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**Philosophy Education and Value
Re-orientation**

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Nigeria's Educational Process and Ethical Re-Orientation

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Abstract

The need for value and ethical re-orientation of Nigerians have become very essential especially at such a time when the country has attained fifty years of independence with no concrete achievements besides those of the sixties. Concerns have been raised as to the veracity of education in inculcating appropriate social and moral values in learners for the development of the country going by their attitudes and actions. The western education has been acclaimed to be responsible for the influx of certain social values that had bedevilled the sanctity of the African and Nigerian society. Africans are known for the principle of communalism among others unlike the individuality of the western 'culture. The need to give greater considerations to our indigenous values is highlighted in this article. It was realised that learners should be made to understand moral concepts through the lessons learnt in their classrooms to further entrench these African values. Similarly, social values of tolerance and sympathy need to be emphasised in order to re-orientate Nigerians for the envisaged growth.

Introduction

Education entails the development of learners intellectually and morally, this is expected to result in the positive transformation of the individual. The process of education employs several means to achieve both the intellectual and moral excellence in learners. These vary from the academic contents of school curriculum to instructional techniques and other inputs which are required to develop the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learning.

Agulana¹ identified a major factor that determines the classificatory scheme into which societies fall that is, whether a country is classified as developed, developing or J underdeveloped. This, according to him is with regard to how the nation responds to those ideas that have a transformative intent and aid the development of the human mind and social life. The classification of Nigeria as a developing or

undeveloped nation points to the fact that the country or/the citizens have not responded favourably to those ideas that have a transformative intent and the development of the human mind and social life going by Agulana's submission. One of the ideas or means of social transformation and development is of course, the educational system, which has been considered-as, an excellent instrument at achieving this. It is evident that beneficiaries of our educational system have not fully responded positively to the transformative and development intents of Nigerian educational process. This is confirmed by Adeniyi² as he stated that there has been presidential concern for the development and transformation of Nigerian youths into effective and responsible citizens who are able to productively contribute to the attainment of the good society. Globally, the educational system has been a major weapon at achieving desired transformation in the society. The second, Reich, in Germany for example, used education to tackle the issue of national unity by a conscious programme of education for patriotism. The Americans achieved remarkable degree of national unity, patriotism and commitment to, democratic principles through planned and systematic educational policies in attaining those values. The need for similar transformation in Nigeria inspired the employment of the tool of education as well to attain desired level of social growth and development. Oladipo³ stated emphatically that if development involves the 'enhancement of the human capacity of self-realisation and social harmony, then it can neither be properly conceived nor realised in a sustainable manner outside the framework of an understanding of the nature and reason of things and the scale of values that is derivable from such understanding. The understanding in this regard is the education system. In other words, enhancement of the human capacity and social harmony cannot be achieved outside the framework of the values derivable from the process of education. For the human capacity to be developed and social harmony attained the mind of the individual beneficiary of the process of education needs to be nurtured in the right way. It is from the mind that actions, dispositions and thoughts spring from. This makes an individual either good or bad. According to Oladipo,

...if society is an aggregation of the individuals within it and the set of institutions that regulate their activities then the health of state of a society cannot be divorced from the configuration of thoughts and behavioural dispositions that shape the lives of the people. Thus, social transformation requires an appropriate mental and moral framework....to achieve their goals.⁴

Man in the Society

Man lives in the society because the latter exists for him and vice versa. The essence of this relationship is to establish and create an enabling environment that will ensure the well-being of both man and society in general. For man to achieve his welfare in the society, he has to relate with fellow human beings in his society. In relating with others, ethics, the systematic study of morality comes into play. Ethics is a normative

science which is concerned with human conduct as distinguished from pure sciences like mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology and the social sciences like economics, sociology, psychology as well as political science. It is (a) normative (science) because it tries to create or even prescribe standards for actions or behaviour. Thus, it entails moral principles which help to recommend standards or approve behaviours in the society. Principle here is considered as important underlying assumption or law governing behaviours. In other words, societies will desire (a) principle(s) which members can assent to as guide(s) in carrying out actions. This therefore, determines the lightness or wrongness of such actions. This moral principle is considered fundamental and has been described as a principle from which everything moral is derived.⁵ In essence, it is a principle which unifies and codifies people's diverse moral principles and myriads of considered moral judgments. It is so fundamental that it is sufficient or adequate to distinguish right from wrong. We agree as to what is right or wrong, citing reasons which tend to prove what we claimed. These reasons may include evidences of past moral principles of actions earned out by members of the society, which the society adopts. These evidences of moral actions are expected to be underlined according to Schoeman, first by an awareness of the open character of moral concepts, secondly by recognition of the autonomy of the moral agent and thirdly, the factor of objectivity.⁶ An awareness of the open character of moral concepts will involve understanding of moral concepts by moral agents; no one is ignorant of any fundamental moral principles and no aspect of the principle is hidden from any one. The recognition of the autonomy of the moral agent ensures that the moral principles of individuals are personally derived based on society's norms, and not imposed heteronomously by any other person(s). Thus, the moral agent is autonomous and aware of the action and decision he takes independently without interference from any one. Lastly, the factor of objectivity reflects a conviction that moral principles are not just matters of subjectivity or caprice but one which has been considered valid by, and for all, rational human beings.

Generally, the issue of ethics usually arises when there are behavioural problems in the society. According to Prior⁷, ethics emanates when the morals of a society have reached (such) problematic stage of internal contradiction or contradiction with the existing social reality that conscious attempts at solution are required as in the case of -present day Nigeria. He stated the difference between ethics and morals. According to him, moral is considered as actions earned out based on individual subjective condition and not on any rules. In other words, moral is unreflective adherence to social or personal rules. That is, taking decisions or actions because the society has stipulated it or because it suits personal desires. Ethics on the other hand is the conscious attempts to find a new morality or revise an old one. This supports the fact that since every society is changing, her social life and morality

tend to conflict therefore; ethics will be an attempt to bring about changes in morals which will involve bringing social and personal problems to consciousness and creating rational solutions to these problems rather than having solutions imposed by the traditions or subjective moral inclinations.

Thus, ethics is an attempt at changing morals in a rational, self-conscious way rather than changing them through external forces. This, is believed, will ensure solving problems of life reflectively and rationally instead of relying on solutions provided by traditions or authority. This is supported by Socrates and Karl Marx. What is therefore expected of ethics is the selection of the appropriate moral system which will assist in resolving difficult cases of moral choice.

The African and his social values

Man is comprised of body and soul according to idealist dualism. His physical and spiritual nature inspired his development in forming or creating a culture for himself. Man as a social being, according to Aristotle, is endowed with the ability to reason with his soul/mind⁸. The soul is the non-physical aspect of man which is described as the complex of human attributes that manifests as consciousness, thought, feeling, and will, regarded as distinct from the physical body⁹. The mind on the other hand is the seat of thought and memory, which is the centre of consciousness that generates thoughts, feelings, ideas, and perceptions, and stores knowledge as well as memories: It is also the human thinking capacity. The soul/mind plays a very important role in the existence of man. Through them, activities are prompted, before they are carried out as actions. These actions could be positive or negative that is, of value or not value.

Moral judgment concerning human actions is judgment about what to do in particular case which is greatly influenced by the society or environment. Man's reasoning and thinking abilities lead to actions that show his attitudes and dispositions. This means that man, from his desire to create a conducive environment (that is, a culture) for himself according to Kant, undertakes actions from a sense of duty but dictated by reason based on environmental or natural instincts. Aristotle agrees with this as he understands man as «a social being endowed with a 'reasoning soul'.¹⁰ Reason was regarded as the specific feature of man as exemplified in Descartes' cogito, ergo sum meaning "I think therefore I am". The conscious mental phenomena inherent in man are shaped during life by the mastery of world culture, and a world-view. This reasoning tendency/ability paves the way for man to carve a niche for himself in his aspirations to live a good life in the society. In his efforts to achieve this, he tries to develop a form of personality (or nature) for himself. This personality gets projected through his body, mind as well as social origin, and these (especially, the mind and social origin) are said to depend

largely on his thinking and reasoning abilities. This shows that what man is and the way he carries, sees, or dignifies himself emanates from his mind. In other words, personality, which has been defined as the totality of somebody's attitudes, interests, behavioural patterns, emotional responses, social roles, and other individual traits that endure over long periods of time,¹³ also resides in the mind. This explains that man is actually embodied in set of characteristics which perhaps make him appealing. Therefore, personality will be a set of distinctive qualities of person who is developed socially, and possesses a relatively stable system of socially significant personal features and who also performs corresponding social roles which originate from his reasoning and thinking capabilities based on his nature or environment. These corresponding social roles and actions however must be of immense value to the society.

In other words, they must be of social importance. This socially important role is expected to bring about development to the society. Thus, the way to advancement in any society will include the cultivation of the mind to possess noble characters which can assist in the realisation of certain social values necessary for development. This discloses that certain social values are required or become inevitable if individuals are to acquire and demonstrate high moral principles which can bring about desired social growth.

Oladipo¹⁴ noted that no process of development can achieve its best unless it is based on the recognition of common humanity. By common humanity, this means each society having shared values that made her distinct from others. In the words of Nyasani¹⁵, African and European minds are products of unique "cultural edifices" and "cultural streams" that arose from environmental condition and long-standing cultural traditions. Within the African cultural streams, Nyasani claims are psychological and moral characteristics pertaining to African identity, personality and dignity. An important characteristic of African life about which scholars of African phenomena seem to show a consensus and which grows in part out of the moral philosophy of altruism, is the African group living or collective life as reflected in African personalism, which is an emphasis on whole-some human relationships among the members of the group at whatever expense and efforts including personal sacrifices of various forms¹⁶. In other words, Africans are noted for good human relationship and takes this with such tenacity that if sacrifices are required to sustain this relationship, he does not hesitate to make it. In the African community, people hold that the welfare of each person is dependent on the welfare of all which makes every one to be inclined to work for the good of all, which always include the person's/own good as well. This is inculcated in every African child through various moral instructions during the process of socialisation in order to impart this sense of community. Gyekye¹⁷ noted that in the cultures of African people, sociality is

considered basic to human nature and most adequately expressed in the community life, which makes it difficult for the human person to live in isolation from others. This reveals that social relationships are essential for the Survival of every human person particularly in Africa, and according to Gyekye,¹⁸ no one is self-sufficient therefore no one can, in isolation, function adequately in the social context.

In African aesthetics generally, the quality of beauty is also applied to the social relationship of the people. Makgoba¹⁹ argues that throughout the African Diaspora, peoples of African descent

are linked by share values that are fundamental features of African identity and culture. These for example, include hospitality, friendliness, the consensus and common framework-seeking principle ...and the emphasis on community rather than on the individual. These features typically underpin the variations of African culture and identity everywhere.

This reveals and corroborates Gyekye that in African community, the principle of dependability on one another is inevitable. Makgoba believes that the personality characteristics inherent in African mind are sociality, tolerance and sympathy which he said are areas in which the African mind seems to reveal itself in a somewhat dramatic way. These three areas according to him appear to serve as important landmarks in the general description of the phenomenology of African mind.²⁰

Many African scholars regard African concepts of the individual and self to be almost totally dependent on, and subordinate to, social entities and cultural processes. Mbiti²¹ believes that the individual has little leeway or freedom for self determination outside the context of the traditional African family and community. According to him,

*whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say; 'I am, be'cause we are; and since we are, therefore I am'. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.*²²

What all these portend is that in the African (social) setting, an individual has limited opportunity to survive without collaboration, cooperation, relationship and partnership with others around him. It is imperative to note however that the individual, although originating' from, and inextricably bound, to his family and community, nevertheless possesses a clear concept of himself as a distinct person of volition who has the ability to make conscious choices or decisions. However, it is from this combined sense of personhood and communal membership that the family and community expect individuals to take personally enhancing and socially responsible decisions and actions. Although Gyekye accepts that the dominant

entity of African social order is the community, he still believes

it would be more correct to describe that order as amphibious, for it manifests features of both communality and individuality... African social thought seeks to avoid the excesses of the two exaggerated systems, while allowing for a meaningful, albeit interaction between individual and the, society.²³

Senghor,²⁴ in agreement with Gyekye regards traditional African society to be based on the community and on the person and in which, because it was founded on dialogue and reciprocity, the group had priority over the individual without crushing him, but allowing him to blossom as a person. The Yoruba maxim 'human beings are my clothing/coverings (that is, "eniyan ni aso mi") and the South African maxim 'a person is a person through persons' ("ununtu ngumuntu") express the notion that is Common to all African languages and traditional cultures.²⁵ They are concerned both with the peculiar interdependence of persons on others for existence, development and fulfilment of their desires that is recognised in African traditional thought, as well as with the understanding of what it is to be a person that underlies this. This invariably gives the understanding that as important as individual is, the African person will find it extremely difficult to act outside the context of his community. This is supported by Nyasani²⁶ who confirmed that the African hardly knows how to act outside the conlexi of his community's prescriptions and proscriptions. For Nyasaiy, the existence of the individual in African society is "quasi-dissolution into the reality of others for the sake of the individual's existence."²⁷ For him, everything boils down to 'me' in the 'we' or rather to the survival of the self through the enhancement and consolidation of the 'we' as a generic whole. This means the individual achieves his aims within the confine or framework of society's hankers. Thus in Africa, the individual will go at all lengths to ascertain the condition of the corporate 'we' and to play his part, if necessary, to ensure the balance of wholesomeness.

This becomes possible through moral values which Gyekye said are those forms or patterns of conduct that are considered most worthwhile and thus cherished by society. They constitute not only principles of behaviour but also goals of social and individual action.²⁸

Social and Educational Implications

The western education which brought the knowledge of individuality and survival of the fittest among others encroached the African society and derided the society's cherished principles' of communalism, tolerance and sympathy. This had bedevilled the Nigerian society to the extent that the average Nigerian had become egoistic in nature there by making individuals to pursue personal development at the expense of the society hence; the various atrocities perpetrated by every calibre of persons in the country. Nobody cares about the wellbeing of others since the 'self' or 'I' has

overtaken the 'we'; no longer could trust and care for others be heard in the vocabularies of the, average Nigerian. The need to return to the African and Nigerian culture of communalism, cooperation, tolerance and dependability become highly imperative to restore the social and economic serenity the nation had been known for. The process of education therefore comes handy in the ethical re-orientation of Nigerians towards a society of peaceful and mutual coexistence she had earlier been noted for everyone that passes through the school is expected, to become refined in behaviour; this is exactly what the society expects from our academic institutions. Thus, for the learner to be properly and adequately educated, the need arises for educators to re-examine the traditional African and Nigerian social values in relation to the affective domain of learning in our process of education to be able to inculcate appropriate moral and social values in learners, so that learners will understand what society's moral concepts are, and be able to personally derive moral principles based on the factor of objectivity.

Recommendations

It is highly imperative for teachers to be re-orientated on the importance of making learners realise and/understand various moral concepts through the lessons taught in classes. When learners' minds are cultivated towards what is considered good and moral, based on the contents of each school subject, they are likely to become adept in deriving and exhibiting desired behaviours in the society autonomously. Teachers should no longer be carried away by the dexterity of learners in terms of the cognitive domain of learning alone, but greater emphasis should be placed on the affective domain as well, since morality will be determined by the actions and attitudes displayed while exhibiting whatever knowledge has been acquired in the process of education. These actions and attitudes justify the morality of this knowledge acquired when they eventually graduate into the larger, society. Therefore, the principle of the 'I' in the 'we' as a collective factor without which the Welfare of the society and members can be guaranteed must be constantly emphasised and taught as the concluding part of every lesson. This is hoped to assist in the value as well as the ethical re-orientation of especially learners in our society, who are expected to take over the mantle of leadership in no distant future. Through this, education will be truly considered a veritable tool in the inculcation of right and appropriate moral attitudes in learners.

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