

**UNETHICAL PRACTICES IN OUR CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION.**

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ABSTRACT

The reordering of value system in our society is a search for national culture that would reshape national character and image. The study revealed that our nation Nigeria is bereft of moral values and is taken over by social vices and above it all is the love of materialism and individualism. The writer avows that despite all these vices, there is still hope for a better Nigeria if our scholars and political leaders are charged to use their positions to encourage the reordering of values and to discourage acts that will occasion violence, misunderstanding and war through the provision of sound moral values by value laden instructors. The research found that reordering of values system would promote national image, respect for human life and corporate value

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education as an effective catalyst for economic growth and development in a given society cannot and should not be exaggerated. It is a truism that education is the bedrock of any society or country that wants to attain the higher level of growth and holistic formation of its citizens. It is not out of place to opine that the progress of any country is exclusively dependent on how educated her citizens are. This is why every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens, because of the realization that education is necessary to engineer and consolidate any nation's developmental process.

Education as a bedrock of development plays a fundamental role in shaping the character of humans in such a way that they begin to exhibit conducts that attract admiration. Fafunwa (1974) avows that education denotes the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and forms which are positive values to the society in which he lives. The position of Fafunwa clearly attests to the power of education in shaping humans by instilling in them the requisite character, knowledge, foresight, values and attitudes needed to galvanize socio-economic and political development. Strengthening Fafunwa's view, Amaele (2010) asserts that in acquiring knowledge through the process of education, our focus is on the king of knowledge that has value and which can foster development. This therefore means that the inculcation of ethical or moral behaviors is an essential aspect of education.

Unfortunately in Nigeria in particular, education which is globally perceived as the bedrock of human and national development as well as source of innovative skills, knowledge and ideas is faced with myriads of challenges ranging from poor funding, deteriorating infrastructure, insufficient quality manpower, and most importantly, unethical practices. It is sad to note that the educational sector has not paid adequate attention to issues that border on the moral and spiritual development. Violent demonstrations, cultism, drug abuse, prostitution, nudity, gambling, tribalism, examination malpractice and various acts of indiscipline have become pervasive in the Nigerian educational system. Unethical practices done by some teachers and students have become a phenomenon of concern and disappoint the expectations of society on public services in the field of education. These unscrupulous cases involving teachers and students have raised the concerns about the future profile of future generations who are predicted to be leaders of tomorrow. There is hardly any academic session that educational institutions in the country do not experience various forms of unethical activities done by teachers and students. It is therefore necessary to examine these unethical practices in our contemporary education system that has made ethical or moral education become very important especially in our society where immoral laxity escalates day by day unabated. Thus, this paper is structured to examine the unethical practices in our contemporary education

system and in order to achieve its aim, a conceptual analysis of such concepts as education, ethics, ethical and unethical practice is given to strengthen the discussion.

Education and its Importance for Society

Education has been defined as a process of developing and transforming the culture of a people from generation to generation and as an organized and systematic body of knowledge. The products of education are intellectual, knowledge, socio-political and moral development. Perhaps, the definitions of education revolve around the major functions of education. The educated man, that is, one who has really passed through the fabrics of education should reflect the main functions of education.

Education can therefore be defined as a process of preparing an individual for the good life. It is the acquisition of knowledge or power when one claims that knowledge is power. Castle in Osaat (2010:20) defines education as "all that happens to us from the day we were born to the day we die". Education is the process through which individuals are made members of their society (Ocho, 2005). It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes their potentialities and uses them for self-actualization, to be useful to themselves and others. It is a means of preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of the society.

Education is also the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, politically, and economically. That is why at graduation ceremonies, one hears the Vice-Chancellor pronounce these words while awarding degrees to their institution graduates, "you have been found worthy in character and learning..." In education parlance, it means that the individual has acquired adequate and appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes and values, known as cognitive, psychomotor and affective behaviors to be able to function optimally as a citizen. These behaviors are the focus of training individuals in institutions of learning. The planned systematic training given in particular institution of learning is formal education. The programme is organized, planned and systematically implemented. In an informal education, there is no plan and the training are haphazard and incidental. In every society, education connotes acquisition of something good or worthwhile.

Importance of Education for society

The importance of education as identified by Obasanjo (2012) includes:

1. It must train the individual for a better appreciation of his own cultural traditions whilst at the same time equipping him with the ability to absorb new ideas, new information and new data for resolving the constantly changing problems of his environment
2. It must train the individual to relate to and interact meaningfully with other individuals in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress
3. It must develop the creative ability of individual especially in the cultural and technological realms
4. It must foster in the individual those values which make for good citizenship, such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work and personal integrity, all of which provide the rich soil from which good leadership is spawned

Ethics

A straightforward, univocal definition of ethics is not possible. For philosophers, the pursuit of truth travels on precise definitions. But defining a concept, term, an idea, a thinker or even a movement is not an easy task. It is this and similar understanding, perhaps, that informs Morris (1956) to observe that defining ethics is a difficult issue. The difficulty arises because ethics, in the first place, has no universally acceptable definition. The second reason for the difficulty is because one of the basic problems of philosophy is that of definition of philosophy itself. The understanding here is that ethics, as a branch of philosophy, naturally shares in this perennial philosophical problem of

definition. This, however, does not mean that ethics has no definition as we shall attempt to adopt or formulate a provisional definition of ethics.

Ethics can and has been defined in various ways. Etymologically, the term "ethics" is derived from the Greek word, "ethos" which connotes customs, norms, habits or accepted ways of behavior, especially for an individual or a community. The same word "ethos" is synonymous with "moral" both in concept and meaning. This explains why some philosophers refer to ethics simply as a moral philosophy. Shields (2004) define ethics as a conscious and purposeful behavior which is concerned with the obligations and rules that relate to it. This means ethics aims at discovering the factors that necessitate actions to be classified as good or bad, right or wrong both for an individual and the social groups. It is concerned with both theory and practice.

For Ozumba (2001), ethics can be defined as that branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality. This means ethics is all about moral thinking or attitude to issues of life. This definition presents ethics as a branch of philosophy which deals mainly with the morality of human actions and conduct. Ozumba is not alone as most thinkers seem to agree that ethics deals mainly with man's actions and morality. Thus, ethics is defined as a systematic investigation into the norms of human behavior. This definition shows that ethics is basically the concern of man. It refers to a certain code of conduct or a set of principles by which men live. It is in this light that some thinkers refer to ethics as the fundamental principles of the moral law or guide. Another thing to note about this definition is that ethics has a system or method of checking moral values. It encourages one to pursue the moral truth at all times and at all costs.

Unlike many other branches of philosophy which deal with abstract problems, the problems of ethics or moral philosophy are ones which everybody seems to be familiar with. Among the questions it asks are: Is abortion right? Should I cheat during examination? What is the good life for man? Is there a standard of right by which all human actions can be judged? If such a single standard exists, on what basic will it be determined? What does goodness or badness of human conduct mean? Does right conduct imply curbing our natural desires, or seeking their fulfillment, or some other alternative? What is duty? What is obligation? How should men conduct themselves? What general ideas should they pursue? These and the like questions are questions of ethical or moral value. They belong to the sphere of ethics, since they are concerned with human conduct in the society. They are the sorts of questions which engage the attention of moral philosophers who strive to provide answers to them.

Ethical and Unethical Practices

Ethical Practices: Ethical practices are those practices that follow or are in line with the social norms and such actions are acceptable to the public. It can also be seen as practices that are characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional and in research and scholarly activities. Ethical practices respect the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people. Some examples of ethical practices include: obeying rules and regulations, taking responsibility, being accountable, upholding trust, having respect, etc. They are the complete opposite of unethical practices.

Unethical Practices: Unethical practices are those actions that are against or not in line with social norms or acts that are considered unacceptable to the public. It can also be seen as an action that lacks moral principles; unwilling to adhere to proper rules of conduct or an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person, group or organization. Some examples of unethical practices include: lying, insincerity, verbal harassment/abuse, violence, theft/embezzlement, sexual harassment, corrupt practices, etc. They are the complete opposite of ethical practices.

Unethical Practices in the Nigerian Educational System

Various shades of immorality, vices, unethical practices ranging from indiscipline, tribalism, licentiousness, violent demonstration, armed robbery, thuggery, cultism, abortion, bribery and

corruption, embezzlement of public funds, sycophancy, selfism, avarice, sabotage, oppression, fraud, apathy to work, sexual harassment, drug abuse, sexual permissiveness and so on, have become regular features in our life and have not only eaten deep into the fabrics of our society, they have taken their toll on students in various educational institutions. Let us take a closer look at some of them.

Indiscipline: Indiscipline implies the absence of discipline. Discipline is a culture many Nigerians are yet to imbibe. For instance, the society is affected by impatience. People detest queuing up in public places for social services because everybody appears to be in a hurry. Our educational institutions, which collectively is a reflection of the larger society is not left out in this spate of indiscipline. This manifests through deliberate abscondment from lectures, lateness to school, loafing, offensive dressing among male and female students, littering of the classrooms with wastes, urinating indiscriminately, rioting at the slightest provocation, insubordination to constituted authority, financial recklessness, examination malpractices, cultism and so on.

Indecent Dressing: Girls in Nigerian educational institutions wear dresses that expose their laps, tummy, breasts and other delicate or essential parts. Most of them dress half naked, putting on sexy dresses that expose them to indecent assaults, such as topless, backless, jumpers, hot pants, miniskirts, body hog, tight fitting, sleeveless cloths, that expose their entire body contours. While putting on the above clothes, they walk swinging their buttocks dangling their breasts that are uncovered and in some cases with transparent clothes without brazier - an appearance that debases womanhood (Njoku, 2004). The boys expose their chest, belly and under wears through a mode of dressing they call "sagging". Dressing pattern seen in our various educational institutions is a complete offense to public sensibilities.

Examination Malpractices: Any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practice before, during and after an examination by anybody in any way according to Awusaku and Ugwulebo (2013) is examination malpractice. In recent times, most students in Nigerian higher institutions hold strongly to their belief that they can only scale through in their academic endeavors by examination malpractice (Expo) or by paying to ensure they have good grades. This may not be far from the reason underlying rampant educational malpractices in our educational institutions.

Examination malpractice among students ranges from bringing in foreign materials such as textbooks, notebooks, pieces of paper with notes made on them, retrieval or substitution of re-worked scripts long after the examination is over, impersonation, super prints (writing on palms, thighs/laps, handkerchiefs, dresses, etc.) mutual copying and cooperation in the examination hall, use of phones, text messages for examination and paying for the upgrade of their scores or alteration of marks on the computer.

Drug Abuse: This refers to the use of drugs for non-medical purpose. It can also be seen as the misuse of any psychoactive substance resulting in changes in the body functions, thus affecting the individual socially, cognitively and physically. The use of illegal drugs, and misuse of therapeutic drugs have spread at an unprecedented rate and have penetrated every part of the globe, the impact of drug abuse on youth, especially those in our educational institutions has remained a source of worry to parents, schools, religious bodies, society and even the government because of the attendant misbehavior that usually follow it have negative effect on the society and educational advancement cum achievement of the students.

It seems to be one of the sources of the country's major health challenge as well as social problems (Poor & Salaman, 2014). Improvement of the quality of life for many adolescents has fallen far short of the potential that exists due to the abusive or excessive use of drugs, there by encouraging them to engage in various delinquent acts (drugs abuse, rape, robbery, cultism and vandalism) that are dangerous to the home, community, school and the nation. The impact of drug abuse among students has been a stigma of moral decadence, violence, thuggery, and assault; madness and murder (Sadock and Sadock, 2017).

Sexual Permissiveness: The present trend of licentiousness among our youths and adults is a source of concern. The rate at which Nigeria is being flooded by pornographic materials these days is quite intriguing. Most of our bookshops, supermarkets, tourist and holiday resorts, cinema houses and most astonishing bus stops, now stink with sexually lascivious writings, cartons, video tapes and pictures of nude women in highly beguiling postures. The inordinate and senseless quest for materialism on the part of the female folks, the evil concupiscence and unbridled appetite for women on the part of the men are all necessary and sufficient conditions for sexual permissiveness which breeds other forms of social-ethical vices such as armed robbery, murder, abortion, drug trafficking, drunkenness, drug addiction, juvenile delinquency and prostitution.

In our educational institutions, prostitution is now rampant as young girls have seen it as the most lucrative business (Ezeh, 2015). Most girls live very big in school, pay their school fees, buy text books and handouts and sort lecturers for better result with money realized from illicit business prostitution. They are very much patronized by wealthy businessmen, politicians, and other well to do individuals who come to school with their flashy cars to pick them based on an agreed price. Some female students have lost their lives in the process by being used for rituals by unscrupulous men in the society.

Cultism: For many years, our educational institutions have been bedeviled with different vices of which cultism/secret cult ranks highest. Cultism is practiced both within and outside the school premises. The manner in which cultists go about their business is quite inimical to the wellbeing of the society. One thing with secret cult is that it has so many vices associated with it. Its problems are numerous and have multi effects. They include: killing and murder of fellow students and lecturers, maiming, battering of students, rape, sexual harassment, destruction, robbery, lawlessness and academic failure. Njoku (2004) observes that students from broken homes, those who lacked parental guidance, those whose parents are into cultism and fetishism, those who are easily influenced or lacked awareness of dangers inherent in cultism are those who are easily lured into cultism.

Secret cultism is usually carried out in secret by group of bad boys and girls whose operations and initiation formalities into their association are also done in secret and kept secret. Members are under oath never to reveal the identity or business of the group and carry out without delay any assignment given to them by the group. They are always in the vanguard of any riot or students demonstration, ever ready to kill, maim, fight, and use force and violent confrontations to achieve what they want. Some prominent secret cults for boys as identified by Ugwulebo (1999) include: Vikings, Blackaxe, Buccaneers, Pirates Confraternity, Vampire, Eiyee, Kukluxkklan, Maphites, Diplomat, The Owl, Helmsmen, Red Devil, Black Devil, Black Stars, Black Scorpions, Akees, Vulture, Mgbamgba, etc. While cult for girls as identified by him include: Amazon, Royal Queens, Daughters of Jezebel, Black Brasiere, Fine Girls, White Angels, Black Angels, Black Pants, etc. It would be merely overstressing the obvious to remark that cultism has become a malignant hydra-headed organism in Nigeria.

Violent Demonstrations: Students' violent demonstration is a common occurrence in Nigerian educational institutions. Academic activities are often brought to a halt in most Nigerian educational institutions as a result of students' unrest. Okogu and Umudjere (2016) described students' demonstration as a situation of tension or angry reactions in which students protest or revolt against what they perceived as social ills or irregularities in schools. They are of the opinion that the revolts and rampage by students are in a way, to show their grievances or press home their demands to their school authorities.

In students' demonstration or unrest, many lives, school properties and lecturers cars are usually lost or damaged severely. It is worthy of note that no students demonstration or unrest in the history of education in Nigeria has been peaceful. They are always violent and destructive and sometimes students engage themselves in open confrontations with security agents like the police and army. The common practice today among many students when they are not ready for examination or serious academic work is sudden recourse to fermenting of troubles which usually

snowball into unrest. This is a base attitude that smacks of moral weakness, lack of sense of commitment and focus on the part of students. Bribery, Corruption and Materialism: A bribe is something given or promised to somebody in order to influence or persuade him (often to do something wrong) in favour of the giver. On the other hand, corruption is a derivative of the word "corrupt" meaning actions of persons which are immoral, depraved and dishonest especially through offering and accepting of bribes. Materialism can be seen as the undue attachment of much value to material things, especially wealth and luxury at the expense of spiritual things or moral values. The cultivation of the above-named evil habits has led to the loss of sense of the Holy from the mind and sensibility, leaving a void which is one of our most cruel wounds (Esomonu, 1981). Treasury looting, dishonesty, and avarice have come to be appreciated in our society as a norm and circumscribed as smartness. Unmasking the ugly scenario, Omoregbe (1993:xi) lamented that "the situation has degenerated to such an extent that anybody who finds himself in a position to enrich himself through fraudulent and corrupt practices but refuses to do so is regarded as a fool and scorned by his friends and especially his relations. Many Nigerians especially now believe that there is nothing wrong in paying or accepting bribe to upgrade students result or stealing the money belonging to the institution or any large organization if one is lucky to find oneself in a position to do so without being caught.

Apathy and Nonchalant Attitude to Work: Many Nigerians lack the sense of duty. Almost everybody is interested in coveting the riches of the polity without the exertion of energy. Many politicians eat the bread of idleness. Our lecturers and even students we elect to represent us in certain places are not left out. Many idle away only to receive fat allowances for the work they never did at the end of the day. Situations where the job is actually done, it is poorly supervised. Today, it is not unusual to see heaps of files left untreated or not properly treated in offices. Habitual lateness to duty, absence without leave, closing work before the stipulated official time, not-on-seat syndrome, using official period for personal business and other forms of dereliction of duty are the order of the day. It is sad that these vices have been institutionalized as norms mostly in our public educational institutions.

Tribalism: The concept tribalism is coined from the word tribe, meaning a racial group united by a common language and custom. Tribalism can be seen as the tendency to believe and behave as though one's tribe or ethnic group is the superior of all others and the embodiment of all that is good and desirable. It has become a terminal disease afflicting the Nigerian polity. It can be discerned as the bane of national integration, development and stability. Being diametrically opposed to nationalism, tribalism is gradually driving Nigeria to the precipice and eventual disintegration.

In some of our educational institutions, fellow Nigerians suffer various forms of discrimination in violation of their civil and constitutional rights. Nigerians in some parts of Nigeria or away from their own state are practically treated as foreigners in their own country. Under such devices as "State of Origin", "Other States", "Indigenes of the State", "Sons of the Soil", hideous form of tribal discrimination and prejudice have been practiced to the detriment of nation-building and Nigerian unity. Tribalism has assumed higher dimension of awfulness with the activities of some tribal chauvinistic politicians and academics who often whip-up sentiments detrimental to our collective interests. Lewis (1972) cited in Iwe (1991:42) puts it thus: "... in that unfortunate country, the educated were even more tribalistic than the uneducated, with some of the nastiest incidents occurring inside the educational institutions".

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) The government should declare a state of emergency on the educational industry in order to review our value system and apparently conceive a proper educational programme
- (2) There is need to improve curricula by teaching values like tolerance, respect, cooperation, understanding, honesty and conflict resolution right from primary schools to higher

institutions. Genuine discouragements of unethical practices such as bribery and corruption, tribalism and religious sentiment by empowering anti-graft agencies to discharge their duties diligently.

- (3) Appointment should be based on merit and our cherished value system of hard work, honesty, sincerity, etc. should be encouraged.
- (4) Less emphasis should be given to the acquisition of material wealth; i.e. money should not be seen as the measure of all things in Nigeria.
- (5) Let every Nigerian who has accepted one religion or the other, be good example and practitioner of such belief system, because no major religion practiced by Nigerians encourages or promotes unethical practices.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary Nigerian society is in dire need of moral guidance to enable us become focused and disciplined so as to develop our galaxy of potentials for meaningful contributions to societal wellbeing because no nation or society which aspires for the attainment of rapid socio-economic, political, cultural, technological and human capital development trivializes issues that border on good character formation, value orientation and spiritual development of her younger generations, who are potential leaders of tomorrow and the only right place where they can be sorted out and harnessed for the above purpose is the educational institutions but unfortunately, the development over there sends a fearful signal that the future of our dear nation is at stake. This is as a result of the current neglect of the study of morality in our educational institutions, a programme of study that nourishes the soul of the young persons, authoritatively guides, directs and disciplines erring ones by pointing them to the right course of actions which help them conform to norms and values of the society.

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