

ETHICS AND VALUES RE-ORIENTATION FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Ideas towards the Enugu State of Nigeria Smart and Green School
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by Obiora Ike & Chidiebere Onyia

1. EDUCATION FOR LIFE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education is at the heart of every human settlement. It is the source of re-inventing the past into the present for a sustainable future by focusing on the young in any society and community. Without education, the heritage of transmission of language, skills, character and acceptable behavior, culture, knowledge, history, and more importantly, the art of being human within the local and international milieu of civilization, would be impossible. We are called to educate and cannot but educate.

What has become an unfortunate conclusion across nations, particularly in many African countries is that the current education systems, which ordinarily would be useful tools for transmission of all-round wisdom that brings the positive change many of us envisage, have failed globally. They failed because education has moved from its primary purpose as the basis of a cultured society to the space for some competitive commercial enterprise. Whereas education was designed to serve the pursuit of wisdom, the moulding of human character, and the cultivation of virtues and beauty alongside knowledge and skills transmission, taking to the

examples of the wise sages of history in all cultures and civilizations through time, the reality is quite different in the 21st century. And this is so because education has shifted from andragogical and pedagogically based transmission of human values to the complete service of market-based commercial needs, often lacking in any values except the maximization of profit and money. C.S. Lewis once commented that: *"education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make humans more clever devils"* (*The Abolition of Man, Quebec; Univ. Press, 1943*).

Ethics and values orientation are very important for the advancement of a people from savagery to humanity. Indeed, sustainable development is possible only when ethical principles are built on the foundations of such development. It is our opportunity and task as parents, communities, groups, and nation-states, to re-orientate and re-invent education to its primary purpose of formation of the young in skills, values, knowledge, and character. It is not just about knowledge acquisition, it is also about the content transmitted as well as the transmitter – the teacher. The great Greek philosopher once wrote: *"Teachers who educate children deserve more honor than parents who merely gave birth; for bare life is furnished by one, the other ensures a good life"* – Aristotle.

Humanity has come so far, because women and men of all ages brought to bear their received traditions and values, ethical orientations, and disciplines from the past into the present, which have added to the advancement of the human quality, namely OF BEING HUMAN AND HUMANE, made possible through integral education.

2. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA – AN URGENT NEED FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF SOCIETIES

Thought leadership is the challenge of the 21st century. It is a leadership that calls on people with courage, daring, and means to come forward to serve. Thought leadership demands persons and institutions with adequate knowledge, selflessness in serving their people, open to critical thinking and rational approaches, filled with some measure of moral integrity and ethical standing, and the ability to show some track record and intentional determination to create leadership models that provide a world environment of peace and progress for everybody. The world has moved on and history pages shall tell the story. People in leadership positions at all levels of society, especially in African countries cannot shy away from this task as they try to establish policies and principles that advance the progress of their communities and the common good of all.

We live in a world of plenty, with enough wealth and resources for all but witness the sad reality of children going to bed hungry, without food and care in many African countries. We note a dearth of access to means and resources needed for sustainable livelihoods such as Medicare, decent housing, playgrounds for children and youth in cities, social amenities, safe drinking water, healthy sanitation, clothing or the simple basic amenities enjoyed by their peers elsewhere in our one world. This unacceptable phenomenon is buttressed by facts that indicate, that over 80 million children have not seen a school building from the inside in some Nigerian remote villages and states, due to factors of bad leadership, corruption,

poverty and lack of access, but rather pass by, watching schools from afar. This explains the unfortunate phenomenon of "Boko Haram" - an expression indicating "*Education is harmful*".

Because we live in the 21st century and are witness to the great achievements of science and technology globally and within, knowing and using the tools of modern communication and the speed of informatics and telematics, watching revolutions that limit space and time, our challenge makes it imperative on responsible leadership to reflect on how these global developments trickle down on our peoples within the continent of Africa. We have received enough excuses. It is time to move from theory to action.

Thought leadership makes those responsible to brace up and address the reality of children without basic health care and education in a world that can afford basic needs for all. Thought leadership questions the culture of corruption as not sustainable and sets parameters and transparent systems that benefit all by confronting "integrity deficiency", which is another name for corruption. Thought Leadership anchors ethics as its compass and road map because the discipline of Ethics encourages and promotes principles of respect for human dignity, regard for the common good, solidarity, self-help as best help, and the promotion of life for humans, flora and fauna.

When we learn the principles of respect for our own lives and the lives of others, we learn to integrate diversity and inclusion. There are challenges to being ethical especially where a culture of impunity, lethargy to service, laziness, apparent vice, and the glorification of ignorance hold sway for people who should know better. We can do better and be better in our

countries and societies. But we must accept the learning process that helps us reduce arrant fanaticism, holding to illusory fantasies that have no grounding in sound reason or common sense, and living on past glories that cannot serve the needs of a humane and human society in the present tense. Thought leadership holds us accountable to stand as people who are not just inward-looking, holding only to the things they know, resisting great ideas that open up to a universal human family, irrespective of colour, creed, language, and social class, but also a people ready to advance and share in the achievements of the global family, particularly through education that shows success.

3. VALUES RE-ORIENTATION IS AT THE HEART OF QUALITY EDUCATION – THE SMART AND GREEN SCHOOLS PROJECT

Ethics and values remain central and at the heart of quality education in the past and into the future. Currently, the noticeable gaps in the errant behaviour of educated people point to this missing link. We must rise and truly reflect on these three pertinent questions that T. S. Eliot has asked, namely: *"Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"*. It is in ethics, with ethics and through ethics that the values we need as humanity can be found and transmitted for a new generation of decent citizens to emerge.

Education has a value to add by integrating ethical thinking in the young as they shape the future. The idea of the autonomous individual which is a philosophical debate in modern society is fanciful but is not compelling.

Likewise current debates promoting deconstructivism as a theory fail to show a human being as tabula rasa. For example, Arithmetic is a subject teaching the use of numbers, while ethics applies this knowledge to connecting humans and all life in the world, not just as arithmetical numbers, but as Living beings with dignity and respect.

One is always born in a community of others and as the South African wisdom teaches: "*Umuntu Ugabantu Mgamuntu* » meaning – «*A human being is human through other humans*». In the rich words of Professor John Mbiti, "*I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am*". Igbo society would say: "*Onye anwuna ma ibe ya efula... Egbe bere Ugo bere*" expressing justice and co-existence for the "*birds – the kite and the Eagle*" - meaning "*Live and Let live*". These pearls of wisdom represent the African world views and need concrete applications across life. The transformation of society through ethical education elevates the quality of education that has values. When we negate ethics, we increase the potential for global crisis.

With ethics and values, the potential to respect and promote LIFE in everything, by doing Right in Thought and Action, assumes practical effect. Jesus Christ, Socrates, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Nelson Mandela and many others centered on Ethics as the GOOD.

4. RELEVANCE AND CONTEXT OF THE SMART AND GREEN SCHOOLS

The envisaged Smart and Green schools agenda currently promoted by our well-intentioned political leadership in Enugu state since 29 May, 2023, and expectedly, supported by the academic, social, cultural and religious leadership at various levels, including communities, teachers, pupils and

beneficiaries shall make education have its true effects by bringing principles into educational pedagogy that serve the common good of all. The youth and the future of Ndi Enugu who are the primary beneficiaries of the Smart and Green schools, despite living in their various remote villages and towns, have access to the tools of globalization.

The Sustainable development Goals of the United Nations in the 17 goals mention as a guiding priority, an ethical value that includes all and neglects no one with the words "That no one be left behind". It is envisaged and recommended that THE SMART AND GREEN SCHOOLS PROJECT IN ENUGU STATE focus and internalize in its curriculum, the promotion of values of respect for human dignity and human rights, the integrity of creation, inclusion, justice, fairness, quality first, cooperation, competence, sustainability, holistic approach and need for a united global effort to channel the forces of science and technology positively and govern the peaceful evolution of human society.

Globally the challenges to serve the many needs of people and citizens continues to increase. Historically in Nigeria, the attempt envisaged through the Christian Mission Schools of the early 19th and 20th centuries in southeastern Nigeria served a great purpose by linking religion as a great service to people's identity and needs, providing grounding to character and learning for the young. Today, the Green and Smart schools build on that tradition and in light of current technological developments, must lift the bar higher with the means of modern communication to multi-dimensional shifts in lower and higher education.

From our experiences as authors, serving as full members of the Club of Rome and at levels of engagement with the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, we add voice to the conclusions of the CADMUS Journal (Vol 2, Issue 5, October 2015) *advocating for a shift in education from an over-emphasis on information in an age of information glut, to a greater emphasis on understanding and organizing principles and relationships between phenomena. This implies a need to move education from memorization of facts to creative thinking; from passive to active learning; from fragmented to contextual knowledge. There is a need to move education from mechanistic to organic or ecological conception; from abstract to life-centric studies; from discipline-specific to trans-disciplinary perspective. Finally, there is need to move education from abstract principles to spiritual values and from subject to person-centred and personality-centred education. This in essence, is the expected bedrock and orientation of the Smart and Green Schools initiative of Governor Peter Mbah for Ndi Enugu.*

About the joint authors:

Msgr Professor Dr Obiora Ike is a University Professor of Ethics & Intercultural Studies and the author of many books. He is ProChancellor of the State University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS), Enugu State. He served as Executive Director of Globethics Geneva until 2022.

Prof Dr Chidiebere Onyia is Secretary to the Enugu State Government and Professor of Education, with years of research, teaching, publications and practice in Development cooperation nationally and internationally.