

ISBN: 978-36284-1-0

LEADING ISSUES IN
**GENERAL
STUDIES:-**
HUMANITIES
AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Editor:

Director

*General Studies Division,
University of Ilorin,
Ilorin, Nigeria.*

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First Published: 2002

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ISBN: 978-36284-1-0

Printed at
UNILORIN PRESS
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The contributors to this book and the Coordinators of GNS courses wish to acknowledge with thanks the initiative of Prof. Musbau Akanji (Former Director of GNS) for starting this book project. Thanks are due to others who participated in proof-reading, typesetting, and in editing the manuscript. The institutional cooperation and the enabling support of the University of Ilorin Administration is acknowledged as well.

Prof. E. Teju Jolayemi

Director GNS

May 20, 2002.

PREFACE

This work has its origin in an attempt to provide a book for students and teachers in General Studies with a focus on the humanities and social sciences. The book contains leading issues which are developed around the Approved Minimum Academic Standard (AMAS) syllabus on General Studies for University students.

"Leading issues in General Studies: Humanities and Social Sciences Focus" offers students, teachers and general readers an opportunity which has been under-emphasized in understanding issues and having relevant textbooks in Nigerian Universities. The contributors are very down-to-earth in their presentation of the different issues clarified. It is not an exaggeration that the text would afford readers the opportunity to appraise leading and current issues in an emergent society as Nigeria.

Based on the viable and modest contribution of various authors, the applicability of the material to Nigeria, and the simplicity in the language with which the book is packaged, it is strongly recommended to students, teachers, and to the general reader.

The book is best used in conjunction with other books. Since it is intended for use by students and teachers from various backgrounds, it is a ready source materials to those who seek to examine issues which seem relevant to any society as well.

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EDUCATIONAL AND NIGERIA'S CULTURAL VALUES

By

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INTRODUCTION

Informal education is the kind of education that goes on in the society every time, everywhere, with every member of the society as student and learner. In this type of education, there is no specifically defined curriculum, no syllabus, no subject teachers, no classroom, no examinations, no certification or graduation. The community in general is the sole agent and beneficiary of its own education. There is no limit to the time or length of study and there is no limit to the content of instruction. This is the kind of education that was prevalent in the Spartan society and in the traditional African society. Indigenous education in Nigeria is also a kind of informal education. It was an education in which all the people were involved, and it was basically intended to serve their immediate needs and aspirations.

As its name implies, formal education is a form of formalized education, an education that is based on a particular curriculum and clearly defined content or subject syllabuses, a teaching-learning process with a classroom or school as base, an education that is based on the principle of examinations and certification. This is the kind of education that was prevalent in the Athenian society of the days of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and it was also prevalent in Roman education of the days of Cicero and Quintilian. When Greco-Roman education was brought to Western Europe during the Middle Ages, education in Western Europe became formal like that of Greece and Rome. With the infiltration of Western education into Nigeria and other African countries, the Western type of formal education was adopted by most countries in Africa as was the case in other third world countries. Though the educational process is conducted mainly through the formal system, a great deal of ethical education is given informally but deliberately, with adults of a given society giving the necessary direction and guidance.

As noted earlier, in the traditional system of education, which was before the advent of the Western system of education, education was conducted informally. Adults in any given society imparted the necessary or required knowledge and skill(s) to the young ones. The traditional system of education aimed at producing a total being, that would function effectively within a given community. Education in those days, was therefore functional by nature. For example, in times of war, the focus would be on imparting warfare skills to the young ones.

In conclusion, both systems of education (formal and informal) aim at producing a total and integrated human being, one who is in possession of the required skills that would enable him fit the society to which he belongs.

DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

The word 'education' was derived from the Latin word *educare* or (*educare*, *educavi*, *educatum*), meaning, 'to bring up', 'to lead out', 'to raise up', to educate. In its original sense, *educare* meant 'acting' in order to lead out fully all the potentialities of an individual. In other words, it meant the process of helping the individual to grow and develop, the process of leading the individual into the ways of life of the society, the process of initiating him into the society to which he has been born to live, work and die.

There are today as many definitions of education as there are educational philosophers, scholars and students. There could even be more, because a person can define education in more than one way, and one's definitions of the word changes from time to time, as in the case of Jerome Brunner who recently admitted that his earlier definition of education was inadequate, for today's world.

A few of the current ideas and definitions of education are given below:

R.G. Lodge holds the view that 'life is education and education is life', meaning that the process of education spans through a man's life. On to Horace, education is a process of character formation while Things (1966) sees it as the transmission of life, by the living, to the living. To Majasan, (1967) education is the process by which society passes its culture from one generation to another while Ajayi holds the view that "education should aim not merely at creating and transferring technology, but at developing people and resources". Further, Babs Fafunwa is of the opinion that the end objectives of education is to produce an individual who is honest, respectful, skillful, cooperative and would conform to the social order. Another popular definition of education is that of Carter Good (1959), who sees education as art of making available to each generation, the organised knowledge of the past, that is, the process by which the traditions and culture of a society are passed on from one generation to the other from the older ones to the young ones.

From the above definitions of and views on education, one could see that any given definition of the term is contingent upon who is giving it. This notwithstanding, education can be said to be the whole process of the development of an independent and integrated personality. It entails training and acquisition of special skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed by an individual to be responsible and which would give him room to contribute his own quota, to the growth of the society, the needs of a given society cannot be left out if a concise definition of "education" is to be given.

There are always peculiar needs for any given society. For example, developing and poor nations need to conquer hunger, diseases, superstition and to join in the technological age if they are not to be left behind. The process of education in such nations can only be

deemed successful in the light of achievable strides where these issues are concerned. And where the above issues are still being battled is always regarded as part of the illiterate worlds. In nations that have been able to minimize the above, the key has always been education, therefore, education can be regarded as the key that opens all doors to all other doors; of technological advancement, poverty alleviation and eradication of diseases and superstition. Any nation that want to advance technologically therefore, cannot toy with its process of education and the education of its people. In developing nations like Nigeria, education is still perceived as ability to read and write, whereas in developed nations, this is now regarded as the "traditional" definition of education. Education to them has moved beyond this level. Thus technological competence like computer literacy is the hallmark by which a person is seen as being literate or educated or not. Thus, even in the definition of education, the definition may depend on the particular society. However, education is a life long process, and aims at imparting the skill needed to live meaningful lives and for an individual to adjust well to his immediate environment and the universe in which he finds himself.

It can be said to be the process by which a sound mind in a sound body is developed, for education to be worth its while, it must be able to produce refined mind, body and soul.

The main purpose of education, therefore, is to develop the individual so that he can be useful to himself, his family, and the society generally. Development in this case does not only mean physical development that we can always see; but it also includes intellectual and emotional developments that only manifest themselves in the behaviour and mental activities of the individual. In A.A. Adeyinka and J.E. Adetoro (1993) in an age of science and technology, part of the purpose of education in a developing nation is, or should be, to provide for the individual basic training the individual would need to serve his nation and to use his acquired skills to develop and maintain the tools that are essential for the scientific and technological development of the nation. A nation that ignores education in science and technology cannot be fully developed and the tendency for such a nation would be to continue to depend on the technologically advanced countries for its own industrial and economic development, among other things.

NIGERIA'S CULTURAL VALUES

Most of Nigeria's cultural values were embedded in the traditional education. African traditional education was the type of education prevalent in African countries before the coming of Western education. It was a kind of informal education in which all the members of the community were involved. Generally, the youth learnt by imitating the ways of life and activities of the elderly members of the society. For example, the young boys learn the art of farming by following their fathers and other male elders to the farm and watching how these leaders clear the land, planted, nurtured and harvested the crops. Later, the young ones carry out these activities on their own. Similarly, the girls study domestic work by watching

and imitation how their mothers and other female elders in the community carried out their domestic chores; for example, how mothers took care of babies and children-bathing and feeding the baby, putting him/her on her back and rocking him to sleep.

As Fafunwa argued, 'functionalism' is the guiding principle of African traditional education. This is true of the early Greek education, particularly Spartan education which also emphasized functionalism. In other words, African traditional education, like Spartan education aimed at making the individual a useful member of the society, this may explain why the traditional African society regarded education as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Education was therefore intended to be a gradual induction into society and a preparation for adult life and responsibility. It was sometimes a preparation for peaceful or a happy end.

Communalism was an important aspect of Nigeria's cultural values. Members of the society shared what they had and did things in common. They had their common markets, play-grounds and moonlight spots. They, as one, were involved in participatory education through various kinds of ceremonies and local festivals. They also together, hunted for animals, went fishing, sold the products of their farms, drummed and danced, wrestled and sometimes together engaged in some kinds of acrobatic or intellectual activities. The education of the child or adult was therefore a continuous activities and every member of the society was involved in it. People acted as their brothers keepers. They rallied round each other in times of trouble. The elders corrected the erring young ones even when such were not their own blood. The extended family was closely knitted and regarded as one big family and would live in a big compound together. Sometimes a child may not know his own biological father or mother until adulthood as he may have others he or she is calling mummy and daddy. The present nuclear family and attitude of "me and my family" was not prevalent in the society before the whitemen's coming.

Respect for the elders by the young ones was not taken lightly. Girls would kneel down while in some societies, boys would prostrate or bow while greeting the elders. Abuse of elderly people was almost an abomination and it was rare to see young people call older ones by their names unlike what is prevalent today.

Hardwork and honesty was hallmark of Nigeria's cultural values. People were recognised on the basis of what they have been able to achieve through their sweat rather than through dubious means and stealing, people caught stealing were regarded as outcasts and could bring shame to their immediate family. Hardwork was honoured in varied ways sometimes through the giving of chieftancy titles. Status symbols were different in the past compared to today, and these must be legitimately acquired.

The marriage institution was also held in high esteem. Parents cemented their friendships not only by giving out their children in marriage to friends and associates sons and daughters, but also because they were always anxious and wanted to be sure of where their children were going so that their children would not be maltreated or be contaminated

in any form like getting a communicable disease. The single parent syndrome was alien in most societies in Nigeria. Chastity before marriage by both sexes was held highly and promiscuity was discouraged in the societies through varied forms.

Folktales and heroes of the society were transmitted from the elders to the young ones under the moonlight tales and sometimes during periods of initiations.

The Oba, Obis and Emirs were political institutions that were respected. They were seen as Gods representative on earth and their word was law. Nobody could change it. Their powers have been eroded away with the adoption of the Western form of governance.

Other aspect of the peoples cultural values include the use of indigeneous language like Efik, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba etc and annual festivals in many societies. Every society equally had their own craft and art works and trade for which they were known. For example, weavings, pottery and goldsmithing were popular in some societies. Binis till date still have some of their woodcrafts and the British loved some so much that they carted them away to sell in their country leaving some in their museums. However, the sophistication of the artworks have dwindled considerably. There were family and village poetical names in which people would proudly reel off known achievements and what families/villages were known for. Elders would reel these off just in response to greetings from younger ones. Through this medium, past heroes/heroines and achievements were kept in view. Also, in most societies in the past, names were indigenous and had meaning. People were not named just anyhow. Sometimes through the names you could know what happened to the family around the period the child was born or the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child.

The indigenous way of dressing by man and woman have changed to the western way of dressing. In the past women would also weave their hair and decorate with beads but today the western hair fashions have taken over. The change in our values have been so great that even in the type of food we eat, things have changed. Indigenous food can no longer be seen on some people's table.

Religion was an important aspect of the people's way of life and people worshipped God in varied forms and had different names for God. Priests were therefore held in high esteem because they are seen as messengers of God. In some societies, they co-ruled with the king and major decisions must be cleared with them.

Indigenous music has also given way to western music. In traditional music, everything had meaning even sometimes dancing steps, such that there were drums called "talking" drums.

There are many aspect of the peoples cultural values which with education and civilization no longer exist with the people. These include the taboo in some societies for a woman to give birth to twins, taboo for a king to see an empty calabash which the Yorubas use when they want to force an Oba off the throne, or the practice of burying people along with the king when the king dies because he would need to have people to serve him in heaven as he was served on earth.

Other things that can be regarded as negative which has given way is the tatooing and giving of marks on bodies to signify one's name, family name or tribal group to which one belongs. Very few people can now be seen doing this today. Female circumcision which was believed to incapacitate a woman from prosmicuity is also gradually being eradicated in the Nigerian society. Female elders going naked to force a king off the throne or to make him change a decision is also gradually going away though some societies still practice this.

Giving girls out in marriage too early in life or for economic inducements is also gradually being wiped away. So also is the practise of keeping woman in purdah or believing that in any group, women can only be seen but not heard.

Another aspect which needs great attention from the Government for its eradication and which though prevalent in most primitive societies and yet to give way in Nigeria is killing people for rituals. In the past, people were killed under the guise of appeasing gods for one thing or the other, but these has been reformed now in some Nigerian societies that people now kill for money-making. Selling off of people especially young ones and kidnapping also needs attention. These are by product of the peoples way of life in the past, that made Africa to have the highest number of slaves exported to the west from (any continent) and which is ingrained in the peoples psyche, that which still makes people to go to such abasement needs to be given prior attention and eradicated in the society, for these things still show the level of development in the country and education, being an emancipatory tool for the people, can go a long way in eradicating these practices and therefore, should be given a good and utmost attention by the Government.

Though the eradication of these negative practice would lead to development of the nation, there are some positive aspect of the people's culture which is giving way to modernization and which ought not to be so. This is because there are many aspects of the peoples way of life which ought to be guided and not allowed to be eroded away. These include indigenous languages, though getting an indigenous lingua-franca for the nation may be difficult because of the multi-facet tribal nature of Nigeria, there are still some efforts in place which can be modified, or intensified. These include the use of mother-tongue in the classroom, which can be allowed for teaching along with the English language, especially for explanatory purposes most especially for children under eight years. This is necessary so that children who do not use the English Language at home would not be disadvantaged in school and so that others who do not use any of the indigenous language can pick some words in school. It is also necessary to have pupils learn at least one indigenous language on the curriculum in school, especially at the primary school level if the languages are not to become extinct with the non-use syndrome of the mother tongue among the new elites. The use of indigenous language, music, arts and crafts, weaving, pottery, dressing are among the peoples heritage which needs to be preserved.

As noted, western education has broadened the horizon of the people. This made possible the importation of various western values into the society. Unfortunately, the people sink in everything, hook, line and sinker, without filtering what comes in. the

situation is more pathetic on the young ones, who are easily influenced. They watch western films, and the way crimes are carried out in films are tested out. The irony is that it is the negative aspect of the western world that Nigerians copy much more than the positive aspect. For example, the western technological advancement is one that ought to challenge Nigerians but which oddly has not been so.

The challenges before Nigerian leaders include the ability to take Nigeria out of the woods such that advance technology becomes an everyday life for Nigerians in every facet of our national life. The world is now a global village and Nigeria must join. The challenges also include the ability to reorientate Nigerians such that traditional values like hardwork and honesty would again permeate the society and cases of "419" would be eliminated. Also making Nigerians to keep their cultural heritage while blending that with the positive aspect of western cultures is a challenge, with the adoption of western form of governance, the challenges also include bringing forth a stable democratic polity. For without stability, organisation, planning and development becomes difficult. And, the only way forward for Nigeria as things are presently is rapid development, if the country is not to be left behind in the global village in the next century.

EDUCATION AND THE DANGERS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Education is not just the ability to read and write but it also enriches the mind, thus bringing about refinement of behaviour. It changes attitudes and improves professionalism. It is only through education that one can contribute meaningfully to the development of one's country and activities in one's environment. It brings mental freedom and frees from the shackles of oppression in any form. It is only through education that diseases and hunger plaguing the country can be eradicated.

Education reduces religious intolerance and makes for patriotism. In fact, achieving a high level of patriotism among Nigerias can be through mass education. For patriotism cannot be taught. It can only be earned. When a country is able to give meaning to the lives of its citizens, even if the same country turns around to tell its citizens not to be patriotic, the citizens would not imbibe such. They would not refuse to be patriotic.

Culture is a dynamic phenomenon and culture contacts with other nations makes this more so, and with the level of technological advancement of other nations, there are dangers of Nigeria being left out in the technological enrichment of its people vis-à-vis other nationals, especially in the light of daily advancement in the technological field in other nations, while Nigeria seem content to sleep on.

As apply put by Eke (1992) regions of mass illiteracy are generally regions of instability, economic and political underdevelopment. Economically, the illiterate is on the periphery. Politically, he stands outside and technologically he is in the dark. He went further to predict that the survival of the third republic could be dependent on the level of literacy of the citizenry. He may be proved right. An illiterate cannot meaningfully engage

in any dialogue since he lacks the skill to avail himself of such useful information which is mostly read or published, illiteracy is the bedrock of avarice and vices. Oni (1992) perceived that where adults in any given country are ill-informed, poor and disease ridden, dependent and crippled by illiteracy, the future of the children in such places becomes precarious and susceptible to inheriting all the ills accompanying illiteracy. Literacy makes for a balanced personality and self actualization.

Educational literacy is an enabling skill, that opens up many vistas of personal development and fulfillment. (Akinpelu, 1992).

As aptly noted earlier in this discourse, the definition of literacy in today's world is rapidly changing, and it would continue to change. The Unesco courier of July 1990 conceded that the problem of world illiteracy might have shifted base – a technological revolution in telecommunications and computers has called to question the concept of literacy. Thus, the definition of education as the ability to read and write is now regarded as being "traditional", yet, that is where the vast majority of Nigerians still remain. Kenneth Levine (1990) opined that illiteracy is a relative and dynamic condition, continually subject to technical innovations and that the world of computers now makes it imperative for a redefinition of the world "Literacy". Thus, familiarity with keyboards or other input devices would replace the pen or pencil and would be accepted as the mode of examinations in schools and in communication.

As at present, continuous speech technology, is now the trend in today's computer age. The latest in the world of computer technology enables you to talk naturally without pausing to your computer and it will transcribe what you say without your having to touch a keyboard. And it is said to be 95% accurate, infact, IBM'S via voice enables the computer to read back to you what you have dictated. IBM lays claims to a 97% accuracy and a dictation speed of 70 to 100 words per minute. Thus, with the latest in technology, you can speak to your computer just like you talk to a person. Now, engineers at Stanford University and Yamaha are now taking music to the PC. This is apart from the fact that with internet, the world is now a global village in which you can communicate across continents in minutes. For all we know, we may just find tomorrow, that we will talk to the computer and the computer will converse intelligently with us – yet, this is where the world is going – for even in films in developed nations, making the impossible possible in this area is becoming a usual watch on films, with computer telling you almost anything you need to know, including waking you up at the time you want and telling you, you need to put off your fridge for one reason or the other. But in all these, where does Nigeria stand? This is the danger ahead for a country of over 100 million people and the supposed giant of Africa. The speed of technological development in other nation is such that Nigeria cannot afford to be on-looker.

As noted, the dangers ahead for Nigeria is a tasking one, if she is to join the global village. For presently, the percentage of those who are even aware of what a computer is, as compared to the total percentage of the nations population must be minute. This is so,

because even among the literate, many do not know what a computer is nor how it functions. This is in an age where people now define literacy from the perspective of computer know-how. But that as it may, even going by how literacy and education is defined traditionally – the percentage of educated people in the society as compared to the uneducation is still scary. In fact, according to Adieseshiah (1990) in a Unesco publication, Nigeria ranks fifth in the table of countries with the highest population of illiterates. She is also identified as one of the poorest in the world. Therefore, as aptly put by Akinpelu (1990) if modernisation of the economy and the democratization of the political culture are to be meaningful, sustainable literacy is the key. Thus, any meaningful effort at reducing or eliminating economic poverty and social underdevelopment must be at a proportional effort at eradicating illiteracy. Efforts at putting in place a sustained democratic process must have as its ingredient – mass literacy of the people. Furthermore, no economy has a place for the illiterate or the uninformed in the 21st century, because of the high degree of echologisation that will characterise that century. (Akinpelu, 1990).

Furthermore, peace and stability is closely tied to the mass literacy of the people. It is the only key to the people realising their full potentials and ambitions. When the people are literates and developed, they would develop the indices of modernisation. Thus, no doubt, there are dangers ahead in the 21st century for Nigeria with her high percentage of illiterates, but they could be turned to challenges that must be surmounted. This is one challenge, Nigeria must face.

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