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Basic Social Values In Modern Nigerian School System

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Introduction

A careful study of current event in modern Nigerian scene, religious institutions and of course all other sectors of the society clearly show that there is an unbalanced equation as regards the input and output of societal values in the school system. It is either there is a reduction of the necessary and compulsory societal values which must be introduced and imbibed in the school system or that there is a wanton disregard, disrespect, or negligence of the excellent societal values already introduced or made available to the Nigeria school system. In these two probabilities the society receives the blame if the former probability is the case while the school deserves the blame if the latter is the case Enomah (2003).

Values are ones principles or standards, ones judgment of what is valuable and important in life. When we apply this to the society, we can refer to values as the societies. Principles or standard, society judgment of what is valuable or important in life. To kalusi (1996) values are desires, wants, needs, interests and aspirations. They will present specific element of culture and so can be termed as expected pattern of behavior. They are equally to be passed on from one generation to another. In the words of Benard (1975) no society has been able to live without rules and regulations and apparently the more complex the society, the greater is the need for a detailed description of behavior which are permitted and those which are prescribed. These social regulations are of different levels of visibility- they are called "mores", "folktales" and "laws".

They are designed to make it possible for men to live together harmoniously and thus in contemporary society to enhanced the living conditions of individuals. Unfortunately, when one examines the modern Nigeria school system there are some doubt if there exist any society values at all.

General features of modern Nigeria school system

The Nigeria school system of today is characterized by many forms of vices in the form of student indiscipline, student unrest, cultism, lack of respect, immodesty in dressing, examination malpractice, and prostitution e.t.c. the teachers on their part exhibit partiality, corruption, forms of indiscipline- lateness to school, lack of preparation for class work, absenteeism, tribalism etc. the value system of the larger society which now emphasizes materialism had given rise to the syndrome of getting rich quickly. Hard work is thus forgotten because money has become the most important factor for status symbol. The shift in the value system in the society has affected the school itself. Furthermore since independence in 1960 the political scene had not been very stable. The system had been characterized by inconsistency, instability, fraud, nepotism and all forms of political, social and economic malpractice. The spirit had be truncated while the ideas of honesty and fair play had been thrown over board. To make the situation worse, there had been an uncontrollable rise in the establishment of private education institutions since the mid 1980. Most of the schools though "government approved" have no definite locations, no trained personnel, no structures and no facilities. Most of the schools have no moral standards especially when it comes to examinations. The ministry of

education officials, supervisors and invigilators, law enforcement agents either by omission or commission connive with students and school authorities while pretending to be against vices in the school system. The role of most parents in the areas of values are woeful. Many of them do not want their children to be engaged in manual work and must not suffer. These parents struggled and toil day and night to amass wealth while children are at home unguided and uncontrolled. Many families are broken down resulting in the absence of love, affection, integrity and stability required for the proper upbringing of the child. All these have contributed to the negligence of the basic societal values in the Nigeria school system. Ezewu (1983) Oniyima and Oniyama (2002).

Education, Basic Societal Values in a Traditional Nigeria Society

The sociology of knowledge assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and socially determined knowledge should be the individual community or society which provided the existential basis for such knowledge. This is the premise on which education in a typical Nigeria society is based. Ukeje (1966), Datta (1984), and Itedjere (1997) had warned that education should be a function of cultural matrix in which it operates because educational system is a reflection of a particular culture of which it is a part. To this end every human society at any stage has its own system of education. In the case of a traditional Nigeria society, it could be regarded as indigenous because it is a part and parcel of the society. The objective of indigenous education according to Itedjere (1997) is geared towards enabling the child to live effectively and efficiently in his culture. Culture being the sum total of the life pattern of the people. Hence character and moral training constitute the cornerstone of indigenous education – children are taught from the early stage of their lives to respect the basic values of their society virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, kindness, wisdom, dignity of labor, loyalty, respectfulness, perseverance are highly cherished and are taught to the children right at the family level using myth, legend, proverbs, music and dance e.t.c

Myths are used mainly to inculcate morals and religious observances. Legends on the other hand are tales fabricated to account for real events that took place in time immemorial. They sound like fairy tales but they are closer to reality than myth. They are in reality fragments of actual history proverbs are the condensed wisdom of the great ancestors, which help to convey moral messages, develop the act languages, instruments of social control entertainment and enable children to gain insight into the tribal customs and philosophy. Music and dance apart from entertainment help in moral training. During festival period rhapsodies are sung either to praise or condemn the activities of people in the recent past. In order to avoid the condemnation in which the offence is over exaggerated people are conscious over what they do so as not to be ridiculed during such festivals. Morality in the indigenous education systems is taught by model with great pressure on the child to conform to acceptable behavioral standards. Morality leads to the development of an ideal man who is responsible for discipline and order in the society. According to Ezewu (1990) an educated man must be a man of morals, manners, obedience to authority and respect to customs, conventions and laws of the group. He must accept the values and ethics of the society.

In response to the basic values cherished in the Nigerian society the National conference on moral education held in Port Harcourt Nigerian, February 1-5 1982 recommended for inclusion in the secondary school curriculum the following values:

(a) Honesty –rejection of fraud, cheating, bribery, and corruption; truthfulness, fairplay and sincerity

(b) Regards for the interest of others manifested in tolerance, good neighborliness, humanness, courtesy, and sportsmanship.

(c) Justice –practice in fairness in one's personal dealings with others, the equitable distribution of social amenities, goods and services and the equitable settlements of dispute in and outside of the law courts.

(d) Discipline- shown in habits of self-control, moderation, modesty and respect for legitimate authority.

(e) Right attitude to work –include punctuality and regularity, devotion to duty, service, co-operation and dignity of labor

(f) Courage –physical courage, moral and spiritual courage.

(g) National consciousness, patriotism, sense of belonging, services to the nation, loyalty, unity and communalism.

Western (Modern) Education and the Nigerian Traditional Values

In the 19th century Nigeria was a fertile ground for Christian Missions. Most of them had been founded in Europe and America towards the end of the 18th century. Even before many of the pioneer missionaries set foot on Nigeria's soil, they had wished out of existence the traditional religion and culture of the people, which they expected to collapse at the mere shouting of the gospel through their system of education. According to Iledjere (1997) this was confirmed by such derogatory words used to describe African traditional religion and culture as primitive, idolatry, paganism and heathenism. The Christian missionary education is synonymous with the history of western education in Nigeria. Nigerians were taught to reject their own culture rather to conserve the healthy element and adapt them to changing circumstances. European life styles were enforced and the people were given either English or Biblical names as a mark of civilization.

The western education was criticized for not adaptation to the needs and aspirations of the colonial masters which is getting the people to read and write in English for evangelization and produce clerks who would work in the commercial house of the European traders. The capitalist tendency corrupted the communal and co-operative spirit of the people to the extent that parents complain that they can no longer ask their children to clear the farms without the children asking for remuneration. Nigerians and indeed Africans were intensively indoctrinated and were told not to participate in traditional festivals and to violate indigenous customs, taboos, ethos without regard to their social functions. The result of these is that the system only produced half-baked Christians, half-baked Africans. The picture was summarized by Ezewu (1990) as follows; The young Africans of today has to make a living and in this has two worlds. He belongs to neither of these full and completely, that is, after he has undergone the process of European training. For he becomes through this alienated from pure tribal traditional but never completely adopted into the white community. His clear and unquestionable birthright as been taken from him. What does he receive instead?

It's no exaggeration to say therefore that no European government that came to African made any serious attempt to pursue the education of the natives so that eventually he might be capable of taking his place as a free man in the new post independent society. Both their school and their religion were

mainly, to realize selfish ends. Mbiti (1969), Rodney (1982) and Okpilike (2002).

Recommended Curriculum for the Nigeria Secondary School System

The curriculum may be seen as all that is available to an individual in any social setting which offers such an individual an opportunity to know more about him. Because no society can live in isolation a proper integration of Nigeria basic values as essential ingredients in the process of western/modern education cannot be overemphasized. The curriculum apart from other academic discipline must consist of all that the Nigerian community is prepared to pass on to its generation. A guide line for this is suggested as follows:

(i.) Moral and character curriculum: This should consist of all taboos, ethos of community, greetings, titles attached to elder of different statuses. Behaviors which attract moral lapses and deviation from norm should be high-lighted. Such behaviors as insubordination, theft, fornication, adultery etc. have special punishments.

(ii.) Social curriculum: This should include all relevant information about the child's environment and the community. Also to include the traditions of origin of the community, the village chronicles, the exploits of community heroes, community life etc.

(iii.) Vocational curriculum: Agriculture is basic in traditional education. Every child is expected to learn how to farm before branching off to other specialization. If a boy decides not to be full time farmer he could branch off to craft such as blacksmith, carving, leather work etc. Girls should learn how to cook, weed, and farm, plant cocoyam and cassava etc. They also learn the art of buying and selling and later the special role of house wife from their mothers. These preparations help to remove unemployment except for the very lazy ones.

(iv.) Health Education curriculum. People in the traditional society cater for their health preventive medicine through use of herbs and tree barks, Antidotes for poison are generally also known. This does not qualify them as herbalist.

Conclusion

Time has come for the Nigeria system of education to be fully domesticated at all levels. This approach is not to say that the Nigeria school system should isolate itself from the other part of the world's scientific and technological development. The position of this paper is to advance the need to integrate the African tradition into the school system. By so doing, there would be a great improvement in which case the incidence of indiscipline, cheating in examination, corruption, disrespect for basic values and all other forms of vices would be reduced. It is only then that we can proudly identify as a nation and redeem the nation's image which had been greatly damaged.

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