
NIGERIAN NATIONAL VALUE: WHAT ARE THEY
AND WHO ARE THEIR CUSTODIANS?

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Abstract

Values are the beliefs and standards that are important to us and that make us behave the way we do. Examples of Nigerian national values from the dialogue: Respecting elders; speaking the truth; studying hard to become useful; being kind; being punctual; not being wasteful. The falling-off in the Nigerian society has affected the standard of values and moral character formation. This has reflected in so many anti-social vices. Anti-social behaviour exhibited include corruption, dishonesty, greed, violent crimes, lack of accountability, indiscipline, disrespect to constituted authorities, laziness, low moral courage among many others. All these have instituted a serious moral problem for the Nigerian State and have constrained all sincere efforts targeted at achieving national development. The custodians of the national values have been identified to be the; parents (family unit), schools, teachers and government. Others include religion, economy and mass media. This paper having reviewed the values and the roles of the custodians in promoting national development in Nigeria strongly recommends that the national values must be strongly upheld by each of the custodians in pursuit of national development.

Keywords: Nigeria National Values, Meaning and Custodians of National Values

Introduction

There have been public outcries on the level of moral decay among citizens of Nigeria. Observation shows that Nigerians have deviated and have continued to deviate from the path of integrity, honour, discipline and focus etc as a nation. The people abandoned their moral values for adopted values from the white colonial masters. This reflected during the recent ENDSARS Protest across Nigeria where the youths are agitating for stoppage of police brutality which further escalates to stealing, killing and destruction of government and individual properties. This significantly reflects total deviation from our system of upholding national values.

Decline of societal values in society is one of the most important challenges being faced by the world today. National values are the code of conduct and standards of life set by a particular society and by the international community in general (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). Observations have shown that there is decline of national values among the citizens. This is one of the challenging issues that burden all stakeholders especially parents. It appears much anti-social behaviours such as dishonesty, laziness, lack of love, pride, indiscipline, lack of respect for elders, inability to tolerate others among others are seen in our society.

The value of self-discipline, honesty, humility, obedience, patience, hard work, respect for elders among others seems to be gradually diminishing in our society. What are experienced instead are socially unacceptable behaviours such as indiscipline, dishonesty, pride, disobedience, impatience, laziness and disrespect that negates what the society approves. National values help one make choices between good and evil and they monitor an individual's choices and behaviours. An individual's values may be regulated by the society and government, one's religion, or self. The values driven by the society or government are relative and can change with the change in government or society. Most individuals develop their moral code primarily at home, through the influence of their families and parents who are the first socializing agents

Societal values are the assumptions, beliefs or principles that guide people's decision-making and actions in society. Value, like other philosophical concepts, has a complex and multiple meanings. Nevertheless, etymologically, the term 'value' is derived from the Latin verb, 'valere' which means to be 'strong to be worth'. Etaghene (2005) defined value as the quality of a thing which makes it desirable, useful or an object of interest. Values, according to Etaghene (2005), referred to the desires, wants, needs, interest and aspirations of the people. Values are defined as accepted principles or standard of behaviour that are used to characterise individuals and society and to explain the basis of attitude and behaviour (Osalusi, 2010; Oluwagbohunmi, 2013).

In this present dispensation, it is obvious now that there is great fall in unity among Nigerians, violent everywhere, lawlessness and degeneration in our national life. Citizens of the Nigeria sometimes failed to acknowledge the fact that government belong to the people and there are reasons to uphold the national unity of the country. We can now see people of diverse behaviours that were not germane to the development of the country. This clamoring for peaceful coexistence and upholding of national unity was borne out of the fact that there are geometrical increase in leadership corruption, institutional corruption, cases of insecurity, deprivation of media and social freedom and most importantly, discord in political ideologies of leaders which stands as threat to national peace and development.

Values are statements, from the standpoint of a culture, of what ought to be. Values are broad principles that underline beliefs, specific statements that people hold to be true about their living and existence. Values serve as general guide to action. Ohwovorione (2013) claimed that values and human life cannot be separated because human is rational and thinking being to considerate good or bad matters. Values are included in making final judgment that is closely related to human vision to achieve happiness and be prosperous. Values can be manifested in way, behaviour, conversation, selection and effort. In other words, value is the driving force for human to perform something.

National values, on the other hand, have been defined as standards, principles of good behaviour. Thus, national values implies behaviour, attitude exhibited and encouraged by members of the society for the fact that they are both good and desirable to mankind generally as against those behaviours condemned and discouraged. National values can be defined as a representation of the paramount values upheld throughout the common cultural experience of the nation.

It is a common knowledge that if any society, nation or state must succeed, she must have certain core values to which she attaches considerable significance. In Nigeria it is generally accepted that the core values of the Nigeria nation inherent in a democracy is respect for the rights and differences of others. There are, however, certain values which citizens of a democracy should internalize if that democracy is to survive. These core values includes such values as a belief in the worth and dignity of every human being, personal freedom, equity and justice for all, discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, patriotism, self-reliance and a sense of responsibility for and brotherhood with one's fellows. The core values also includes: respect for certain governmental principles such as rule of law, due process of law, equal right under the law and the idea of government by representation and consent. It is obvious that consciousness of obligations towards upholding national values inculcates much to citizens beyond the prescribed political freedom and also encourages the development of social behaviours that are beneficial to the society. This explains why maintaining our national values through the identification of the custodians of these values, their roles in promoting national development must attract high level of commitment from all stakeholders involved in the progressive development in Nigeria. The sustainability of these national values will contribute meaningfully not only to national development but will also assist in proffering genuine and workable solutions to various challenges in the country, hence, this study.

Meaning of Values

The word values, has so many meanings depending on the context it is used. Values are principles, fundamental convictions, ideas, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action (Elendu, 2009). Lipman (2010) opined that Nigeria is a pluralistic society, there is no universally accepted notion of what acceptable values are; values in Nigeria are often influenced by such considerations as ethnicity, religion, level of education and tribalism among others.

Value can also be defined as the moral principles and standards which guide human actions. Such principles are highly appreciated by people in the society. This is so because they make society what it should be: peaceful and progressive. The acceptable societal values include honesty integrity, courage, loyalty, among others. Okpilike (2010) viewed values are ones principles or standards, ones judgement of what is valuable and important to life.

Society is dynamic not static and as societies change from simple traditional societies to complex modern societies; people, values, trends and activities also change. For instance, traditional African societies where relatively simple with no literary heritage (Ibia, 2016) as oral transmission was what was in vogue as opposed to the modern African societies which have been greatly influenced by the Western world and is more advanced with a lot of literary collections on an array of subjects. Just as societies have developed, values have also continued to change to suit the character of a changing world which has brought in an increased wave of moral decadence and moral laxity in present day societies.

Concept of National Values

Every human society has specific characteristics of its people that distinguish the inhabitants from other society. The Nigeria value system is the beliefs, standards, principles about the right and wrong in the society. Value dictates the choices man make and choice in turn influences the behaviour of every man in the society. The value system of any human society determined the level of development. Like most aspects of culture, the value system is non-material.

Compared to culture and norm, it varies according to society over time. The core value of the Nigeria society was discipline, honesty, hardwork, accountability, loyalty, respect for the elderly, truthfulness, among others (Enu&Esu, 2011).

National values are qualities, principles and behaviours every nation held in high esteem for intensive desire of the nation. A national value is the behavior, conduct and aspiration of the people which the states encourage and promote from the people (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). Patriotism, loyalty, honesty, lack of dedication to duty, cleanliness, obedience, self-discipline, self-reliance and respect for national symbols amongst other is identified as national values among citizens. National value is consistent ethics and ideological integrity applied on individual or collective will of the people. "A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a desirable group, which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action. These definitions focus on the potential of both action and reward because it covers individuals and groups.

National values are treated as static mental structures, with little emphasis placed within the action, it is leading by example that is doing the right thing for right reasons not compromising core principles, and it is moral, political or economic motivated type of behaviors (Osalusi, 2010). Some cherished and upheld national values:

Honesty: This quality can be defined as being honest. Honesty implies being frank, direct, open or even straight. It entails standing up for what you believe in no matter whose pride gets in the way. It means not contradicting oneself in thoughts, words and actions. Isichei and Bolaji (2017) define honesty as "the awareness of what is right and appropriate in one's role, one's behaviour and one's relationship". Honesty is the foundation of integrity; having moral standards. Traditional societies were founded on this value and truthfulness was a quality pursued by all especially by leaders who were looked up to for direction by followers.

Respect is an acknowledgement of the inherent worth and innate rights of the individual and collectively (Isichei&Bolaji, 2017). The value of respect was cherished in the past, especially respect for

elders. This is because it was assumed that elders were more knowledgeable and wiser than young person.

Respect for elders is another value shared among members of a social organization in terms of reverence shown to elders which becomes part of the seniority principle in our society and age is highly valued. Respect is acknowledgement of the inherent worth and innate rights of the individual and collectively (Isichei&Bolaji, 2017). The value of respect was cherished in the past, especially respect for elders. This is because it was assumed that elders were more knowledgeable and wiser than young persons. Respect comes with honour and dignity as the individual or group of individuals are regarded as important personalities in their own rights.

Cooperation: The Bible asks a salient question in Amos 3: 3; Can two people work together if they do not agree? The most logical answer is No. This is because one person will always drawback the other. For persons to work together to accomplish set objectives, they must learn to appreciate their differences, accommodate their weaknesses and pull together their strengths. Tolerance means being receptive to the beauty of differences while cooperation is simply identified as team work. Brotherliness involves mutual understanding resulting from mutual respect while cooperation involves mutually beneficial relations. Traditional societies were tolerant and extremely cooperative, they appreciated diversity in nature and realized that though they were different, they had to work together to promote human life and existence (Ibia, 2016).

Hard work: Traditional societies cherished the virtues of hard work and functionalism. Everything these societies did was geared towards inculcating these values in the younger generations. Traditional African education was very functional in its approach as it comprised basic education for living in conformity with the traditions of the community; education for occupation and economic self-reliance for equipping members with appropriate skills for survival and education for special occupation with regards to particular families - family crafts, medicine among others (Kosemani& Okorosaye-Orubite, 2015). Traditional societies did not support laziness and as such did not encourage it. Individuals had to learn to value hard work as a channel for an improved life.

Members were encouraged to be functional by contributing wholly to the proliferation of their societies. Societies encouraged members of the society who were committed to these values by rewarding them in various ways especially with leadership positions.

Respect for human life and patience: Human life has always been sacred or sacrosanct. Life has always been important and the dignity of persons has been pursued because the origin of life has been linked with “gods” or “deities”. Human belief in the ultimate power of “immortal gods” has caused men to have great respect for human life and regard persons with dignity. Traditional societies promoted the security of life because of their beliefs in its sacredness. Before life was taken, it had to be a necessary sacrifice after a series of interventions of the people for adequate cleansing. Traditional societies as already stated were very simple societies. They believed in character development and functionalism of members and they pursued this cause with utmost sincerity. Most of their determination to pursue just causes arose from their religious beliefs in the supremacy of their “gods” and the punishment(s) that could arise as a result of their disobedience of these “gods”.

Patriotism is the love, devotion to one’s country which might or might not be the native land of the patriot. It believes in nationalism which is devoted to the national interest of a nation. It is a sense of unity among the country’s inhabitants, particularly the natives of the land with a firm will to remain a sovereign government. It is necessary for protecting citizens and their way of life, freedom and participation in international organizations for major decision-making (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). Patriotism has to do with a person’s support for his country by showing feelings and qualities of patriotism.

Loyalty is allegiance to the sovereign government of one’s country, personal reverence to the sovereign and the royal family. It traces the word “loyalty” to the 15th century, as fidelity in service, love to an oath taken. Britannica gives meaning as one who is loyal in the feudal sense of fealty, lawful as opposed to outlaw, full legal rights as a consequence of faithful allegiance to a feudal lord (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017).

Dedication to duty is the act of binding intellectual or emotional to a course of action, total commitment to public service allegiance and loyalty. It concerns attending your work regularly, going in time and dismissing at proper time, above all carrying out the best of your ability.

The Custodians of the National Values

The Parents (Family Unit: Research in human development clearly shows that the seeds of empathy, caring, and compassion are present from early in life, but that to become caring, ethical people, children need adults to help them at every stage of childhood to nurture these seeds into full development. The family, most especially the parents has been identified as one of the major custodians of Nigeria national value. The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society, a primary socialization institution. Socialization is the creation of shared beliefs and ideals that lead to the norms of the family and help indicate to family members how one should interact within a society. In this regard, parents and guardians should mentor and nurture their children into effective, functional and useful members of the society who uphold national values. All families should undertake the following responsibilities towards the realization of the National Values and Principles of Governance: parents and guardians should embrace the national values and act as role models; Parents and guardians should provide basic needs for their children and create a conducive environment for positive socialization; and Parents should mentor and nurture their children into functional and useful members of the society who uphold national values.

School

Education is the single most valuable investment in the life of a child and society at large. The institutions that impart knowledge therefore play a very critical role in national development. A good education system should pass on knowledge, skills and values to the next generation. It should enable each new generation to develop the appropriate traits of public and private character that underpin a constitutional democracy.

The school has been known as a medium of direct instruction and a social institution which is surrounded with norms, customs and ways of thinking and the teacher is a conveyer (Oladipo, 2013), Teachers have very important roles to play in the moral development of the child. Teachers teach children to respect the right of others; they also promote the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions. Teachers are responsible for teaching the importance of honesty, dedication and right behaviour. Children often idealize their teachers, and try to follow their behaviours. The inclusion of moral lesson in the curriculum and ensuring its full accomplishment/delivery is another way in which teachers contribute in societal value development of the child. Teachers are directly involved in teaching behaviours that are right and correct and teaching students to avoid those which are wrong (Oladipo, 2013).

It must be noted that, teaching moral education at both level of secondary school as a core subject standing out on its own in Nigeria will go a long way to fine tune the national values conduct of the Nigerian youth and precisely school children. It is regrettable that the school system and indeed educational stakeholders handle the issue of student morality with levity. This is why upon graduation in tertiary institutions, it is usually said that they (graduates) have been found fit both in character and learning. This is a mere ceremonial statement because some of such graduates are known cultists. If the Nigerian society must match forward, the entire school system charged with the responsibility of raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals, live as good citizens, must be completely over hauled.

Teachers: Section 8 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) document stated clearly that no educational system may rise above the quality of its teachers. Thus, another way that can be a realistic approach to the teaching of national values to students is the exemplary life of the teacher. This understanding underscores the definition of teaching by Sharp (2012) when he defined teaching as imparting knowledge and morals. Teachers should avoid over dependence on threats and punishment as a way of instructing students on national values in schools, but instead, the teacher

should demonstrate those moral virtues he wishes his learners to imbibe. He should also punish erring and reward good virtues demonstrated by students. It is only by these measures that the Nigerian secondary schools can teach values in the right direction. National values should be instilled beginning from preschool education. It provides the basis for learning process and children development in shaping good virtues and personality. Teachers should not only teach the students, but should instill moral values in each of them. Occasionally, moral values are directly contained in the subjects but it is instilled informally in good communication among teachers and students.

Frelin and Grannas (2010) observed that whether the teacher wants this role or not, his daily behaviour is a key factor in his students' value formation. Frequently the teacher is not only somewhat regarded as a referee or object of identification or a group leader or an object in many school settings particularly in the elementary schools. Children look up to the teacher as someone very special, someone to be trusted and loved. However, it has to be underscored that there are times when teachers fall short of deserving this respect, trust and love. This is especially true when they are inconsistent in their transactions with students – when they tell students one thing and then do another.

Teaching values in school aims to guide students in order to achieve high level of thinking and awareness. Osalusi (2009) also emphasized on national value teaching which is closely related to the development of student personality. In fact, moral values and skills are the teaching and learning elements that are essential and closely incorporated to develop better future for students.

Government: The present system of government in Nigerian has call for a deep reflection for the betterment of the country. According to Okechukwu and Ogochukwu (2014), the Nigeria system of government lack patriotism, loyalty, honesty, lack of dedication to duty and respect for national symbols amongst others. This has constituted a big problem to social and economic development of the country. Obviously in Nigeria there has been widespread of kidnapping, abduction, hostage taking, electoral malpractice, exploitation, bribery and corruption by people in the

social strata of the society. Those in positions of authority have continued to relegate our national values to the background. The people in the government are expected to be leading by examples for other citizen to follow but reverse is the case.

Religion can be found in all known human societies. Religion is a system of social unity commonly understood as a group of beliefs or attitudes concerning an object, person, unseen or imaginary being, or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth, and the moral codes, practices, values, institutions, and rituals associated with such belief or system of thought (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). Religion has continued to be a significant part of societies and human experience, shaping how individuals react to the environments in which they live (Fagbamila, David & Issa 2014).

The media play a significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behaviour (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). Mass media is a channel that is capable of conveying information to audience, regardless of their location, culture, social, political, economic and educational status. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) define the massmedia as any form of communication that simultaneously reaches a large number of people, including, but not limited to radio, television, newspapers, magazines, the internet, billboards, films recording and books.

Mass media as one of the custodian of national value, presents the opportunity to communicate to large numbers of people and to target particular groups of people. It is significantly different from other forms of communication. Mass communication has the capacity to reach 'simultaneously' many thousands of people who are not related to the sender.

Social Studies as an agent for National Value Sustainability

A good Social Studies Curriculum is one which helps young individuals to fully develop into human adults by relating them to their society by means of appropriate knowledge and experiences selected from the social sciences (Political science, Geography,

Sociology, Economics, and Anthropology) and other disciplines such as History and Religious studies.

The subject was introduced in America for social competency and citizenship education. Nigeria hopes to teach the ideals of Citizenship Education in order to bring about disciplined adults who would be able to maintain the principles of patriotism, moral uprightness, faithfulness, effectiveness and efficiency in all endeavours that may lead to national development (Adesina, 2010). The basic or fundamental ideas for the introduction of Social Studies in the Nigeria society is the inculcation and transmission of desired values, attitudes and belief systems capable of enhancing the continuous growth and development of the Nigeria society. It is expected that after the child had been drilled in the philosophy of Social Studies, such a child was supposed to have been well groomed and baptized in the etiquette and values of Social Studies Education. Ibia (2016) endorses that Social Studies education is concerned with preparing the learner to the goals and purposes of the responsible and effective citizenship.

The National Council for the Social Studies NCSS (2002) opined that value education should constitute an indispensable part of education and that a teacher owns it as duty to face the issues of values in the classroom. Schools should serve as an agent for inculcating in the young widely held societal norms, standards of behaviour, and ideological preferences. Alerby (2013) maintained that if a teacher feels he is not obliged to teach value, he cannot avoid delving into values in the classroom. Alerby (2013) believed that every teacher affects the value system of his pupils whether he likes it or not; if he tries to avoid teaching values he is himself committing educational felony.

The teaching of attitudes and values, through the instrumentality of Social Studies lays foundations for a perpetuation of democratic principle and a just society. Oluwagbohunmi (2017) associates the teaching of attitudes and values, through the instrumentality of social studies in school to an acquisition and sustenance of desirable attributes of affective citizenry in a social in a purely Nigerian setting. Osalusi (2010) affirms that a major demand which the study of Social Studies is expected to make in the

society impinges on creating some impact on the behaviours of the citizen as he addresses himself to civil, social and political affairs. If Social Studies will achieve its goals, the curriculum must be well planned and strictly related to solving the problems in the country.

Conclusion

The paper reveals that values are standards of conduct, efficiency or worth that the society endorses, maintains and transmits to the future generation. This study stresses the importance of upholding the Nigeria National Value and identifying the custodians of these national values as agent of change in the pursuit of re-orientating the society in the core value system of the country. Good governance depends on the socio-economic, political and culture of individuals and collective national value system, this has virtually affected all spheres of Nigerian society negatively. The failure of Nigerian leaders to address issues confronting the society will continue to fail because our national value system is in chaos.

Way Forward

In most African countries like Nigeria, national values inculcated in citizens in their prime age are very paramount as it forms their attitudes. National values are the code of conduct and standards of life set by a particular society and by the international community in general. National values help one make choices between good and evil and monitor an individual's choices and behaviours. There is an urgent need for the custodian of our national values to instil the values in the citizens. The researcher suggested that policy makers in Education should lay much emphasis on the teaching of national values in Social Studies curriculum to broaden knowledge on acceptable values that should be exhibited in the society. Teachers should be a good role model to the students on various national values and Social studies teachers should inculcate these values to the students inside and outside the classroom. All agencies, bodies or organization such as NOA, civil society groups and Non – Governmental Organizations should as a matter of national importance be seriously involved to help create the awareness, understanding and internalization of societal values in Nigerian

citizens. Religious bodies should put more effort in inculcating acceptable national values to members in their various places of worship. Nigerian should cultivate democratic values for winner and loser in any election, void of malpractices and imposition of candidates. Political leaders should emphasise on good governance while societal values for worshipping money need to be de-emphasized.

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