

Applying Alternative Strategies for the Teaching of Values Education in Contemporary Society

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Abstract

Education all over the world is expected to transmit what is worthwhile to both the individual and the society. The contents, methods, teachers, and the environment are all focused to achieve well integrated individuals in the society. Hence, value education is the main thrust of general education. It is disappointing to note that the various levels of our education system today seem to have lost grip of this very vital component of education. Destructive activities such as examination malpractices, sorting, cultism, drug abuse, sexual abuse and harassment, indecent dressing are among the vices that have assumed high premium in our schools today. This paper is challenged by these ugly intrusions into the education system, and therefore, sought for alternative strategies to teaching the expected values through schools. It adopts a philosophical approach in dealing with such key concepts as values, education and value education and there-by relating them to the contemporary education system in Nigeria. The paper admits that the contemporary experiences have shown great lapses in the area of teaching expected values via the schools. It proffers possible alternatives such as evolving a true national philosophy and philosophy of education, carrying out research studies on values, integrating civic and values orientation into the various school curricular, creating conducive learning environment, exemplary life of the teacher, and effective use of parent-teachers associations, among others.

Keywords: Education, Values, Values education, Alternative strategies, Contemporary approach.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of values in the contemporary society has come to its sorrowful point as men, and women, boys and girls, the leaders and the led all grope in confusion, in search of quality living. The trend has resulted to colossal loss of genuine values in the society (Amaele, 2007). Some observers and analysts (e.g., Adewole, 1990; Ezewu, 1995) of contemporary issues have called attention to this terrible loss of genuine societal values, especially among the youths that has accompanied the growth in industrialization and urbanization. They affirmed that we are living under the misconception that growth in technology means a happier and better life.

Unfortunately, rather than a happier life, there seems to be a steady and alarming increase in crime rate and insecurity, occasioned by lack of definite lifestyle and a change toward negative attitude. The spirit of materialism, rebellion, corruption, impatience, and other general acts of indiscipline has almost completely eroded our old cherished traditional values. Like most adults, the Nigerian youth appear to have lost the sense of purpose and direction (Amaele, 2007).

There is, therefore, the urgent need to refocus and re-direct, in our youth, a strong sense of values through the agency of well integrated, equipped, staffed and funded education system (Adewole, 1986; Okeke, 1989). Since values can be experienced, taught and learnt, it is the responsibility of the school to inculcate right value system of a multi-cultural, religious and ethnic society such as ours, to find common values and teach them to the youth. Technology

without adequate value system could be dangerous, dehumanizing and disastrous. This, therefore, is the thrust of this study.

THE CONCEPT “VALUES”

Man is constantly involved in valuation and making value judgments in his daily life. Value, itself is the primary concern of education, whether formal, informal or non-formal. It could be inculcated in the classroom, at home or in the society. This is why it is necessary for the teacher to be conscious of the value-basis of the education which he imparts on his/her students.

Values represent reasons, beliefs, and convictions, virtues that guide people's choice or actions. They refer, primarily, to those objects that we cherish, appreciate, desire, want or need. Values may be social, moral, religious, (spiritual) economic, political, aesthetic, material, technological and others. Values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth which a society endorses, maintains and even transmits to her members.

Values, as philosophical concepts, belong to the broad division known as axiology and are subjected to various philosophical schools of thought. The idealists may take an objective approach of the concept. This school of thought maintains that values have independent existence outside of man's experiences. In this regard, certain values are absolute, universal, immutable (permanent) and are supposed to be imbibed by every member of the society. From this viewpoint, which was championed by Plato, it implies that man does not create values, rather he discovers them. This further point to the fact that educational values must have existence independent of man's personal interest and desires (Amaele, 2007).

The position of the idealist could be accepted at the level of general principles such as values of life, shelter, education, security, food, and clothing, among others. These values are permanent, universal and ought to be imposed on members of any given society. But such philosophical school could not be possible on values that appear to be particular to individuals. For instance while it is a universal truth for one to seek shelter or to desire for education, individuals may have their diverse interest or desire for the type of shelter or education they should have.

This perhaps explains why the realists emphasize on relative values as opposed to absolute values. According to them man is a creator and maker of values, and that all educational aims are regarded as valuable only to extent that they are based upon the objective of meeting the needs of those being educated. They emphasize on the individual's interest and desires as key words to values. Values, accordingly, are subjective, relative as they change with time, place and people.

It is necessary to also caution that an over use of this philosophical point of view, may lead to anarchy as everybody would evolve values that may serve only personal aims to the detriment of the entire society. This is indeed where values education is necessary, especially to a multi-religious, ethnic and cultural society such as we have in the contemporary society. According to Dewey a foremost pragmatist, to value means primarily, to prize, to esteem, but secondarily it means to appraise, to estimate. It means... the act of cherishing something, holding it dear and also the act of passing judgment upon the nature and amount of its values as compared with something else. (1968, p. 238).

Value connotes importance, something that is qualitatively cherished, and something that provides admiration, something that provides some satisfaction or sense of accomplishment. However, Denga (1989) argues that value is a philosophical issue which helps an individual to judge how reasonable, truthful and appropriates his actions and relationship with formation. According to him values may be expressed in these ways:

1. Values may be chosen freely, not imposed. This implies that neither the society nor school should decide what values to be imposed on the individual.
2. Values must be prized and cherished. This implies that values must be consistently respected.
3. One must be willing to publicly state ones values. This means one should let others know ones values.
4. An individual should consider his values in relation to those of the society in which he lives.
5. Values may change with economic, political and cultural changes.

It is essential we examine the above five point principles for clarity. The first principle states that values may be chosen freely and not imposed. This statement is true of values, but it is not enough for a society, school or family to ask her subject or student to choose values without adequate guide or information relating to the advantages and or consequences of each choice. The children or individuals should be adequately educated to be able to make right choices and decisions that could be useful to themselves and the society, otherwise such society may be doomed. Kant (2003) in his theory of autonomy submitted that a moral situation would be acceptable if the right of individuals as persons is not composed. He

further argued that the dignity of a person lies in his freedom to choose what is right without being coerced or maneuvered. The emphasis here is choosing what is right to avoid conflicting individual desires.

Second, “Values must be prized and cherished”. This leaves a question to be answered. Who prizes or cherishes the values: The individual or the society? What happens if what the individual cherishes is frowned at by the society? For instance an individual may cherish wealth without work, whereas, the society cherishes hard work. Whose values ought to be cherished? However, what is valuable must be prized and cherished by both the individual and the group (society).

Third, Kant (2003) stated that values must be publicized. What you value, indeed must be made known to others either for acceptance, rejection or modification. Even at a personal level, value must be expressed, it cannot be hidden.

The fourth point is that an individual must consider his/her value in relation to those of others. This is indeed very important. It goes on to elude part of the fears expressed in point one. But, supposing an individual refuses to consider the interest of others and goes on to exercise his values, can others then stop him/her or they stop others. This is one major task of the education institutions. One’s values ought to respect the others values.

The fifth point is that values may change with economic, political and cultural changes. This statement appears too general to hold. It is true that we live in a changing world and so some of our values would change to meet up with the societal changes. However, these changes can not change the ultimate value of human life (universal values). Respect for human life cannot change, even though there could be changes in interpretation of the concept of respect. The need for human shelter, security, education, freedom and others could not change, what may change is their application from place, time and people (Ozumba et al., 1999).

THE PRESCRIPTIVE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Education has been defined from several perspectives by different scholars at different times and at different places. The definitions given from the Pre-Socratic era even to the present times suggests that education is a vital instrument for human and societal transformation. This implies that education, whether privately controlled or publicly controlled must be given desired attention by all irrespective of status, culture or time.

However, most of the definitions given to education confirm one or the two of the etymological concepts drawn from the Latin word: educare, which means to mould, make or build, and or “educere” which means to lead, to uphold, to guide. The sociologists may prefer the first, educare, for it serves the interest of the society above that of the individual. But the Humanists may favour the latter educere, for it gives adequate attention to the individuals innate ability, test and desires (Amaele. 2007).

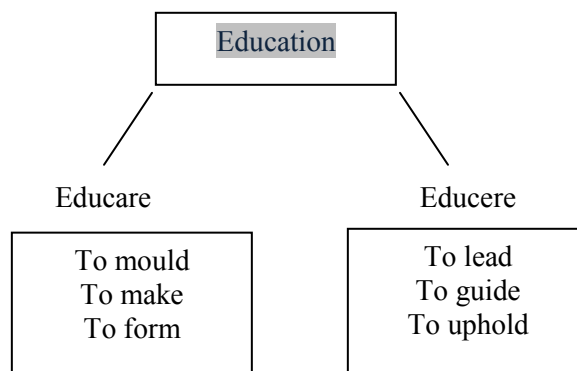


Figure 1: Etymological concept

The reason that there are diverse interests which informs various interpretations of the concept of education is imperative; this study would only select some general criteria that would guide the purpose of the research. Education, according to Peter (1966) implies three major criteria, namely the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it, the knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive built up, the procedures or methods of transmission that would entail use of wisdom and act of voluntary of learning.

From Peters Criteria above, the fact of values or worthwhileness is recreated. Education is value loaded, for what the society gives to her citizen at home or school must be a thing of value and interest. In transmitting things of values, the child’s mental, physical, moral and other components ought to be properly built up through acceptable teaching models.

Otherwise the intentions may be right while the procedure could make a mess of the whole process. This is where values education is very relevant.

Akinpelu, (1981:184) affirms the above criteria, arguing that education must involve:

1. A conscious effort to bring about a desirable change;
2. A change that is intentional, deliberate and purposeful;
3. Knowledge and understanding; and
4. Method of transmission that is morally acceptable.

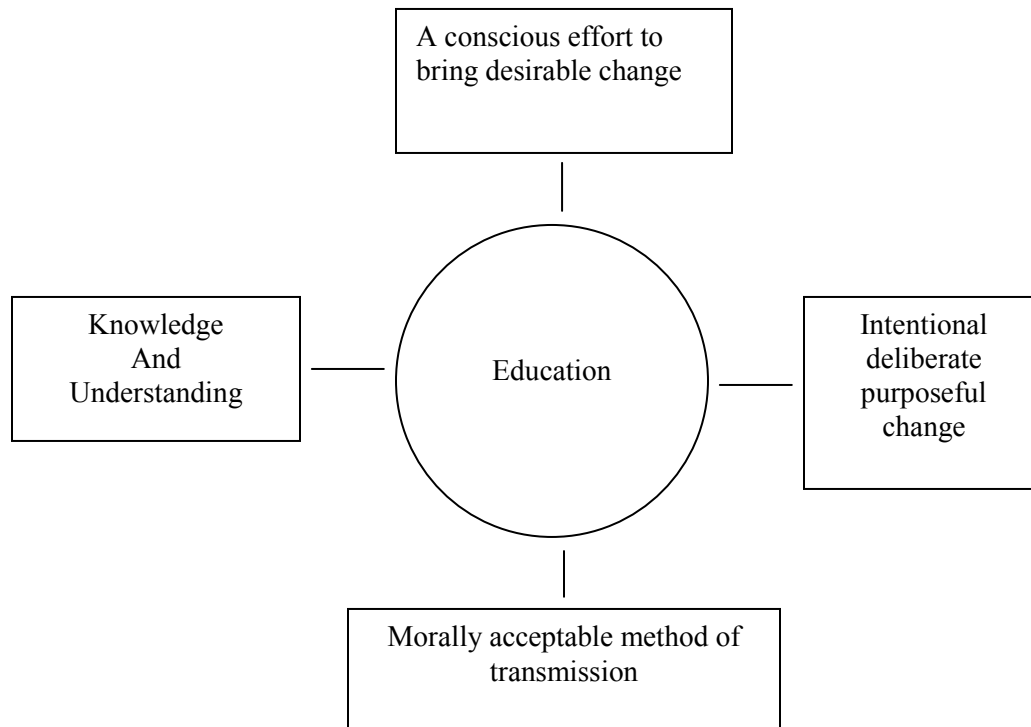


Figure 2: Education Model

Peters (1966) and Akinpelu (1981), as well as other normative scholars raised some fundamental issues which ought to guide the principles and practice of all education programmes and processes, irrespective of time, place and people. But how these criteria apply to our contemporary society in these obvious and glaring trends of negative practices remains issues of concern to all the stakeholders of the education industry. Cultism, examination malpractices, economic gratification to teachers/lecturers, drug abuse, sexual harassment and embarrassment, as well as, general indiscipline are glaring phenomena at homes and at schools. This is why it is necessary to review the existing strategies for the teaching of values education in our society.

VALUES EDUCATION

The concept of values education as conceived in this study refers to that aspect of education that deals with what is right to do and evil to avoid, what is good to do and bad to avoid, what is true to uphold and false to reject (Amaele, 2007). In other word, this study concerns itself mainly to the affective development of the individual. It deals with the upbringing of the child to make best decisions in life. This decisions made could bring positive transformation to the individual, the family, the local, national and international communities. In the same vein Okafor (1990, p. 76) argue that the factors of education is indispensable in the solution of contemporary equations because it is through education the local, national, international and supernatural values are identified and scrutinized.

Reviewing Plato's definition of education Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2007, p. 73) observes that education is an instrument of moral reform, for it would mould and transform human souls. Education inculcated the right values of selfless duty towards all, and was therefore positive. It helped in performance of one's functions in society and in attaining fulfillment.

Education moulds the character of the people, leading them to know and appreciate things that are worthy and good. Platonic education according to Klosko, (1986, p. 118) is primarily a moulding of souls... Plato holds that the virtue of anything, including the soul is a matter of regular and orderly arrangement. It is the function of education to produce for the virtue based on correction opinion and a necessary precondition for the virtue based on knowledge.

Values education talks about character molding, positive attitudinal changes: dedication to duty, honesty, hardworking, perseverance, trustworthy, love, patience, truthfulness. It is against the spirit of all forms of examination malpractices, indecent appearances, cultism, bribery and corruption, sexual abuse, drug abuse, sexual harassments, thuggery, brutality and other vices that have clouded the contemporary society and schools.

The trend today, seems to suggest that our education system is far from inculcating the right type of values. This is unfortunate. The traditional value system enshrined by traditional education has systematically been eroded away by a confused multi-religious, ethnic and cultural system. The school is expected to effect the acquisition of values through:

- a. The reinforcement of desirable values already existing in the community.
- b. The reduction of the influence of the undesirable values.
- c. The promotion of the child's respect, and
- d. The education of his moral upright (Nduka, 1964, pp. 104-105)

The questions necessary at this point are:

- a. What are those desirable values which the school should reinforce?
- b. To what extent has the school reduced the influence of the undesirable values?
- c. How far has the school promoted the child's respect for elders, authority or the society?
- d. What is the moral competence of the products of our school system?

The school system which informs the modern education structure is at its value crisis. It has become so difficult to establish what values are desirable as negative vices have assumed greater proportion in our various institutions of learning. The school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, as well as pupils and students grope in search of adequate value orientation. Money value has been placed over and above that of handwork and honesty has been kicked anyway, as eye-services are praised and rewarded. Paper qualification is preferred to resourcefulness and productive labour.

The school, to some extent, has failed to reduce the influence of undesirable values. This is evidenced by the daily negative reports of examination fraud, cultism, robbery, immorality and general indiscipline all that are also observed in the larger society. Respect for elders, parents, authority had eluded so many products of our various school systems. Disrespect seems to be the order of the day among our school leavers.

The method of transmission, the orientation given to our teachers, the negative influence of the society, the corrupt leadership and the near absence of well articulated philosophy of education are some of the negative influences on values education in our schools.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO TEACHING OF VALUES EDUCATION

One of the main criteria set up by Peters (1966) to consider for any education process is the procedure or method of transmission which entails wisdom and act of voluntary submission to learning. Teaching of values, moral, social, political, economic, spiritual, and others, begins at home from infancy. At the time the child gets to school, he or she ought to have had some basic values from home. The school therein reinforces the desirable values which the individuals have and reduces the influence of the undesirable ones. It further enhances the child's respect for authority, parents, teachers, leaders, elders and so on and also builds up the moral life of the child.

The school, like any other socializing institution, is a builder, and as a builder, it builds the individuals, using the materials available in him. It also needs to build an individual that could be acceptable in the society. But between the child and the expected change, there are so many things. The child must be taught through a deliberate, well planned, purposeful programme of activities. The subject matter must be tested and proved to bear positive values to the child and the society. The learning environment must be conducive for teaching and learning, the teachers must be adequately trained, recruited equipped and paid for the service and the necessary facilities should be provided.

Unfortunately, there seems to be little to talk about values in Nigerian education system today. The high premium given to paper qualification and the mad rush for quick money has turned down the values of handwork, perseverance, honesty, patience, chastity, respect and other virtues. The vices of examination malpractice, sorting and bribing teachers, admission fraud, night club and prostitution, sexual abuse and harassment, political thuggery, drug abuse/addiction, cultism, robbery and others are highly amplified in our schools. The teacher, learner, management, parents, government and even religious organizations and other agencies in the country are all involved in the teaching and learning of these vices. Some female students in our tertiary institutions dress like women of easy virtue and are so applauded by the school administrators. Their male counterparts look like militant youths. Teachers who should teach positive values in and outside the class through their words, acts and appearances are now exhibiting negative vices before their students. Some of the teachers sponsor cultism in schools because they are cult members. Students, who could not buy textbooks, are now busy with two or three handsets calling and receiving phone. Calls or text messages take the place of studying with concentration in and outside the classroom.

There are daily reports of institutions in Nigeria turning out militants, otherwise known as cultists. Killing, disruption of academic works and recruitment of more members become the resultant effects. Some of these youths (students) are empowered by selfish politician who encourage them to rig election, kidnap their opponents or ballot boxes to favour their wicked ambitions.

Most parents have abandoned their primary responsibilities of teaching their children right values, leaving this to either the school or less informed peers. Unfortunately, these categories of people are not prepared or encouraged to play the substitution role of parents.

Most of the school environments where the students ought to learn the expected values appear to be jungles or camps too far for human development. The qualified teachers are not enough in schools, facilities are grossly inadequate and the surroundings or environment are not healthy for learning.

It is indeed, difficult to inculcate expected values among our pupils and students today because our national philosophy is either faulty or non-existent, the school curriculum is short of reality, the parent and the entire society have lost focus on ideal family/societal values, the government is not sincere to the value of life of the citizens and the school has adopted the pattern of the society. There is, therefore, the need for alternative strategies if, we must save our contemporary society from total collapse.

SOME ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING VALUES EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The studies so far show that values entails, to great extents, independent choice of the individual. It also implies that there are competing and even more conflicting alternatives at every moment of one's decision. The more the alternatives, the greater the level of difficulties in choice. Since the individual is responsible for the choice he made, it is necessary then to properly educate him to value something that is durable and has positive outcome. Our education process should provide this outlet.

The aim of the teacher is to teach the child to live and set standards and make valuable decisions for himself within the context and demands of his society. The plural nature of Nigerian society also should be encouraged, taught and preserved. This is why a comprehensive study and research on the values system is absolutely necessary. The following strategies could be of help to teacher, school administrators, counselors and professional educators in guiding the Nigerian youth to decide what is right and wrong.

Well Defined National Philosophy Of Education:

It would be vital to note that most of the questions on values arising from education can be reduced to the unsettled claims of the individuals versus those of his society. The question of the relationship between the individual and public values is one that only society has to tackle before embarking on the formulations of a national philosophy of education. For now, Nigeria has no national philosophy worth the name, and so philosophy of education is still a mirage. The nation needs well defined national philosophy and philosophy of education. The former would give the necessary clues to the later for better value education orientation in Nigeria.

Research on Value System:

There is the need for intensive research on the values system of the diverse cultures of Nigeria. Educators, teachers and counselors cannot work in a vacuum. Adequate knowledge of the value system of our diverse society can be got through interviews, questionnaires, reading of relevant texts, rating seals, and others. Values in this multi-cultural and multi-religions nation should focus on universal and rational standard. Standard in this context is the degree of excellence required for a particular purpose; it is an accepted or approved example against which phenomenon are judged or measured (Ololube & Ubogu, 2008).

Teaching of Values:

Youths should be taught both the basic universal values and or common values that the society deems as acceptable and worth preserving. Teaching procedure, in this regard should consider the individual unique nature, characteristic and needs, alongside the needs of the society.

Broadened School Curriculum to Accommodate Civic/Moral Education:

The present school curriculum does not make adequate provision for civic or value education programme. There is the need to include moral and civic instructions and education at all levels of our education system. The aim should include among others: to enhance political literacy, to handle the problems of multiplicity of culture and a deep awareness of the fundamental human rights of the citizens; to expose students to adequate knowledge of the constitution of the country; to enhance human development and promote self assurance among citizens through the leading of good values and morals.

Other strategies worth mentioning include: modeling, reinforcement of desirable behaviours, teacher personality and methods, orientation programme, effective use of the parent-teachers association, school club and societies, creating effective school environment and the use of Audio-visual Aids in schools in teaching values orientation.

CONCLUSION

Education is value-loaded. There is no education process worth the name that should teach what is not worthwhile. Unfortunately, our present life experience has shown that most Nigerian youth and the adults alike could not, for sure, state enduring values for themselves and the society. Some of them are already entangled into very wrong values. This has weakened the foundation of life in the country. Nigeria has become a country where anything goes, even when it is nothing. The traditional approach of teaching values education, which is mainly through imposition and threat, appears to be irrelevant, especially, due to the complex nature of the modern society.

We must admit that education is a key factor in the development of any society. It builds quality manpower that transforms the human society. The overstretched attention which our contemporary education gives to cognitive facts without corresponding input on the affective and even manipulative domains of the individual makes a near mockery of both the educational institutions and the society. The result is that so many of the school products in Nigeria roam the streets of major towns and villages as cannibals or criminals.

Besides, the contemporary approach in teaching values related issues in schools which stresses on threat and physical measures ought to be checked and replaced with exemplary life of parents, teachers and even the government. The child is born innocent of crime and if he is exposed early in life to standard acceptable values by his parent and immediate environment, he may need little prompting at school to cope. The society should equally be true bearers of the expected moral and spiritual values so as to reduce the burden of the school in inculcating the right values on her products.

With proper coordination at all levels of our education and society, Nigeria education would regain its original status of teaching the required values and restore the country to international respect.

Implication for Research and Practice

Education, whether formal or informal, is value loaded. For whatever is not of value is not education. Unfortunately, a lot of schools in contemporary world produce pupils/students with questionable characters which send dangerous signals on the integrity of such education. This study addressed the value component of education both at the global and at the national levels.

It will help the curriculum planners and the operators alike to strengthen this salient aspect of the school system. The study would enhance quality education which addresses the production of balanced personality. With value education

adequately advocated in this paper most social vices such as cultism, examination malpractices, sexual abuse/harassment, kidnapping and others which manifest themselves in our institution of learning and the wider society would be controlled. With the values reform advocated in this paper, there is hope for a more peaceful world tomorrow.

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