
Book Review

TITLE

EDUCATION AND NIGERIA VALUES A COMPANION FOR STUDENTS.”

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REVIEWER

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INTRODUCTION:

The book, EDUCATION AND NIGERIAN VALUES: A COMPANION FOR STUDENTS is an absorbing textbook, well worthy of the distinguished series to which it belongs. Times have changed in the “new Nigeria” where values have been radically altered. For Professor Chukwudum B. Okolo, a philosophical king-pin in the world of academic expose, our problem in Nigeria is that of crisis of values and their priorities.

We have certainly reached a stage of suffering and near desperation in this country (Nigeria) where, as citizens, we can neither bear our ills nor even their cure (if prescribed). The future of the nation at worst is uncertain; at best compoundedly problematic ... (Okolo, 1993:1)

This has led us into an epileptic economy continuously endangered by dangerous political somersaults, and social conditions that approximate the ingredients for pervasive anarchy. Everybody, of course, blames the government but nobody has been able to trace the exact root – cause of the problem. It is within this background that Professor Okolo’s book acquires its relevance. Its basic contention is that, “we have to blame our sad predicament ... not on our stars, nor on the white man but squarely on ourselves ...”

REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS BOOK FOR REVIEW

I selected this book for review because in Nigeria today, substance is exchanged for glittering shadow, and the morale, the will and the enthusiasm of the people for great national endeavours are seriously eroded. The book is no doubt an act of providence for which the educator, the learner and the learned should be thankful for this publication at the time when national awareness and educational reconstruction loom very large in the minds of all well meaning people of Nigeria.

A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE BOOK

Professor Okolo sets out to prove that the problem with Nigeria is wrong or false values; wrong priorities and the materialistic outlook which under girds them. This has led Nigerians into cultural consumerism or sequandermania consciousness. He furthermore traces the problem to the failure of the nation to produce a relevant and functional philosophy of Nigerian education.

Achebe (1982) seems to be at variance with Okolo's idea. In brief, Achebe contends that the trouble with Nigeria is her leadership. In another development, the National Concord "Editorial" (Nov. 30, 1990) quotes General Ibrahim Babangida as observing that the problem with Nigeria is in the falling standard of education and discipline which cannot be divorced from the moral bankruptcy of the parents in particular, and the corrupt atmosphere of our homes in general. He also notes that the school environment has definitely failed to inculcate the values in the nation's children. Okafor (1991) in his own trend of thought argues that the problem with Nigeria began with the take over of schools, by which the government encourage monolithic school system in contemporary Nigeria. He emphasizes that schools run completely by government have much less capacity to inculcate the right values.

Nwabuisi (1992) opines that the Nigerian situation is an epoch of value crisis. He presses the point home that, while the child is expected to be a champion of values, the adults around him who are supposed to teach him by the way they live out these values, destroy the very values by their own lives, thus creating double bond in the child.

Ehoh (1994) maintains that the problem with Nigeria is as a result of materialism menace, and neglect of religion. He charges that materialism contains the seed of its own destruction, and when pushed to its logical conclusion, it in the main, a moral vacuum. The neglect of the spiritual has made us empty and indifferent, hence the feverish pursuit of illusions and our being obliged to live in a world of lies where nothing is but what is not. Professor Okolo (1993) as a Professional philosopher acknowledges that, "it is neither possible nor desirable for all intellectuals, not even most of them to see the Nigerian problems through the same perspective or intellectual lens".

Properly speaking, it is a discussion about the same coin of different sides. The above mentioned authors are asserting the same thing in different ways, and they all disagree to agree. No one receives an answer in philosophy that is more clever than his question. Thus, no answer in philosophy is absolute no matter what system of philosophy provides the answer.

A CRITIQUE OF THE FORMAT AND THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK

In chapter I Professor C. B. Okolo massaged the ego of the Nigerian government for its frantic effort to sustain the Nigerian academic globe from the brink of abyss. On the other

hand, the author as a professor of a high literary horizon and a formidable critique of status quo opined that education which is a bipolar process between the educator and the educand has in Nigeria failed to achieve its desired end.

Chapter II is more of an exploration into the philosophical notion of value. Indeed many authors of consequence have splashed ink on this term – “value”, yet in our present passing parade of time, ambiguities and complexities cannot be eliminated by definitions. We can only circumvent them by begging the questions. Hence Professor C.B. Okolo is right to state like John Hospers (1967) that, “the attempt to give a satisfactory definition of values is an unexpectedly difficult and tricky business”.

The author made a penetrating survey in Chapter III, concerning the Nigerian society and the type of values that dominated the individuals in their various sectors of life. He stressed that the essential trouble with Nigeria which is the “fons et origo” or the fountain-head of all other troubles is sequandermania consciousness or cultural consumerism. Another supreme value akin to a Nigerian is base honours or hankering after cheap popularity. The author also added that clannishness or statism is among the dominant values of the Nigerian. The result of the author’s survey is that we have to blame our pangs of socio-political debacle on ourselves, not on our stars or on the white man.

In chapters IV and V Professor C.B. Okolo prescribed the antidote, not placebo or nostrum, as a panacea to the kind of man the Nigerian is himself and the kind of values he pursues and parades. The antidote is a new relevant education and its philosophy that will make the Nigerian appreciate to be more (qualitatively) rather than to have more (quantitatively). The Nigerian therefore, is to be re-educated to recognize the existence of hierarchy of values.

In chapter VI, the author re-iterated on how we can build a new Nigeria of sapphire and emerald. This is possible through relevant education and through drastic changes in the fundamental modes of people’s thoughts. Professor C.B. Okolo contended that the success of the present Nigeria socio-political projections depends on how both the leadership and fellowship cadres change their basic value system and outlook on life.

THE LOGICAL APPROACH OF THE BOOK

On page 33 of the book under review, the first four lines of paragraph one, stated thus, “materialistic values and aspirations are so fleeting, often disappointing. They ultimately fail to satisfy man whose nature clamours for higher more lasting values”.

Is the author criticizing the concept of materialistic values and aspiration or is he reflecting the peculiar circumstance of Nigeria at the time? Values can be subjective or objective, changing or constant, and values are hierarchical. Most probably Professor Okolo is using a micro-analytical approach to hand down a subtle warning to wishy-washy writers who may be fast to bequeath posterity with wrong evaluation of the Nigerian values. The whole work is treated with scholarly expertise. The author in his overall logical approach is more of an artist who is not only familiar with the scene, but has the mastery of bringing into life the abstractions of inspiration.

A CRITIQUE OF THE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE OF THE BOOK

The book, **Education And Nigeria Values: A Companion for Students**, is written with utmost clarity and simplicity. The collaborative evidences cited as well as their

satisfactory peculiarity keep the reader spell-bound from cover to cover. If the word, "Language" in a "school boy definition" means bringing to the mind of another person, the idea which is in your own mind, then the book under review is written in the language of all who are committed to the mission of a greater Nigeria, free, just and egalitarian.

The academic language of the author's point of view plays in the reader's psyche, like a pin stuck in the groove of an album, as the range of the author's thoughts is impressively evident in the bewildering array of his researches and publications both here and abroad, spanning through practically all the continents. Professor Okolo purposely avoided the usual blizzards of philosophical jargons, abstract, mystifying and jaw breaking terms employed by some professional philosophers.

A REVIEW OF THE PROPER SEQUENCE OF THE BOOK

I would prefer "The philosophical notion of value" to be treated before "The persistent crisis". In other words the chapter I of the book is to be chapter II, while chapter II becomes chapter I. The first reason for this change is that philosophical **Notion** connotes views, concepts and meaning of a term or subject matter. It would be appropriate for the book to begin with a definition of term or what "a thing is" (Quid sit?) before stating how that thing exists or ought to be.

The second reason is that the book's introduction is an adequate launching pad and philosophical incursion into the Nigerian crisis. In order to create a reading break for the purpose of literal rhythm, philosophical notion of value is to be treated before the persistent value crisis. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that Professor Okolo in his unique modus scribed maintained a critical thinking sequence in sifting, assessing and evaluating his and others views on value.

THE CONFORMITY OF THE BOOK CONTENT WITH THE BOOK TITLE:

The heart-beat of the book content is "crisis of values and wrong priorities" of which Professor Okolo recommended that a relevant philosophy of Nigerian education is absolutely vital as a basic remedy.

The title, "Education And Nigerian Values ..." is not "Education For Nigerian Values..." The book title paradoxical as it should be, lends a support to Professor Okolo's thinking that one of the crucial roles of education is a critique and reconstruction of people's values. The book content therefore conveys a rounded picture of the book title. The book content and the book title are in conformity, for the Nigeria "National Policy on Education" (2004) is meant to recreate values and education into an enterprise of learning, researching and teaching.

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