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# Education and Values in Nigeria's National Development

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## Abstract

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*Societies designed educational processes to propagate their values, traditions and achieve set goals as well as objectives. Several countries particularly, the developing world have found it difficult to achieve this. Achieving society's goals and objectives have been herculean task for Nigeria as a nation. The process of education is established as a veritable tool to correct the anomaly. This paper therefore, examined values that are pertinent to national development, raised questions on the failure of these values for desired growth and attempted answers to the questions. The philosophical research method was employed in the study. The paper concluded that the extinction of African traditional values coupled with economic challenges have contributed to the downturn. The paper recommended the reconsideration of African traditional values and efforts at revamping the economy. This is hoped to go a long way to effect needed growth and developments in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** *African traditional values, Educational system, National development, Existential philosophy.*

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## Introduction

Education plays important roles in the transformation of individuals that pass through the process, this includes evolving the ability and capacity to initiate rational, desired and positive development actions/activities for the good of both the individual and the society in learners. The ideals of Nigeria's education system are in consonance with this as clearly stated in the National Policy on Education {N.P.E., 2014) 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. 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 in learners and on the society must be substantial, significant and appreciable, manifesting in learner's well-being and promoting social wellbeing of the society. Plato emphasised the importance of societal development and progress through the actions and activities of learners, which among others, justifies the investment in the education sector. Therefore, the primary purpose of

education is to impart knowledge, skills, attitudes, and transmit values (Czerniewicz, et al 2021, Bolarin, 2005) to learners. Therefore, one of the expectations of education is its positive influence on the various sectors of the society, which is usually manifested through the activities of its agents economically, socially, politically, and which of course is predicated on the values and qualities possessed and demonstrated by the products of education and their resultant effects on the nation's social life. It is in this wise that this paper seeks to examine the influence, effects and the place of the products of Nigeria's system of education on the nation's general development. The method of philosophical research shall be employed for this purpose.

## Concept clarification

Values and qualities are 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 the qualities on which these depend'. This is relating a thing/issue to what it amounts to. It is a word that connotes a high standard thus, Bolarin (2005) stated it as the worth, merit or esteem that

we ascribe to a person, or an object /an idea. In other words, it is an attribute which an individual, 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 society (Noah, 2003, Adyanga et al, 2022). In the Nigerian context, some of these values include dignity of labour, hospitality, hard work and respect or sanctity of life (Bolarin, 2005). According to the National Policy on Education (N.P.E., 2014), education is to prepare the learners for useful living within the society (N.P.E., 2013). This is corroborated by Ethman et al (1974) cited by Ndan (2005) that without values, men are not human and cannot take rational decisions that can be of advantage to the society. Values can be described again as benefits and specific words of conduct that are personally and socially preferable or acceptable Ndan (2005). This is saying that those attributes that are unacceptable and not preferred by the society are not values since they are negative and run contrary to the desires of the society.

Having clarified what values is, attention can now be shifted to quality. Walklin (1992) cited in Ubong (2001) defines quality as fitness for purpose and safe in use. In any social organisation, there is always a purpose, that is, the essence of the organisation. There will be aims or objectives they are determined to achieve. For an organisation to achieve its objectives, certain traits or identifying characteristics such as attitudes are to be displayed in conformity to the aspirations of attaining these goals. These attitudes are regarded as quality since they are fit for the purpose of achieving their desired aims/objectives. Therefore, quality is a desired word or concept in any society or organisation. In the words of Ndan, values (and of course, quality) is not just tangible, but germane to determine the path of human development and progress.

## Education and essence

The existential philosophers like Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche and Rene Descartes harped on the uniqueness of individuals for existence and freely making his self-defining choices. The choices include decisions on attitudes and characters displayed by individuals. These go a long way to achieve the essence of the existence of both the person and the society. The process of education is saddled with the responsibility of achieving the essence of a society by developing or producing learners and school products that will ensure this. Koko (2005) stated that students in higher educational institutions subscribe largely to the fact that the essence of education is firstly to secure 'a job with a future', and for financial stability. This is supported by Wodi et al (2005) that education is considered a means of gaining access to economically rewarding employments. If this is paramount in the minds of Nigerian students, the question can then be asked; what is the place of values in the inculcation of knowledge? Are students' emotional, social, behavioural and intellectual needs/aspirations in line with Nigeria's desires or goals? and are they being met by the educational system?

A cursory look at the school curriculum reveals the elements of values which are desirable and acceptable to the Nigerian society. This is backed by Bolarin (2005) that contents of some subjects such as Social studies, Religious studies, Government and Political science have been identified as capable of helping the society to restore cherished values and at the same time orientate the youths. This means that learners' interactions with the school learning experiences (i.e. subjects) are capable of developing as well as possess the required values and qualities, noting however, that the values, virtues and attributes promoted by each subject vary. 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 inculcating right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society at large (N.P.E., 2014). The educational

process in Nigerian contains necessary values which learners can acquire, this include thoughtfulness/critical thinking, communalism, temperance, compassion, generosity, among others. All these can be considered 'worthwhile' according to R. S. Peters, since those that possess and practice these values as well as qualities will be assumed to be committed to the objectives and goals as desired (Cleworth, 1996) by the society.

Thoughtfulness as a value can be described as the ability to engage in critical thinking and logical reasoning to approach or address issues or problems (Goleman, 1995). In every subject, there are opportunities for teachers to encourage learners to acquire the habits of taking rational decisions. Thus, school subjects do not only focus on the cognitive, but also on emotional education (Ujomu, 2001). The social nature of education is expected to promote communalism or brotherly care in learners, this is to become an obligation to learners (Akintunde et al, 2005). Therefore, the individuals that pass through Nigeria's educational system is expected to demonstrate characteristics and attitudes of critical thinking and logical reasoning in order to be socially responsible in his/her activities.

Temperance is another value worthy of consideration in the educational process. This is the ability of self-control. Temperance enables the individual to exercise restraints in taking actions or decisions. Generosity and compassion are values that encourage rendering timely and appropriate assistance out of deep and personal desire, which may also be taken as an obligation.

These are some of the values the Nigerian educational system imparts through the various subjects and courses taken in schools. They are expected to be applied in daily relationships and interactions. The graduates of educational institutions are to approach their works with these social responsibilities, which will make them able to apply themselves positively and appropriately in the society (Nwabachili, 2001). The value or quality of being compassionate will discourage school

graduates from detrimental actions and activities like being destructive and wasteful, which had contributed to bankruptcy and closure of several establishments and industries. Generosity will promote the wellbeing of others (including establishments), and by extension, promote good relationship through kindness to others. This value detests egoism. Thoughtfulness encourages learners to examine and think critically over issues before arriving at conclusions or taking a decision that is logically arrived at. When these values and qualities are applied at various endeavours, there will be productivity and wellbeing of both individuals and the society at large.

A pertinent question arises; why do people act contrary to values and qualities the society expects? Nwabachili (2001) laments some of the reasons behind this, which has affected several sectors of society's national life. This, according to him, include misappropriation and mismanagement of funds for the implementation of for instance, the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E.). Similar experiences are not occasionally in Nigeria, rather, they pervade several establishments and rampant, which prompted the creation of crime and corruption curbing agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (E.F.C.C.) and Investigation of Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (I.C.P.C.). These vices are allegedly perpetrated by the educated elites of the society, which do not reflect values and qualities expected of school products. It can be proceeded to ask that; what can be responsible for such acts by products of educational institutions? Several factors have been adduced. Obanya (2018) identified teachers as an important factor for quality education. He stated that a teacher can change a student's life, in other words, positively or negatively. Factor like the economy have contributed to the degeneration of the society. The harsh economy that could not sustain both the employees and employers has been a clog. Civilisation, which led to the neglect of Africa's indigenous education and values system cannot be ruled out. This paves the way for the eroding

of values. All these have affected the development of the Nigerian society. The blame-game has however continued on who to blame; teachers, school authority, government or the society?

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that the valuable objectives of the educational process are capable of transforming the Nigerian society as stated in the National Policy on Education (N.P.E.) through the contents of school subjects, but the neglect of traditional social values and the negative trend of the economy have hindered and prevented the achievement of the laudable goals. The bad economy had invariably incapacitated the efficacy of the educational system to effect the desired development.

### Recommendation

It is expedient that the society makes efforts to restore African traditional communal values and revamping the economy through development of moral values, attitudes and characters by various agents like the religious bodies and concerned organisations. The social critics have reneged on their criticisms against social maladies due to empty stomachs that halted their struggles. It is a known fact that nobody or country would like to associate with non-economically viable country. It is therefore, evident that for education to be productive, influence work life positively and have rightful impacts on Nigeria's society, the correction has to start from the economy so as not to continue in the rot.

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