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Review Article

Moral Values in the Indigenous African Education: Implications for Community Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: The paper critically examines value crisis and a high level of moral decadence inherent in Nigerian nation life. The paper conceptualizes human development as the sustained enhancement of the cognitive, psycho motor, affective and other competencies of individuals and groups to increase productivity. It sees education, especially African education as central in seeking to achieve this. It clarifies the concept of moral values and others and is skeptical about their functionality in contemporary human capacity development efforts in the country. A number of values are identified and recommended for inclusion in the curricular of our schools, primary through tertiary with a very strong belief in complete value reorientation for better communities growth in Nigeria.
Keywords: Nigeria, Human Development, Value Crisis, Moral Decadence, Education, Curriculum Reform.

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming a global village, but there seem to be a colossal damage going on unnoticed. This change has to do with the collapse of cultures that were cherished in the past by the original owners, and African cultures and no exception. However, in the midst of these damaging circumstances, there is an urgent need to protect one's cultural identity as this is fundamental towards sustaining his world view and life as an individual. The aim of this work is to expose and fish out the values that are original and peculiar to Africa, as it help to differentiate African values from those of our western brothers. Some of the cultures and values manifested in various things they do such as art, craft, folk love, religion, languages and cuisine while its values are expressed in areas like sense of community, sacredness and of religion, respect for authority and elders, language and proverbs to mention a few.

Again, there seems to be general cry for a venture of our societal values. In every aspect of our social life, the older generation appear to be looking back with nostalgia and concluding that yesterday was better than today and without a return, tomorrow might be worst. Based on this, extensive discussion would be done with a view to highlight how moral values in our indigenous education would immensely contribute to community development in Nigeria.

It is truism that every society possesses values which it thrives to preserve by transmitting them from generation to the next through the practice and system of education. Thus, those values held by a particular society determine what is transmitted by the educational institutions of that particular society. Education is therefore, recognized as an agent of values and aims designed by the society and which the school refines, form the basis of the core curriculum of education. The questions of aims and objectives in education are in other words, essentially questions in the theory of values.

Education appears to be inseparable from value as several attempt at defining education always establish its link with values transmission. According to Oludare and Yemi (2023:157), education is the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of a society. Similarly, Bolarin as cited by Babarinde, Kola and Bolaji (2011) sees value-related issues as of great importance in education because we educate in, and for a society with a system of values. This is because education is not only a powerful tool for intellectual development but also for the development of shared beliefs, attitudes, values and ethical principles.

The enterprise of education is said to be value-laden. Everyone involved in the educational process is involved in the activity of evaluation and assessment of one another which is an exercise in the realm of value.

Human societies are sustained by principles that determine what is desirable or undesirable, what is preferable or not preferable and what is cherished or not cherished. Value cherished by the societies are usually perpetuated through ages by rooting them in their education practices it is in this respect, that the quality of a system of education can be judged by the extent it inculcates the types of values that are necessary for becoming the kind of person who can contribute to the peace, progress and development of human and the society. Hence Enoh (2004 in Oludare and Yemi, 2024:158) assert that;

It is an axiomatic fact that a universal role of education is the inculcation of values and the educated individuals, more than their uneducated ones are better equipped to play a role in value clarification and orientation.

Fafunwa (1974) in this vein, maintains that, when evaluating any educational system, one must determine the extent to which it is meeting the needs of a particular society at any given time.

What is Moral Value
Before dabbling on what moral value is all about attempt would be made to characterize value through a few selected definitions and a summary of functions. Callatan and Clark (1977 in Ololobou 2011:350) citing other sources, reflected the following highly compressed definitions.

→ A direct factor in human factor
→ The standards held by individuals or groups
→ A subjective appraisal of a situation, proposal or even
→ The total universe of a person's belief about the physical world, the social world and themselves

The Webster's Dictionary, in Nwagwu (1981) sees as that quality of a thing according to which it is thought of as being more or less desirable, useful, estimable important. According to Denga (1983), values represent reasons, beliefs, convictions or virtues that guide people's behavior. Values are also philosophical considerations which helps an individual personally to judge how reasonable, truthful and appropriate this actions and relationship with others are. They include honesty, loyalty, social justice, self-control, fairplay, respect for others… truthfulness, diligence, goodness, righteousness, to list a few.

To Ololobou (1993), a value is simply an assessment of worth by an individual or group that influences the life-style of the individual or group for Schwart and Blisky (1987 in Ololobou 2011) conceptualize values as "concepts or beliefs about desirable end-states or behavior that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior or events and are ordered by relative importance.

Values have been subjected to various classification efforts and criteria to produce many types e.g,
i. Universal and Restricted/Localized/Controversial Values
ii. Religious, Moral and Social Values
iii. Substantive, behavioral and procedural value
iv. Personal, social and aesthetic values
v. Democratic and Autocratic values
vi. Positive and negative values
vii. Functional and dysfunctional values

Borsodi (1965 in Singh and Nath, 2008) observed that every human action is a reflection of an individual value and every human institution, the outgrowth or a social value.

Having said that, let us quickly look at what moral values is/are. Moral values on the other hand is the interest of this paper and is used here with reference to those cherished norms of action and ways of life that foster growth and peaceful co-existence in human society. It has to do with the moral values that the people cherished in their tradition.

Moral values are defined as guidelines that assist a person in deciding between right and wrong in order to create honest, credible and fair judgment and relationship in daily life, the awareness of one's morals along with self-awareness. The development of moral values is a necessary process that should begin in childhood. Moral values in children can set them on right path, helping them form a pleasant personality combined with a strong character. Hence the child's family schools are critical in guiding, supporting and holding their hands as they navigate the stereoscope of moral values. Moral values are the foundation of our children character.

Moral Values in Indigenous African Education
Every society, whether primitive or modern has its own concept of what is good or bad or what is accepted as good behavior and what it admires or condemned. Although, there are core universal values, values are mostly relative as they differ from one culture to another. What is cherished by a culture as their norms and value may be condemned or rejected by another.

Some aspects of African Values
In the African society where gerontocracy (government by the elders) is practiced, it is also the values which elders considered worthwhile that were preserved and handed down to generations after them. It would be erroneous to argue that respect for elders within the African setting come with the era of colonialism and Christianity respect for elders was an already entrenched moral code which formed part of our customs and tradition. Conton in Eha 2012:196 "Africans generally have deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when we can find nothing to admire in an old man, we will not easily forget that his grey hairs have earned him the right to courtesy and politeness.

The elders are highly respected in Africa as a result of these reasons. One, they play both earthly and spiritual roles in traditional society, based on the experience they have gathered over the years. As a result of their wisdom, people repose a lot of confidence in them. Infact they were regarded as libraries of today. The person who visit an elders is like one who consults an oracle. The respect given to the elders has its practical affect in the maintenance or custom and tradition. The young are always looking forward to being elders and they are often told that if a child respects an elder, he would be respected by the young when he becomes an elder.

Another area in African education is the sense of the sacred and the religious. Religion in the indigenous African societies was and still characterized by secrecy. In African religion, the drum plays a very important role, and this is because Africans are very fond of music. music is used most times to transmit knowledge and values. The drum primarily act as musical instrument often used to send and receive messages. According to Mbiti (1969) "in African religion, the drum is considered sacred". The drummer must be skilled as an oral communicator, and skilled at the art of drumming precise rhythms, connected with religious ceremony and ritual as well as entertainment. Since African people depend upon oral tradition to teach their listeners important traditional values and morals pertaining to how to live. Oral tradition delivers explanation to the mysteries of the universe and the meaning of life on earth for Mbiti, African considers oral tradition and its values, as guiding principle in which to make sense of the world. (1969).

Mbiti argues further that in traditional African societies there were no atheists, because religion in the indigenous African culture was not an independent institution. Rather, it is an integral and inseparable part of the entire culture. religion was practical, in the sense that one's entire action is reflective in one's religious concept and practices as is seen in the ordering of society, because social morality is dependent on religion (1969). To corroborate the above position, Idowu (1962) covers that among the Yoruba's morality is certainly the fruit of religion. It is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences. The implication of this is that in traditional African culture, moral, religious and philosophical attitudes were accepted as complementary in life, given that all were interrelated in reality. In a nutshell, the result of inseparability of religion from morality was that, the ancient African was far from being an abode of Laissez-faire morality. There were strict moral principles and determined code of conduct. Custom laid down the code of law which established the nature of right doings and custom established penalties and taboos against male factors. Moral sanctions were mainly religious sanctions and these metaphysical sanctions were truly effective. In brief, the sense of respect, and the area of the sacred filled the African as he approached religious elements and matters.

Language and proverbs is another area where African demonstrate the moral values. African so value language because it gives them insight into their cultural worldview. It carries a lot of the people's culture and history. For Effa (2012) language is an integral to worldview. He further asserts that learning a language, offers one the opportunity to learn an exciting, frustrating and equally valid way of thinking for when we think in the way of our first language, we indirectly learn how to think in that culture put differently, language expressed in speech is an important vehicle of thought and culture.

For the African therefore, if an individual is not able to communicate with the native language, the individual ideologically, puts himself out of community speaking a language does not in the African sense depends on the peripheral knowledge of the language. It depends on the ability to express oneself adequately in the proverbs and idioms of the language community. There is the African saying that, the child who carries an elders bag has a very good chance of being a wise man in his life. This is because they usually make use of proverbs to drive home their point (Ebijuwa, 2007). This is a result of meeting where he follows his father to, where he listens to the wise words of the elders speak.

One of the important of African traditional education is sense of community. Communalism in Africa is a political arrangement which emphasizes community feelings and togetherness on the socio-political values, African believe in being their brothers keepers. The communal spirit and the communal life make it mandatory for each to come to the aid of fellow members by his community in time of needs and disaster.

In the indigenous African culture, the truly educated person is assessed not so much by his academic achievements or social and economic status as by wisdom, his smooth interpersonal relationship, his versatility in indigenous culture, and above all, by exemplary personal character. Indeed, a good character is the one single most important evidence of an ideally educated man in the African conception. The emphasis on character development stems from the African belief that it is only a good useful and moral life; that can make the community's social life happy and meaningful; that can guarantee the individual success and prosperity in this world, and that can win him long life on earth and secure him survival in the next world (Oludare & Yemi, 2023:162).

Fafunwa (1974) and Oludare and Yemi (2023) respectively identified the ultimate goal of indigenous African education as the production of an individual who is honest, respectful skilled and cooperative who conforms to the social order of the day. Although the indigenous objectives cannot be neatly distinguished, the further identified seven aspects of the cardinal goals of African education as:
1. To develop the child's talent physical skills

2. To develop character
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority
4. To develop intellectual skills
5. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labor
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to encourage active participation in family and community affairs
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

What appears to be the uppermost in these scale of values for Akinpelu (1983) is the value of human life. He presented Dzobo's five important principles that summarize all the ideas on the African value system.

These are:
1. Life is the greatest things in the whole world
2. Man's humanity has an inalienable worth
3. The good of the individual is a function of the good of the community
4. The solidarity of the extended family is supreme
5. The universe is friendly and this implies a belief in a benevolent creator God.

It should be noted that the African idea of securing and its value depends on personal identification with and within the community, communication as discussed elsewhere is super sensible and material. According to Etta (2012:198), both are found in a society that is believed by the Africans to be originally "god-made" because it transcends the people who live in it now, and its "man-made" because it cannot be culturally understood independent of those who live it now. The implication here is that the authentic African is known and identified in, by and through his community.

For this reason Wiredu (1980) summarizes African traditional values, thus;
1. The idea of the existence of one great God as integral member of society as distinct from the western and Christian idea of God staying a look in heaven in the community of the spirits, looking down on the evil one in hell, and yet seeking to govern a mixture of the sinners and the righteous on earth.
2. The belief in the peripheral existence of life, in which there is a cycle of pregnancy, life, death, and a period of waiting in a universal pool of spiritual existence with a subsequent state of reincarnation, by which it is possible to change one's lot for better or for worse.
3. The belief in the sanctity of man as opposed to woman in society.
4. The belief in the idea that man is born free from sin and the idea that he remains so until he becomes involved in some polluting circumstances in life, as opposed to the Jewish and Christian idea of man born with original sin which he is said to have inherited from his ancestors, Adam and Eve.
5. The idea of beauty or thought, speech, action and appearance as a basic and necessary factors for the continuance of marriage.
6. The importance of marriage as a criteria of social status.The principle of age as a vital criterion of wisdom.
7. The tendency to stress, in all forms of art, the quality of significance as a criterion of beauty and virtue as opposed to the external emphasis on the slogan "art for art's sake, which is tending to render human life in modern Europe so grossly pointless and not different from that of the beast of the field.
8. Spontaneity of self-expression (the lack) which is the greatest weakness of modern western diplomacy, and
9. The peculiar conception that it is improper and obscene to say thanks soon after one has been offered food by a neighbour.

The above implied that beliefs and practices is simply that apart from being expressed intangibly, that is independent of its tangible culture, African values here are often times exhibited in the numerous material cultures of Africa.

At such times these values are seen as the hidden essence of certain material cultural displays.

These moral values are mostly taught to generation coming up.

Moral values in the indigenous education and their implication for community development. What African nations which Nigeria is one is lack of clear concept of the notion of development that has relevance to the African situation. According to Udoidem (2020:45), this has been one of the root causes of the apparent under development. In the Nigerian situation, and within the context of our discourse, the lack of a clearly defined notion of community and its relationship to development has led to a misguided conception that identifies rurality with community and development with great structures. Such approaches have been the cause of the failure of the various community development programmes in the country. Hence, for better understanding, some theoretical issues would be appropriate here.

Some theoretical issues it would be most appropriate to at stage going by raising some pertinent questions such as what is community? What is development? And what is the existing relationship such that are able to describe a particular state of affairs as community development.

What is Community

The question "What is Community" seem at the first glance hardly to deserve any intellectual attention. Some philosopher has noted that the whole of human development is punctuated with the search for community. According to one of these philosophers, Robert Nisbet refers to youth seeking for community taking the form of activities ranging from musical festivals to Pentecostal and charismatic revivalism (1973). We also experience the formation of various religious, political ethnic, peer and economic groupings. All these point to and give credence to the evidence and necessity of community. The search for community is also seen in social and philosophical writings for example, from Plato's lasting portrait of the political community in his Republic through St. Augustine's formation of religious community in his city of God to Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jacques Rousseau and many others down to Karl Mark's brilliant vision of social community. These were attempt made by generation's intellectual search for an ideal community. If community does exist, what then is its nature?

We often use the word community in expressions like "community leader" "community school" "community development" etc. we even embark on community development programmes, yet when asked what we mean by community, we lack words to express it. Our experience of the usage and the application of the word indicates a sense of ambiguity. According to Udoidem (2021:50), the word "community" could be analyzed in two perspectives.

The first one could be seen from geographical sense as when we refer to a group of people living in a particular geographical area. For example we often talk of Ibibio community, referring to a people living in the south eastern part of Nigeria. At other times the word is used to refer a group of people living at a certain location within a larger group as when we talk of Hausa community in Owerri (Heart of Igbo Town). However, as to whether occupying a certain geographical location really constitutes people into a community is questionable.

The second sense is the etymological sense. Here the word implies "a coming together for the purpose of uniting" or "a common unity". This understanding denotes a lasting sense of relationship among individuals that are characterized by high degree of personal intimacy, of social cohesion or moral commitment and of continuity in time. What then is the type of being that has the capacity for "common unity"? What is the basis of the common unity? Is it blood ties or kinship or association with land and ties of place or sheer contractual agreement.

Tonnies (1887 in Udoidem 2021) make a distinction between community and society and argued that community is supposed to rest upon ties of blood and kinship, upon association with land and ties of place, belief. The prototype of this community is the family and out of it grows the extended communal forms of association such as the village. Lonergan (1985) had a similar opinion when he defined community as "a people with a common field of experience, with a common or at least complementary way of understanding people and things, with common goal".

Although, there are clear distinction between community and society as highlighted by Tonnies which according to him "is the atomic collection of individuals and its basic form is contractual. This type of contractual society has its root from the British contract theorists like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

Historically, it might be observed, that since the Enlightenment in Europe, with its attendant emphasis on the primacy of individual freedom and upon the so-called "contractual" relations. For the last two centuries, European social scientists like Max Weber, Emile Darkheim and Robert Nisbet etc. have been seeking to recover the concept of community based on Tonnies society. Such "Community" has been marked by explicit or implicit contract, impersonal functional relations and declared special purpose. Thus for the west, a community is developed when there exists large business co-operations, massive state bureaucracies, professional organizations and special interest groups. This is why one often hears of expressions like European Economic Community (EEC) or Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS), Business Community, Political Community, Academic Community, etc. Community is here interpreted in terms of the collectivity of individuals or a collective individual. It was this very conception of community and its sense of development that Nigeria inherited from her colonial masters. The result of this inheritance was that she lost the indigenous person-centred communal concept of community (Udoidem, 2023:52).

Today, there is a different understanding based of such inheritance which is urbanized in nature. The meaning of is far from us for want of referent. Since the inception of the mamserisation programme, there has been clarion calls for community development but at the heart of these calls is the question of what is meant by community and the nature of its development.

Despite the polydimensional character, two main models would be disciplined, namely community as contractual society and community as a person. The two models will be analyzed and contrasted with the hope of identifying which nation of community describes what a community ought to be.

Community as a Contractual Society

The notion of contractual relation stems from the basic belief that human beings are isolated individual who live primarily to protect their self-interest. Thus for

the contractarians, the community is an artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings who stay together precisely because they have an interest that they seek to protect. By that it mean a network of relationship which is artificial construct but in this paper the notion of community should be understood as a social prior, something that transcends mere interpersonal reciprocal relationships.

Sometimes too, apart from the collectivity of individuals approach to community, the notion of community is inflated into a great individual set above or beneath or alongside the network of individuals. The most extreme form of this inflation it found in the "absolutism" of the totalitarian state where the will of the sovereign is regarded as the will of the people.

Given this new artificially constructed notion, of community, rationality and morality came to be seen as having the capacity to calculate utility and pleasure in al engagements. The value of any relationship came to be determined by the amount of profit or gain that one gets. Since one's personal interest is what is paramount in this contractual community, the natural community far from being actuated is instead denied. This is why, in a country like Nigeria most community development efforts do not achieve their set objectives. Most of the powerful individual may use the opportunity for personal aggrandizement.

Having said that, let us look at community as person.

Community as Person
Emphasis of this paper is on community as a person. However, the notion of community as person has two dimensions. The first connotes the human community as a single whole possessing, a unity, and serving as a moral person, the second aspect relates to the individual persons as being communal. However, in this paper, emphasis will be laid on the notion of individual as communal. The reason for the choice stems from the conviction that, such an analysis will help clarify the ontological foundation of community and shed more light on why any form on community development should be person centered. In otherwords, the human communality therefore, it could be said belongs not to geographical location, not to any abstract idea like politics or religion but to the human person as part of his ontological constitution. The point that must be noted here is that human communality does not absorb our individuality rather individuality is enhanced and ensured by communality. Individuality is ensured precisely in the humanity that is common to all. Without such an ontological community, we would lack the specific form, the capacity for altruistic love, by which we can come together in friendship. The power by which we differentiate ourselves is the very same power by which we share ourselves. It was this type of understanding that led Michael Novak in his book free persons and the common good, to conclude that the

highest development of individual persons is not reached if those individuals remain self-enclosed, imperious to their brothers and sisters, and shut off from habits or cooperation, civil spirit and personal contributions to the development of the human community as a whole. Human continuity is thus brought about by self-sharing through love, love of the human person which gives correct motivation, unifying motivation to our symbolic snaring of selves through language, society, science, art, law, and religion. If therefore a community is to be developed, the focus of the development must be the human person. (Udoidem, 2012:62).

From the above analysis, there is the need to understand the term "development" and its implications for community advancement.

What is Development
The term development cannot be easily defined. Development is "a many-sided process". Needless bordering the readers with tedious terminological jargon, it would be appropriate for an interpretation that is universally applicable to the many-sidedness or various dimensions of development which is essentially person centred.

According to Rodney (1982:3-12); at the level of the individual person development implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. But for Rodney the achievement of any of these aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole. It must be pointed out there that it is in this last remark that Rodney's mistake about how development is constituted. He seems to have sub-summed the person within the social structures as a necessary condition for development. The position of this paper is that he reverse seems to be the case for both socio-economic and political conditions are contingent on the individual person's development.

According Ellah (1987), the idea of development originate from person and being person centred. For him, No development can occur in the absence of freedom, because without freedom we are in bondage, and bondage is slavery, which is the lowest degradation to which human nature can fall, which is the very opposite of development. There can be no development if men are ignorant, intimidated, poor and sick in body and mind. There is no development if man himself is not developed in his body and in his mind.

The crucial issues in Ellah's submission is that of freedom which become a conditio sine quanon and freedom resides primarily in the person, and as pointed out development must begin with person. Again, Ellah assets that there can be no development if men are ignorant and sick in the body and mind.

From all indications and from a synthesis of both Rodney and Ellah's submission, it is gathered that development can be defined as the process leading to the realization of full human and environmental potentials are not realized, then community is still yet to be developed.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, this work has been able to show that Africa is a vast continent, rich and diverse in its cultures and values, especially moral values. Education and values are inseparably linked. Education no doubt, is the main instrument relied upon by the society to transit its values. Values represent ideals which the majority of a society have collectively accepted. Unfortunately, alien cultures have forced changes upon the indigenous African nation and values. As a result of modernity, through contact with modern technology and civilization, traditional values are no longer appreciated. The paper suggest the teaching of value education and citizenship orientation for community development in our various communities in Nigeria.

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