

VALUE SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BORNO STATE AND THEIR PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

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Abstract

This paper discussed the “Value Systems of Government senior Secondary School students in Borno State and their performance in Public Examinations” particularly the West African Senior Secondary school Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The purposes of this study were to determine the values that affect the academic performance of Government Senior secondary School students in Borno State and to make some recommendations with a view to enhance the performance of the students in public examinations. The concept of value system in the context of this study refers to enduring organized beliefs regarding desirable modes of conduct which are arranged along a continuum of relative importance. The paper identified the characteristics of values, discussed how they are developed, and examined the relationship between students’ values and their academic performance. The study found that the students’ top five ranking values are religion, studying, honesty, ambition and being intellectual which are all academically-oriented. But unfortunately their performance in WASSCE did not reflect these values. Several factors that accounted for this incongruous situation were identified and recommendations were proffered with a view to solve the problem which among others include: (1) the State Government should employ more professionally qualified teachers to man the schools, (2) More classroom blocks, laboratories and libraries should be built and equipped and (3) Teachers’ Salary Scale (TSS) should be implemented to boost the morale of teachers for greater productivity.

Keywords: *Values, Students, Performance, Examination, Borno State.*

Introduction

In recent years, parents, teachers, schools and all other stakeholders in the education sector have decried the poor performance of senior secondary school children in this nation in public examinations particularly the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council Senior School Certificate Examination (NECOSSCE). Some people attributed it to the falling standard of education while others

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opined that the standard of education has not changed. The issue of falling standard of education has been a long standing controversy in this nation. A consensus has not been reached on this issue up to now. The current situation can also be attributed to the inconsistency in the nation's educational system. The 7-5-2-3 educational system was changed in 1976 when the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced. Currently what obtains is the 9-3-4 system of education basically due to the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

There has been an outcry about the poor performance of students in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in this country. Year by year the students' performance is deteriorating. The Daily Trust (2010) reported that 75% of the candidates who sat for the 2009 May/June West African Senior Certificate Examination (WASSCE) failed to meet the minimum entry requirement for tertiary institutions. National Council of Nigeria (NECO) in 2009 SSCE is the worst ever in the history of examinations in Nigeria. It was in view of this dismal situation that concerned citizens exclaimed that there is a need for well-meaning Nigerians, Parent-Teachers' Associations (PTAs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and religious groups to make concerted efforts to find out the factors responsible for the mass failure and proffer solutions to it.

Borno State being one of the educationally-disadvantaged states of the federation is terribly affected by the mass failure in the national examinations. For instance in 2007, a total of 15,336 candidates sat for the WASSCE and out of this figure, 14,000 candidates could not meet admission requirements into tertiary institutions (Yerima, 2008). To be precise 9,911 candidates did not get a single credit at all. Coupled with this, there is also the monster of examination malpractice which has spread all over the nation. According to the Exam Ethics Report of 2005, Borno State maintained a track record in examination malpractice in 2003, 2004 and 2005 ranking first in the north east region (Yerima, 2008).

This paper is organized into the following sub-headings: introduction, theoretical framework, the nature of values and value systems, development of values and value systems, students' value systems and academic performance, causes of poor performance in public examinations in Borno State, conclusion and recommendations. In this paper, the word performance is synonymous with achievement. The main objectives of this paper were to determine the values and value systems of the Government Senior Secondary School students in Borno State. Are they academically-oriented values or not? Values have strong motivational functions in the process of learning. Rokeach (1973) asserted that values are conceptual tools and weapons that people employ to maintain and enhance self-esteem. But what are values and value system and how do they develop?

According to Nayak and Rao (2004) value refers to criteria for determining levels of goodness, worth or beauty. The act of valuing is regarded as an act of making value judgments; an expression of feeling or the acquisition of and adherence to a set of principles. Russel (2004) defined values as ‘unique verbal concepts that relate to the worth given to specific kinds of objects, acts and conditions by individuals and groups.’ He identified three dimensions of values: (1) a quantitative element which indicates the amount of worth one allocates to the particular phenomenon (2) a quality of elasticity which is evidenced by the extent to which a person holds onto his ideals and (3) the interrelationship or system frequently referred to as the individual’s hierarchy of values. Rokeach (1973) defined value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end - state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end – state of existence” (p.5).

Smith and Shuartz (cited in Borgatta & Montgomery, 2000) emphasized five features of values:

1. Values are beliefs that when activated become infused with feelings.
2. Values refer to desirable goals and the modes of conduct that promote these goals.
3. Values transcend specific actions and situations (obedience for example, is relevant at work or in school, in sports or in business, with family, friends or strangers).
4. Values serve as standards to guide the selection or evaluation of behaviour, people and events.
5. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. The ordered set of values forms a system of value priorities.

Some values designated as important for workers in the information age are responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, integrity and honesty. Huitt (cited in Nayak & Rao, 2004) suggested an additional set of important values for life success as autonomy, benevolence, compassion, courage, courtesy, honesty, integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness and truthfulness. List of other core values developed include: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness and civic virtue and citizenship.

The Council for Global Education stated that the following values are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights: compassion, courtesy, critical enquiry, due process, equality of opportunity, freedom of thought and action, human worth and dignity, integrity, justice, knowledge, loyalty, objectivity, order, patriotism, rational consent, reasoned argument, respect for others, responsibility, responsible citizenship, rule of law, tolerance and truth (Nayak & Rao, 2004).

Rokeach (1973) defined value system as “an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance. Thomson (2004) asserted that values are meaningless when they are not arranged in a hierarchical order. If everything were of equal or same value, then nothing would be of value. Hierarchy of values connotes some sort of philosophy of life. This is because goals basically group themselves into value systems that are somewhat synonymous with our life goals. They serve as standards or as guiding principles for our behaviours.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Rokeach theory of values. Rokeach postulated that values can be divided into two sets (Karp, 2000). The first set is tagged “instrumental values” and refers to values that reflect modes of conduct such as politeness, honesty and obedience. The second set is referred to as “terminal values” and reflect desired end states such as freedom, equality, peace and salvation. Rokeach developed an instrument which is called Rokeach Value Survey and it is used to measure values which he believes are universal and trans-situational. It consists of 36 values – nine instrumental values and nine terminal values which are ranked by survey subjects based on the items’ importance as guiding principles in their lives. The major reason for this method is to force the subjects to identify priorities among competing values. The values are assumed to be universal.

The Rokeach Value Survey permits a researcher to compare and see whether the value priorities of a given group of students are similar to that of another group or not. It allows comparison of people with different demographic characteristics such as age, sex, religion and education (Karp, 2000). The Rokeach Value Survey has been used by numerous researchers to investigate many aspects of values such as the relationship between values and behaviour, the role of values in justifying attitudes and the extent to which people remain committed to certain values.

The Nature of Values and Value Systems

Values and value systems have several qualities. Rokeach (1973) identified the following characteristics of values:

1. **Values are enduring** – The tendency for values to endure arises basically from the fact that they are initially taught and learned in isolation from other values in an absolute, all-or-none manner. For instance, we are taught that it is always desirable to be honest and not sometimes desirable or to be just a little bit honest. It is this isolated and absolute learning of values that somewhat guarantees their endurance and stability.

However, as a child grows and matures, he is likely to encounter social situations in which several values rather than one value may compete with one another, thus requiring a weighing of one value as more important. Gradually through experience and maturation people learn to integrate the isolated, absolute values they have been taught into a hierarchical organized system, in which each value is ranked in order of its importance relative to other values.

2. **Values and beliefs** – values are beliefs that are judged to be good or desirable. They have cognitive, affective and behavioural components like other beliefs. A value is cognition of the desirable. When a person is said to have a value, it means that cognitively he knows that the correct mode of behaviour or the correct end-state to strive for. A value is also affective in the sense that one can feel emotional about it and approve of those who show it and disapprove of those who don't show it. A value also has a behavioural component in the sense that it is an activating variable that leads to action when activated.
3. **Values refer to modes of conduct/end-states of existence** – Values also refer to desirable modes of conduct or desirable end-state of existence. These two kinds of values are also known as instrumental and terminal values. Instrumental values are values that are personal and interpersonal in nature. There are two kinds of instrumental values namely: moral and competence values. Moral values refer to modes of behaviour and other (instrumental) values that are associated with interpersonal relationship which when violated cause guilty conscience or feelings of guilt for wrongdoing. The competence (self-actualisation) values on the other hand are values that have to do with one's intelligence, and prowess and not morality whose violations can lead to the feelings of shame rather than the feelings of guilt.

Terminal values on the other hand are values that may be self-centred or society-centred, intrapersonal or interpersonal in nature. For example, such end-states as "salvation" and "peace of mind" are intrapersonal while "peace and brotherhood" are interpersonal.

Development of Values

It is imperative to ask the following questions: How do people acquire their values? Where do they get their values? Russell (2004) opined that some values are derivatives of the natural development process and cannot be attributed to specific elements or events that have taken place along the way. A great number of pleasant and unpleasant experiences, observations of the results of behaviour, learning about the effects of the activities of others, knowledge of human organism and the adoption of ideas seen to be worthwhile by others, all

lead to the development of values. Pleasant and unpleasant experiences make children to devote their energy to seeking one type of objects or conditions and avoiding others. Some personal experiences are reinforced by observations of the results of the behaviour of others. The knowledge of the relationship that exist between the individual and his milieu forms the basis for reasoning process and indeed reasoning has a place in value formation because it enables the child to draw conclusions and make predictions concerning the outcome of a specific action.

Russell further maintained that through identification there is internalization of the behaviour or actions that the child likes about the model. Such a person is usually close, warm and friendly or has a position that is desired by the child. By identification with the model, the child acquires his value. And as he grows up, the value he acquires competes with other values. These values are compared with one another and ordered according to their level of importance which becomes his value system.

Values can be inculcated into children formally through teaching and learning process in schools. Childs (2004) stressed that “schools always exhibit in their purposes and their programmes of study that which adults of a society have come to prize in their experience and most deeply desire to nurture in their own children”. There is no qualm that educational experiences promote the development of values. Pleasant experiences obtained as part of school life are active in value formations. Pupils think of education as worthwhile if they realize its importance in helping them to advance their goals. Stendler (2004) pointed out that school experiences affect the development of responsibility and honesty more than they do loyalty, moral courage and friendliness.

Skinner (2004) stated that there are multitudes of values that children should/could be taught in the school which include the following:

1. Values that relate to the protection of human life – children irrespective of their age should be made aware of the importance of human life above everything else. Frequently, a case of negligent homicide is a pointer to chance development. School children should be informed of the dangers of impulsive action, carelessness, thrill-seeking and other actions that destroy life.
2. Values for personal and public property – school children should be made to understand that people and the public/government have right to own property and this should be observed. Hence, they should avoid stealing, willful destruction or vandalism.
3. Values for society – children should be made to acquire values such as peace, equality and security which are essential for the survival of the society.

4. Values for traditional social institutions – schools should make children to develop values for the family, church, mosque and the school. They play important roles in our lives.

Students Value Systems and Academic Performance

Students have different values. In a study on students value system conducted by the researcher using the students value survey (SVS) developed by the researcher, in which 300 subjects were requested to rank 15 values according to their order of personal importance to them, it was discovered that the top five ranking values are religion, studying, honesty, ambition and being intellectual are all academically-oriented values. One would therefore expect Borno State Senior Secondary School students to be faring well in West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council Senior School Certificate Examination (NECOSSCE) going by this revelation. However, when one considers the performance of Borno State Senior Secondary School students in WASSCE and the NECOSSCE, one feels sad. Their performance is very poor. The result of the 2007 WASSCE vividly shows the poor performance of the students. According to Yerima (2008) in 2007, 15,336 students sat for the WASSCE in Borno State. Out of this figure, only two students got credit in nine subjects, 16 got credits in eight subjects, 19 students got credits in 7 subjects, 62 got six credits, 164 students got five credits each and 5,162 got less than 5 credits. The rest of the students 9,911 got no credit at all. The summary of the analysis of the 2007 for the four educational zones in Borno State WASSCE results is given in the table below:

Table 1: Borno State WSSCE Result Analysis

Zone	Total No. Regis.	CREDITS									
		9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
A	4554	0	0	0	0	13	39	72	201	571	3506
B	4295	2	14	13	40	69	287	289	516	1032	2111
C	5436	0	1	6	21	74	101	201	450	1085	3497
D	1051	0	1	0	1	8	15	21	777	214	714
Total	15,336	2 (0.01%)	16 (0.10%)	19 (0.12%)	62 (0.40%)	164 (1.07%)	442 (2.88%)	583 (3.80%)	1244 (8.11%)	2893 (18.86%)	9911 (64.63%)

Source: WAEC 2007

The fact that the students in public schools have good values that students need to have to excel in public examinations, one begins to wonder why the poor performance. The students' values and value systems as revealed by this study is highly questionable when one considers the high incidence of examination malpractice which has become the order of the day to the students. It is difficult to reconcile the avowed values of the students with the state of examination malpractice. The Exam Ethics Report of 2005 revealed that Borno State maintained a track record of examination malpractice in 2003, 2004 and 2005 ranking first in the north east region (Yerima, 2008). Apparently, from the foregoing, the causes of the poor performance do not lie in the lack of the right values but other factors are responsible for it. Those factors are not far-fetched.

Causes of poor performance in public examinations

The causes of poor performance recorded by Government Senior Secondary School students in Borno State in public examinations can be attributed to several factors viz:

1. **Automatic promotion of students** – The poor performance of the students in SSCE can (could) be attributed to automatic promotion. Normally any student who fails to meet the requirement for promotion to the next class is supposed to repeat. But somehow this good practice has been discarded for reasons best known to the operators of the educational system. It was observed that one of the veritable means of checking mass failure in public examinations such as WASSCE and NECOSSCE is to stop automatic promotions which are prevalent in public schools (Oyo bans automatic promotion in public schools, 2010). Demotion may have its own disadvantages but will pay-off if it is endured patiently.
2. **Poor preparation of students by teachers** – Students in public schools do not get adequate preparation or coaching for SSCE. This is due to several factors. Incessant strike actions embarked upon by teachers in the State Government employ contribute a lot to the poor preparation of the students. Teachers in the employ of the State Government are poorly paid and in pressing for higher pay package do go out on strikes which are usually unfruitful. For instance, last year (2010) they went on strike twice. The losses incurred in terms of lost grounds and time are never adequately compensated when the strikes are called off. Also the teachers who are frustrated and demoralized no longer take their work serious and do not go to class punctually to teach the poor students. They involve themselves in farming or other businesses in order to augment their poor salaries which are in most cases spent in advance and are only used to service debts.

3. **Examination malpractice** – Examination malpractice has contributed a lot to the poor performance of the students in the SSCE. Examination malpractice seems to be the order of the day in our nation. Today some schools have been humorously tagged ‘miracle centres’ (meaning examination centres where you can convert all candidates into high scorers in public examinations (The Nigerian Voice, 2010). Unfortunately, many schools have run into trouble as they were caught and the entire results of their centres were cancelled and the schools blacklisted. The Examination Ethics Project Report (EEPR) of 2005 (as cited in Yerima, 2008) reported that in 2002, Borno State was ranked 35th in Examination Malpractice in Nigeria. However, in 2003, 2004 and 2005 Borno State was ranked 5th, 19th and 6th respectively. In the North East region, EEPR ranked Borno State 1st.
4. **Poor feeding of students** – The boarding students are poorly fed. Yerima (2008) stated that a paltry sum of ₦20.00 is given per day per student for feeding which is too small. These students are in the adolescence stage of development. At this critical stage of development they require adequate feeding for their mental and physical development. Malnourishment can lead to malnutrition, stunted growth and mental retardation. Students cannot be expected to learn effectively and efficiently under such conditions. It is therefore not surprising that the students’ performance in the SSCE is horrible.
5. **Lack of qualified teachers** – In every educational institution, teachers are the facilitators of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, there is gross shortage of qualified teachers at all levels of our educational institutions. Thakur and Ezenna (1980) stated that the effectiveness of any educational system depends basically on the quality of its teachers regardless of the excellence of the aims and objectives of the system, equipment and planning and administration. Yerima (2008) asserted that for more than seven years now, there has never been a planned and concerted effort to employ teachers for Borno State secondary schools. Teachers are made to teach many subjects which include, the subjects they were not trained to teach and the most affected subjects are the sciences. Some of them even do not have teaching qualifications. The quality and staff strength of teaching staff in any educational institution determine to a large extent the level of students’ performance or achievement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the performance of our students in SSCE is deplorably poor.
6. **Inadequate infrastructural and instructional facilities** – There is gross lack of physical and instructional materials in our post-primary institutions in Borno State. Most of the public secondary schools have blown-up roofs and dilapidated buildings which are not conducive for effective and efficient learning (Yerima, 2008). School

libraries are virtually non-existent and where they are, they are not stocked with books. Teaching aids are not also available. He further maintained that students sit on stones and write on their thighs and bare floor. It is under this condition that students are prepared to sit for WASSCE and NECOSSCE and pass which is not practically possible.

Conclusion

This paper examined the value systems of Government Senior Secondary School students in Borno State and their performance in public examinations. The study revealed that the five top ranking values of the students are religion, studying, honesty, ambition and being intellectual. Three of these values namely: studying, ambition and intellectualism are academically-oriented values that could spur the students to achieve well in their SSCE. But unfortunately, it is not so. The research attributed the causes of their poor performance in the SSCE to the following factors namely: automatic promotion of students, poor preparation of students, examination malpractice, malnourishment, lack of qualified teachers and inadequate infrastructural (physical) and instructional facilities. Recommendations were proffered with a view to help the students perform well in public examinations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made with a view to check the mass failure in public examinations:

1. The State Government should employ more professionally qualified teachers to man the schools. Teachers without teaching qualification that are already in the system should be encouraged to obtain Postgraduate Diploma in Education.
2. The State Government should build more classroom blocks, laboratories and libraries in the school and equip them very well.
3. The State Government should implement the Teachers Salary Scale to boost the morale of the teachers and hence increase productivity.
4. The State Government should as a matter of policy discipline principals that involve themselves in examination malpractice to serve as deterrent to others.
5. The Ministry of Education should revisit the policy on automatic promotion in the educational system in the State. It does not encourage the students to work hard and excel in their studies.

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