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Education, Work and Value

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Introduction

An important role education plays is the transformation of an individual that passes through the process into one that can bring about desired and positive development to both the individual and the society as a whole using the various contents of school subjects to achieve this. The Nigerian education system subscribes to this ideal as clearly stated in her National Policy on Education (N.P.E) Year? that education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formation of ideas, their integration for national development, and interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of (her) education.¹ The policy went further to state that education fosters the worth and development of the individual for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society. In essence, the impact of the education system on the learner after graduation from school and on the society must be an appreciable one not only in terms of the graduate learner's well-being but also in terms of promoting the society in the committee of nations regionally or even globally. This is what will make the government and of course, the society to justify the huge investment in the education sector. Thus, the primary purpose of education is to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes and also to be able to transmit certain values³ to learners. Therefore, one of the expectations of education will be its positive influence on

the various sectors of the society which is usually manifested through the activities of its agents (economically, socially, politically, etc), and which of course is predicated on the values and qualities possessed by these products of education and their resultant effects on the nation's social life. It is in this wise that this paper seeks to discuss the effects the products of the Nigerian education process have on the nation's general development.

Concept Clarification

Value and quality are words as well as concepts that cannot be extricated from any process and system of education the world over. Denotatively, the Oxford English Dictionary defines value as "worth, desirability, or utility or the qualities on which these depend". This is relating a thing to what it amounts to. It is a word connoting a high standard thus, Bolarin (2005) stated it as the worth, merit or esteem that we give to a person, or an object or an idea.⁴ In other words; it is an attribute which a person, object or idea may possess. For instance, the value of educational process will be the worth of this process based on the functions it (the education process) is expected to play in the society. Since education thrives in the social context, every society therefore has certain values it desires since they (values) have been described as the building blocks of any society⁵. In the Nigerian context,

some of these values include among others, dignity of labour, hospitality, hard work and respect or sanctity of life⁶. According to the National Policy on Education (N.P.E.), education is to prepare the learners for useful living within the society⁷. This is corroborated by Ethman et al (1974) cited by Ndan (2005) that without values, men are not human and cannot take decisions that can be of benefit to the society⁸.

Values again can be described as benefits and specific words of conduct that are personally and socially preferable and acceptable⁹. This is saying that those attributes that are unacceptable and not preferred by the society are not values since they can be termed as bad.

Having clarified what value is, let us now consider quality. Walklin (1992) cited in Ubong (2001) defines quality as fitness for purpose and safe in use¹⁰. In any social organisation, there is always a purpose (i.e. the essence of the organisation). That is, there will be aims or objectives they are determined to achieve. For an organisation to achieve its objectives, certain traits in the form of action/activities are to be displayed which are to conform with the aspirations of attaining/achieving these goals. These actions or traits are regarded as quality (traits or actions) since they are fit for the purpose of achieving their desired aim(s). Thus, quality is a desired word or concept in any society or organisational setup and in the words of Ndan (2005), this concept of value (and of course, quality) is not just intangible but very important to determine the path of human development and progress¹¹.

For the purpose of this paper, both value(s) and quality will be taken to mean one and the same thing and will be used interchangeably.

Education And Its Essence

In a research carried out by Koko¹² on

students' values on higher education, it was discovered that students in higher institutions of learning subscribe largely to the fact that the essence of education is firstly to secure "a job with a future" and for the purpose of "money". This is corroborated by Wodi et al (2005) that education is seen as a means of gaining access to economically rewarding jobs¹³. If this is paramount and basic in the minds of Nigerian students, the question can then be asked; what is the place of value/quality in the inculcation of knowledge in learners? Are students' emotional, social, behavioural and intellectual needs in line with Nigerian social aspirations and are they being met by our educational system?

A cursory look at some of the contents of our school subjects shows that they possess the elements of values and qualities which are desirable and acceptable to the Nigerian society. This view is supported by Bolarin (2005) that:

the contents of some subjects such as social studies, religion, government and political science have been identified as capable of helping us to restore our cherished values and at the same time orientate our youths¹⁴.

This means that learners' interaction with the school experiences (i.e. subjects) will make them develop and possess these values, virtues and qualities, noting however that the values, virtues and attributes promoted by each subject vary. However, the general consensus is that this has not been the case despite the renewed commitments of government (both financially and materially) at all levels towards achieving these objectives of inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society¹⁵.

Of the centrally important values contained in the Nigerian system of

education which learners can acquire and nourish are thoughtfulness, temperance, compassion, generosity, among others and all these can be considered 'worthwhile' according to Peters since those that possess and practice these values as well as qualities will be assumed to be committed to them¹⁶ and see them as being desirable¹⁷.

Thoughtfulness as a value in the process of education has been described as the ability to think well about how to approach various kinds of activities, problems, values, conflicts, etc¹⁸. In every subject, there are opportunities for teachers to encourage students to monitor their efforts in order to acquire the habit of making desirable changes in their attitudes. Thus, school subjects do not only focus on the cognitive, on the mastering of "information" or the logical relationships between theoretical entities, although we can use cognition and the best current thinking and knowledge to help students deal with the non-cognitive aspects of personal development by increasing the attention we pay to the emotions and what might be called emotional education¹⁹.

Since education is carried out in the society, the value of responsibility which infers "*not only the responsibility for or to oneself, but also the responsibility for, or to others*"²⁰ will according to Ujomu, make one to carry out moral actions in the form of caring for something which he also sees as a just or justified act that becomes an obligation to individuals²⁰. Thus, the individual that passes through the Nigerian education system is expected to show an attitude of social responsibility in all his/her endeavours.

Considering temperance as another value in our educational process, this is seen as the virtue of self-control. On many occasions, individuals are confronted with situations that always warrant decision-making; this quality (or virtue) enables the

individual to exercise restraint in taking decisions hurriedly. In most cases (especially when the decision taken is in the positive), such an individual is seen as possessing/exhibiting traits or qualities of intelligence. Similarly, generosity and compassion are values that describe situations of rendering or giving timely and appropriate assistance out of deep and personal desire that may even be the detriment of the giver. This is done because it is seen to be just an obligation.

These are some of the values the Nigerian education system imparts through the various contents of her school subjects. These are expected to be put into practice, that is, applied in real life situations after graduation from school no matter the character traits students possess since the outcome of learning is change in the behaviour of the learner.

With these values or new character traits, the graduate learners are therefore expected to approach their work life with the spirit of social responsibility which bestows on the new worker the obligation of giving regard to tested principles, rules and regulations of acquiring (and performing) skills and knowledge that will ensure that the person (that is the graduate learner) is better able to apply himself positively in the society²¹.

The value or quality of compassion will always prevent the school graduate from carrying out those acts that are inimical to the growth, progress and development of the work and/or place of work. Such value will discourage the spirit of wastage of resource(s) that can be in the form of theft or embezzlement at work which had reportedly led to the bankruptcy of many establishments, subsequently bringing economic hardship on many lives. In the same vein, the value of generosity will go a long way to promote the welfare of others (both individuals and organisations/

society) and by extension, promote love which can establish the spirit of kindness in people. This is inevitably the quality that detests egoism which only desires and preaches personal interests above and at the expense of the general good. Thoughtfulness on its own will enable the recipients to ponder over issues so that a desirable decision is eventually arrived at which will bring about promotion and development. All these values if conscientiously exhibited at work, will no doubt promote productivity, efficiency, good turnover and the welfare of the employees and by extension, the general well-being of the entire Nigerian society.

But what has the experience been in the employment circle despite the laudable values embedded in our education system? Nwabachili (2001) laments some of the reasons that brought about these contrary attitudes in our society and which affected many areas of our national lives including education, especially the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.). These according to him include the mismanagement and misappropriation of the monies meant for the programme²². Such experiences and others similar to this are not occasional occurrences in the Nigerian labour force. Instances of embezzlements followed by arson are not new in the history of Nigeria. Such vices pervaded the Nigerian society and got to an alarming ratio that led the present government to establish various commissions like the Investigation of Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (I.C.P.C.), the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (E.F.C.C.) and others to curb these maladies.

All these vices are activities of the so-called products of our education system which do not reflect traits of the good and aesthetic values of thoughtfulness, social responsibility, generosity, temperance, and

compassion imparted through the contents of these school subjects. The question now is: what can be responsible for such attitudes and acts by almost all our school products?

A major factor attributed to it is the bad economy. The dwindling economy that rendered the nation's currency worthless in relation to other currencies around the world has been a major bane. An economy that refuses to sustain its workers has no power to promote good virtues in its (economic) agents. Thus, the harsh economic situation subjects, an average individual to fend for him/herself in an unconventional way when the economy refuses to sustain and nurture truth as well as prudence in the society. This paves the way for the eroding of the values and qualities of thoughtfulness, social responsibility, compassion, temperance, generosity and selfcontrol from the personality of the average Nigerian graduate learner which is exhibited at work. This has created the contention of who actually has the blame; the school that is expected to turn out/produce prudent and efficient school-leavers or the government who is accused of inability to effectively carry out its roles and responsibilities to the process and system of education?

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the valuable objectives of our educational process are able to transform the Nigerian society as desired and stated in the National Policy on Education (N.P.E) through the various subjects' contents ^{of sch. subjects} but the collapsed economy is the reason for the fall of these values and qualities in our education system. Since the economy that is at the centre has collapsed, there is no way the (educational) centre will be able to hold any longer therefore, rendering every effort at

exhibiting and practicing these values and qualities at work to be a mirage,

Recommendations

The only recommendation this paper suggests is the revamping of the nation's economy. The religious circle through its moral lessons has not been able to effect appreciable changes mainly due to this same economic situation. The so-called apostles of 'righteousness', the social critics, have reneged on their principles when their empty stomachs refused to provide the

necessary strength to continue the struggle. In the same vein, nobody (or country) would like to relate with anyone (or country) that does not have economic prospects. It is therefore evident that for education to be productive, have positive influence on our work life and have its rightful impacts on Nigeria's society, the correction has to start from the economy so as not to continue worrying about the 'unstraightened load' on the head of a k-legged education which is accused of an 'unstraightened luggage' on its head.

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