities to some neighboring Universities in Africa.

Furthermore, there have been cases of infringement on academic freedom in Nigeria. For instance, in 1989, during the Babangida's era, Dr Festus Iyayi, the then Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) president had his appointment terminated in University of Benin on the allegation that he was engaged in activities which violated the University laws governing his employment. The activity was that he took part in a seminar on 'Alternative to SAP'. Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was an economic measure instituted by the Babangida Government in order to achieve an economic growth and development in Nigeria.

Another case of violation of academic freedom occurred when the government terminated the contract of an expatriate staff, Dr. Wilmot because of his criticisms of government policies as part of his academic freedom. He was alleged and deported on the ground that he was a spy of a foreign government. This took place in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria. Okorosaye-Orubite, Abraham, & Paulley (n.d) conclude this by quoting Ihovbere thus:

The University system in Nigeria has been destroyed by various military Regimes aided by scores of intellectual rationalizers who served as advisers, Ministers ... hangers-on, consultants, and agents of World Bank... Collaborated in different capacities to erode strands of academic procedures, Freedom and respect of the country. As a result, institutions are no longer known for teaching and research, but for politics, manipulations, ethnic and religious

Jingoism, petty squabbles, political posturing, opportunism and the recycling of irrelevant theories, methodologies and idea.

There is an apparent misplacement of values in the Nigerian society in general and the education sector in particular. The environment does not encourage honesty and hard work. It is a system that identifies with and or rewards criminals. The Nigerians and indeed the Niger Deltans could not have peace because the idle 'repentant militants' did not receive their allowances as at when due, an amount which the genuine civil servants cannot receive at the end of the month. The repentant militants (as they claim to be) took to the streets close to the University of Port Harcourt, breaking shops, looting and openly raping the innocent female students, as an expression of anger for the delay in the payment of their monthly allowance. To this the Federal Government quickly responded and their allowances were fully paid. But as genuine and peaceful as the Academic Union of the Nigerian Universities (ASUU) struggle was, the tussle lasted for about three months with the government's constant remonstrations, 'no work no pay'. Salaries were not paid to ASUU members until they went back to the classroom.

Renewed hope for the Nigerian education

There is hardly any society that can exist without a comprehensive set of values jointly shared by its members. In this regard, the Federal Government of Nigeria should create an opportunity where all the stakeholders in education will meet (stakeholders Forum) and discuss the future of education in the country.

Furthermore, we can at least recognize that values are important and not merely matters of individual choice. The educational matters should not be left for the manipulation of the individuals to suit their personal and selfish interests. Effective steps should be taken to counter and stop the bad financial management of our leadership. Any stolen monies recovered from public funds should be invested in the education subsector.

More so, all Education Reforms which are not legislated into existence ought to be stopped. If they are meant to serve the interest of the Nigerian people, the public ought to be allowed to discuss them and their alternatives in the proper forum. This is the way reform should be done in a democratic society.

The management of the business of education should be placed on merit and on moral integrity of the individuals. It should be devoid of ethnicity and personal relationship; and any leader who is proved to be corrupt should be properly punished according to the law. This will serve as deterrent to the others.

Finally, the government at all levels of the country should see education as the only means through which the much needed development can be realized. Education must be given its pride of place in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion, values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endorses, maintains and transmits to the future generation. No society can achieve an expected target if its values are left at the mercy of the individuals, situation, circumstance, and time. The system failure of the Nigerian society, particularly, the education subsector is to a large extent caused by the subjectivity and relativity of the value system in the country. The Universal validity of values is needed if the country must achieve its targets in Education. It is however, dangerous to understand the values in the narrow sense. Common morality for all protects the interests of all. The right ethics therefore, is that which is based on common good of the society; such should be the case in the Nigerian society.

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