

PERSPECTIVES ON THE SIX VALUES OF NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria is deemed to have made giant strides in the transformation, growth and development of education. This is in a bid to ensure the turn-out of articulate, integrated, well-informed, functional and productive citizens. Besides, the Nigerian educational system has not only been adjudged dynamically innovative but also functionally and intrinsically worthwhile in the process of value inculcation and inter-realization. The crux of this paper therefore is to appraise, objectively the six values of the nation's philosophy vis-a-vis education as enunciated in the National Policy on Education. This critique is necessitated by the uncertainties beclouding the attainment of these well-thought-out values when juxtaposed with the present state of socio-political and economic development occasioned by the growing nightmare of hopelessness, moral laxity, emotional stress and psychological uneasiness, disregard of human dignity and social tension and insecurity. The paper calls to question the reality of these ideals in the foreseeable future and makes recommendations.

Introduction

Education has become an integral part of human activity which is fundamentally useful for the overall socio-economic, cultural and political development of individual and society. It is a worthwhile venture and a means by which an individual gains knowledge or insight and develops attitude or skills useful to himself and the society in solving problems (Okoye, 1978). Being essentially concerned with increase of skill or development of knowledge and understanding of an individual as a result of training, study or experience, education goes on in all human societies. Evidently, in order to survive, society must pass on basic skills, information and beliefs from one generation to the next.

Over the years, education in Nigeria has witnessed a progressive transformation and growth with the overriding aim of producing individuals who will actively participate in the development of the nation. Government intervention and active participation in matters of educational concern is demonstrated in the huge amount of its financial commitment to education annually. Perhaps, it is in the interest and benefits of all the citizens that the government has decisively been involved in the formulation of policies and programmes of education deemed relevant to the nation's philosophy to meet the needs and aspirations of the people taking cognizance of the kind of society the government wants to build,

The rapid social changes in values and ideological orientation calls for an educational system that concerns itself with "the integration of individuals into sound and effective citizens and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system" (NPE, 1981 Revised).

It is in the realization of the role of education in the promotion of the nation's values and objectives that experts from all walks of life converged in 1973 to deliberate on a document which main focus was to inculcate values that are inherent and indispensable in the national philosophy for the growth and development of individual emotional, physical and psychological stability. In section

1 subsection 3, the policy states interalia, "in consequence the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

- i. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- ii. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;

- iii. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations;
- iv. Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- v. Respect for the dignity of labour; and
- vi. Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

These are laudable and excellent values, which when put into practice and actualized will, to a large extent transform the nation into an eldorado; build the citizens into sound, responsible and responsive dynamic individuals, ready and willing to contribute to economic vitality, moral uprightness, political stability and democratic spirit in Nigeria.

One thing is clear, we in Nigeria, according to Odeem, (1993), are desirous and anxious to improve our educational system and the quality of education received, and furthermore to make education affordable to all citizens. Evidence abound for this. The declaration by the Federal Government in the Third National Development Plan in 1975 that "one of the main national objectives is to build a just and equalitarian society" and the launching of the Universal Primary Education was a step in this direction of making education available to all children. This aim was thus to eradicate all forms of illiteracy in the Nigerian society.

Needless to say that no philosophy of a nation can be truly achieved without education being used as a necessary tool in identifying and implementing the values inherent in such a philosophy. Be that as it may, the onus of this paper is to ascertain whether or not educational system in Nigeria has -rationally and effectively translated these noble values into concrete and logical reality; hence, an appraisal of the six values has become inevitable and relevant considering the nation's pace in economic, political and socio-cultural development, injustice and moral decadence threatening the Nigerian nation.

Inculcation of Values In The Educational System

The issue of values is of primary concern in Education and it comes up everywhere as far as the role of education in inculcating them in individual in the society is central and paramount. According to Akinpelu (1981), values refer to those objects which we cherish, appreciate, want, desire or need. Even though values are things of our interest and desire, they can sometimes turn out to be objects of no lasting values and so become undesirable. Therefore, for anything- to be considered valuable or desirable, it must possess the quality of being worth the desirability. It is on this basis that the planning and development of curriculum and the formation of the aims and objectives in education have to be essentially rooted in the values which the nation's philosophy upholds.

Values in education can be personal and individual or public and social. Thus, values have both personal and social significance. While personal has to do with the development of individual interest which benefits him to the exclusion of others, social values are moral which can hardly be private since it is social relationships that give rise to them (Akinpelu, 1981). Besides, the end of education is the development of the knowledge and the skills of the individual for his economic and social well-being. At the same time, the individual also uses his knowledge and skills to contribute to the welfare of his family, the community and larger society. On account o this, Akinpelu (1981) maintained further that the question of the relationship between private or personal values and public or social values is one that any society has to tackle before formulating its educational philosophy.

There is therefore an urgent need in Nigeria to reconsider the claims, rights and obligations of the individual in relationship to those of the society, and to work out a balance between both for the formulation. Given that values are the determiners in an individual that influence his choices in life and that these direct his behaviour and attitude, a review of these values becomes expedient. Undeniably, values are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Thus inherently or intrinsically, education has the potentials which the individual so educated is endowed with and therefore poised to contribute to his personal well-being and that of the wider society.

After all is said, these questions arise what type of values should our children and youth acquire in the education that so much has been spent in order to make it available and affordable for all? Secondly,

what are the human values which education must inculcate in our children and youth? Thirdly, if those human values have been spelt out (as in the National Policy on Education), to what extent has the educational system exerted itself to achieve them? Fourthly, how far have our children and youth been orientated to imbibe them? And fifthly, how have our children and youth appreciated and embraced them?

Understandably, our educational objectives and values are ideal and lofty, all in accordance with the principles of human dignity and rights (Onolu, 1978). At a glance, one can see those values like human dignity and freedom to make rational decisions in a democratic society such as ours in Nigeria, which when translated into reality, every citizen will enjoy. Taking into account all the confusions education has brought into the country in the sense of rational values and inculcation of worthwhile activities leaving out the much cherished traditional values, one wonders whether the educational system has been able to achieve the goals for which it was established.

The value-emphasis in education and horrible social contestations of youth have resulted in the so called cult of youths. The country is now suffering from the insurgence of youths struggling against established and constituted authority both in family and public life. Happily, the country is now sensing the dangers inherent in the educational system and paying attention to the menace posed by youths. The old values which proved their worth in human life are gone to the blues as far as youths are concerned. The new social order that is ephemeral, depthless, irresponsible is now acceptable, all in the name of being modern. The youths meet in schools, colleges and universities and imbibe in these institutions in relation to the outside world what they regard as 'new value'. Today, we find out children and youth well versed in all the radio, television and the general mass, media bringing out to the public what are terms "new things" that are put under one big name modernity which, inadvertently or advertently, is damaging to their future growth. - At this juncture, it is pertinent to review the six values in the nation's national policy on education and their implications for national development.

i. Respect For The Worth And Dignity Of The Individuals

Any educational system that is worth its salt should provide for the worth and dignity of man in society, it should enable individuals within the domain of its operation to realize their importance and the role they can play in shaping and transforming the society in which they belong. Education is supposed to inculcate this worthy value in individuals. The quality of individuals the educational system produces determine the quality of education transmitted. Education, of course should transmit what is worthwhile to the learners for the purpose of moulding sound character and promoting desirable behaviour. Acclaimed and good manners, positive attitude and desirable habits which are "some of the qualities education should inculcate. When these qualities are instilled in individuals, no one is left in doubt as to the achievement of such values in education. However, in Nigeria today, the worth and dignity of individuals have become eroded in our educational system as indiscipline such as examination malpractices, sexual harassment, bribery and corruption have eaten deep into the fabric of our educational system. This laudable value has been abused, bastardized and ridiculed by both students and practitioners of education.

ii. Faith In Man's Ability To Make Rational Decisions

From the philosophical point of view, education should be geared towards producing the whole man who must be sound in body and mind, and always alert to face situations and appraise issues objectively and intelligently. He should be rational and ready to take decisions on matters that affect him and his immediate environment. He should be intellectually up to date, sound and critical of events and trends in the contemporary society or world. On no account should he allow people to take or make decisions for him. Decisions made or taken should be such that are rationally based to avoid regret and blame. A sound and rational man should not be vulnerable to prejudices, inconsistencies and contradictions but should be firm and resolute in whatever stance one takes on issues bordering on controversy. Such a man by virtue of education he has acquired should be able to show evidence of well-integrated personality, competent, efficient, and versatile when it comes to participating in decisions that affect his life and in the interest of others in the society. It has rather become questionable whether the Nigerian educational system has been able to sufficiently and effectively instill and inculcate this vital value in individuals. This is because most, if not all intellectuals in our ivory towers and in governments at local, state and federal levels have

abandoned the cherished and fine reputation bequeathed on them by virtue of their learning to stoop low before those not worthy and refined enough to initiate and take decisions for them. There should be a clarion call on all well meaning educationists to reverse this ugly trend and give our educational system a pride of place in the world's scheme of things.

Hi. Moral And Spiritual Values In Inter-Personal And Human Relations

A nation that is out to Achieve moral and spiritual up Tightness must ensure that her educational policy and progr-ammes are tailored toward inculcating right behaviour in individuals or citizens. A God fearing nation is a peaceful, virtuous and prosperous nation. When the entire citizenry of a nation is confident, courageous and truthful in the cause it is pursuing, there is bound to be success and development in all facets of human endeavour. The educational system that is poised to bring about the achievement of the above values must be ready to work to produce individuals who are morally acceptable in the society in which they belong. Morality must have to do with good character and happy relationships with others in one's society. However, a cursory look at our educational system leaves no one in doubt that education has failed to instill these values in individuals. Moral decadence, cheating, sectional interest, hatred and dishonesty have become practices that are in vogue today in our society. It is not surprising to hear people who preach and advocate spiritual and moral rectitude turning round to practice and endorse vices in society because the love and craze for wealth, position and power in government and non-governmental sectors have disoriented and beclouded our sense of morality and spiritual welfare., thus, these laudable values, well intentioned as they are in the national policy have severely suffered with impunity.

iv. Shared Responsibility For The Common Good Of Society

True to type an acceptable educational system should lay emphasis on competence and efficiency, team spirit, cooperation and mutual understanding. Individuals who benefit from an educational system that stresses these qualities are supposed to possess skills and knowledge which earn them and their society means of survival as well as making contribution to the common good. Shared responsibility to the common good therefore entails individual citizens working together or collectively and severally with the sole aim of contributing to I he growth and development of the society. They should he prepared and willing to share their common experiences and work cooperatively to enhance unity, progress and stability of the society. Thus, this value is based on the ' idea that a sound policy of education must cater for a well-integrated personality of individuals who should at all times uphold that sense of unity of purpose and unit of command. lint whether this value has been really and rightly inculcated to and imbibed by !he Nigerian citizens is a thing one cannot attest to with any degree of confidence. This is so because the attitude of the Nigerian to work is lax, faulty and poor. Unpatriotic sentiment and absence of national consciousness coupled with lack of good sense of direction makes the achievement of this value highly impossible. Needless to say that a nation that wants to achieve self reliance and self-sufficiency and economic independence must promote (he philosophy of shared responsibility for the common good of the society. Without this, the desire to provide and promote a free, just, equalitarian and democratic society will remain a far cry in Nigeria.

v. Respect For The Dignity Of Labour

This means that all citizens should uphold and cherish the value of hardwork in whatever field they find themselves. Labour no mailer how menial is essential for the survival and sustenance of a nation. A nation that encourages laziness among its citizens will be drifting dangerously into economic demise. Accordingly, a nation that uses education as a valuable instrument to inculcate the sense of harwork will be producing citizens who will work to promote economic viability and stability of the nation. Based on Ibis, education should be placed with the sole responsibility of producing individuals who will embrace both white and blue collar jobs. And educational system that is geared towards diversifying the economy of the nation is not only relevant but indispensable. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on vocational and technical studies that will transform the economy and make it more dynamic. The 6-3-3-4 system of education is introduced to achieve this objective but its implementation has become faulty, inconsistent and haphazard lo meet the goals of the nation. If Nigeria is to achieve a great and dynamic economy, its citizens must cultivate the habit of dedication, hardwork and devotion lo duly. Lacking this value means pulling I he economy into a doldrum.

vi, Promotion Of The Emotional, Physical And Psychological Health Of all Children

A sound educational system must provide for and foster the much needed health of mind, body and soul of its citizens. Our educational system has not met this objective. Lack of employment after graduating from school has caused much stress, emotional upset due to suffering and hardship. Besides, the poor state of the economy has caused parents not to be able to afford their wards good education that will make them as disciplined and morally upright future leaders of tomorrow. In our secondary and tertiary institutions today abortion, drug-addiction, secret cults and promiscuity have become the established values of our youths. Instead of building moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations in the society, we now have negative and misplaced values and priorities. Nigeria is yet (o be free from poverty, disease, ignorance, insecurity, illiteracy, acule moral decadence and many other vices.

Recommendations

It is important that the nation shows much concern and take this matter of value-inculcation in education very seriously. Education should be closely related to the working world, offering sufficient instruction in business training and manual skills, agriculture and human relationships.

More importantly, education should be the fruitage of culture inculcating wisdom in living so that the products of such education can contribute meaningfully to the progress and development of their country.

Invariably, the government's Policy on Education should reflect the view of the society. In a developing country like Nigeria, the major wealth of its citizens is not their physical equipment but the body of accumulated knowledge from education and the training of the population to use this knowledge effectively (Okoye, 1978).

The nation's educational system should be closely studied with a view to correcting the anomalies inherent therein. Put simply, the wave of cynicism in the face of corruption, apathy, poverty, self indulgence and superstition prevalent in modern society can be attributed to a faulty educational system.

To scale the height of greatness, the educational system has to be re-organized to achieve these laudable values and objectives.

The ability of the nation to inculcate these values is to transform education into a potent force of nationalism, social integration and industrial efficiency, using it to foster a strong love of the father land and care for public property.

Education should of necessity eradicate the prevailing social vices, and develop a scientific democratic and patriotic spirit that will bring the country to the first rank of nations in which illiteracy is wiped out and productivity is continually rising. Therefore proper orientation and guidance of our children and youths will in no small measure move this great giant of Africa economically, socially and politically forward in the third millennium.

Conclusion

It has been observed that values are purely conventional and always concretized in philosophical or conceptual relativity. What is of value to one individual or society may not be desirable to another person or community and vice-versa. As already mentioned, we need to inculcate values that are perennial and eternally human based on worthwhile activities.

Above all, the need to educate our children and youths to imbibe values and aspirations to arrive at the over-all sphere of socio-economic progress of the nation cannot be over-emphasized. Such values or activities are necessary to meet up with the development of individuals who will contribute realistically towards national development.

Interestingly, education is concerned with the life and destiny of man. Therefore, the way he internalizes and makes an existential intentionality of his society is the way he goes to act and react to it. The worth of what he internalizes matters a lot for him. He should know what he must take to survive and what to avoid taking in order not to endanger his life. Hence, in education what an individual inculcates is vital to him for survival of his various dimensions which satisfies for the worth of any educational system is through the means of the human resources of knowledge that touch on the totality of his being.

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