

**CONFIGURING A MORALITY-BASED LEADERSHIP THROUGH EDUCATION:  
TOWARDS A VALUE-ORIENTED NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA**

**By**

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**Abstract**

Every nation is a conglomeration of people of different cultural traits and backgrounds. Such traits develop from family, through kindred, village, town and State before it finally culminates in what is regarded as a nation. However, the proper harnessing of the fruit of these diversities creates a beautiful atmosphere for growth in all its ramifications. But this harnessing is not done *in vacuo*, that is why it demands that some people will have to be chosen to assume leadership roles in order to pilot the affairs of the nation. The leadership of any nation reflects how and where the growth of the nation is tilted. Based on that, it is important that the leadership have a strong moral base in order to withstand the storms of challenges that could buffet the ship of the administrative structure in the process of nation-building. When such background is created, it will go a long way in guaranteeing an art of nation-building that is solidly oriented towards the promotion of values that will move the nation positively forward. Against this backdrop, the researcher has exposed how far the leadership of Nigeria has positively progressed in the art of building the nation. Has the leadership any robust moral foundation? Are the leaders value-oriented in decision-making? The researcher employed an expository approach in order to examine the situation through the help of literary sources. On the other hand, analytic method was used for a critical evaluation of the facts and proffering of fruitful recommendations.

**Keywords:** morality, leadership, value, education, nation-building

## Introduction

Man is astride of two natures - the mind and the body. This is the concern of hylemorphic theory. This bifurcated nature of man thrusts him into the realms of matter and spirit. All things being equal, both are operationally interwoven. Otherwise, internal destabilization ensues. More still, for homogeneity in operation, they must be properly cared for. The body has to be fed, adequately sheltered and medically insured so as to guard it against any imminent health hazard and its attendant discomfort or even death. The mind on the other hand, proper to its nature is developed via abstract thoughts and instructions. It is on this level that education "per se" is situated. Such education has to be value-oriented for it to bear fruit that will stand the test of time.

However, this seemingly intertwined relationship of the mind and the body is likened to that of the carpenter and his tools. Just as a seasoned carpenter shows mastery of his implements, so the mind unreservedly stirs the body into action. The use of the body is at the discretion of the mind. Invariably, to educate the mind is to educate the body. The mental environment guides the physical environment. This is encapsulated in the Latin aphorism from the Roman poet Juvenal - *Mens sana in corpore sano* - a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Be it as it may, a trained mind is geared towards civilization - social development, political consciousness, agricultural enhancement, religious tolerance and a string of other gains, which boil down to solid nation-building. But proper civilization of the mind is founded on value-based education; and value-based education on its own part is nourished and realized through a morality-based leadership. When there is such good leadership proper nation-building definitely becomes a *fait accompli*. It is obvious that man by nature is a social animal and is able to communicate through the vehicle of language. More so, since man lives in community, there comes the need of having leaders that would pilot the affairs of the community. How far such a community, or State or Nation is going to progress depends on how morally sound the leaders are. Since the process of building is geared towards realizing an architectural piece, if a full-blown building that has lasted for sixty-three years is erected on a faulty foundation it will surely be buffeted by every passing wind. If that building is taken to be a nation as in the case of Nigeria, could be those who initiators of the building be likened to the biblical foolish builder who founded his house on sand (Matt. 7:26). However, since nation-building is a continuous process, how could a nation with faulty foundation begin the process of rebuilding in order to metamorphose into being a house founded

on rock (Matt7:25); and thus, enjoy the comfort of a house projected by a wise builder? Is it possible to reconfigure such problem-laden foundation? These are the issues this research aims to unravel.

### **Understanding the terms: Morality and leadership**

Morality has both Greek and Latin roots. For the former, it is “ethos” and the latter “mores”. From the Greek root is gotten the English word Ethics; and the Latin root gives rise to the word Morality. However, both of them still refer to ‘custom.’ According to Fagothey (2000:17),

Ethics comes from ἠθος, the lengthened form of ἔθος. Both words mean custom, but ἠθος, denotes a more fixed type of custom and is often used to mean a man's character. The Latin word for custom is *mos*; its plural, *mores*, is the equivalent of the Greek ἠθος. From *mores* we derive the words moral and morality. Ethics is also called moral philosophy.

Human custom literally connotes people’s way of life – mannerism and dressing, beliefs and so on. If morality then is restricted to custom, it means confining morality to the realm of relativism, because as many as there are people, almost so many are there customs. That being the case, we have to release morality from the shackles of custom by giving it an all-inclusive stance. That will make moral principles the same everywhere.

On another note, Fagothey (2000) remarkably notes that,

there are other customs which seem more fundamental, seem to rest on something inherent in human nature, such as telling the truth, paying our debts, honoring our parents, respecting the lives and property of others. We judge that such conduct is not only customary but right, that to deviate from it would be wrong, that it results not from arbitrary whim but from some fixed principle in human nature. These are morals, and it is with these alone that ethics deals. Hence ethics is the study of right and wrong in human conduct (pp.17-18).

Morality *per se* is abstract and in potency; therefore, it needs a rational being to actualize it. We can talk of rational being without morality, but we cannot talk of morality without a rational being. It will then be an ethical impossibility to subtract rational beings from the realm of morality. Both have to unite for a fruitful production.

Morality deals with how human acts relate to their norm. Without mincing words Glenn (2022) states that, “it is that quality of a human act whereby it measures up to what it should be as a step towards the objective last end of human act, or fails so to measure up.” Measuring up to what should be” and “failing to measure up” signify rightness and wrongness of an action respectively. It is the ability to decipher the goodness and badness of an act. Glenn (2022a) put it clearly when he said that, “morality is that quality of human act which leads us to call some actions good and some evil” (p.10).

As a matter of fact, morality is intrinsically embedded in the act itself. It is not determined by external denomination. Moral justifiability of a human act is an unavoidable quality of an act that satisfies the three determinants of moral act. For a human act to be moral, three determinants have to be considered namely, “the act itself or what a man does, the motive, or why he does it; the circumstances, or how, where, when etc. he does it” (Fagothey 2000:145). For an act to be termed a moral act it has to satisfy these three determinants. For, *Bonum est integra causa malum ex quocumque defectu* – “An action is good when good in every respect; it is wrong when wrong in any respect.”

Advisedly, Scruton (1982) quoting Kant writes “every rational being must so act as if he were by his maxims in every case a legislating member of the universal kingdom of ends” (p.71). Morality then is unconditional, all-binding, obligatory and inspired by reason.

Leadership, on the other hand, is very crucial in nation-building because it goes to give direction to the ship of the nation. Without a focused, visionary leader, a nation wanders like a rudderless ship. However, dreams must be translated into reality. Davis (1967:96-97) considers leadership as “the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals”. In another context, leadership is viewed by Middlemist and Hitt (1981:384) as the “process of providing direction and influencing individuals or groups to achieve goals”. To a great extent, therefore, Fullan (2007:9) opines that leadership has a lot to do with leaders influencing their followers to act for certain goals that represent motivation, aspirations and expectations of both the leaders and followers. It is important to note that leadership is not only about influencing others but it has also to do with co-ordination and giving a sense of direction in an organization. Obviously, when a nation, an organization, an institution is guided in the right direction, leadership creates a vision for the future. In this regard,

the concept of servant-leadership coined by Robert Greenleaf (2002) later became widespread. It “emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision making”. In fact, the servant-leadership Spears (2003:16) affirms, manifests its outstanding difference in “the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely to become servants?” In fact, this servant-leadership concept does seem to stand as the turning point of every durable model of leadership.

### **Transformational leadership**

Transformation in this context implies positive change. It demands every hand being on deck in the process of initiating and responding to change. Humes (2004) affirms, it is a collaborative exercise, which is aimed at confronting challenges together for a successful result. This art of leadership begins in the interior but finally becomes manifested in the exterior. More so, transformational leadership has diverse components which if properly utilized will yield positive result. According to Bass (1990), these components include: building national vision, establishing of national goals, offering individualized support, providing of intellectual stimulation, modelling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating of high performance expectation, developing of structures to foster participation in decision-making, and creating of a productive environment. All these elements must be brought into play for a transformational leadership to be really transformative. More so, it calls for transformational leadership guided by sound moral principles rooted in the respect for the rule of law.

This form of leadership has the ultimate aim of motivating followers through positive influence and widening the leader’s vision. Such motivation is founded on a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty and trust toward the leader. The leader on his own part transforms and motivates followers by encouraging them to transcend their own self-interest for the promotion of national goals, effective communication with all and collective vision. Such awareness ultimately enhances output. It is important to note that transformation has to be a two-way action. According to Burns (1978:20), it is not only the leader that transforms the followers; the followers in their own turn have a transformational influence on the leader.

Bass (1990) maintains that idealized influence tries to model behaviour through exemplary personal achievements, character, and behaviour; inspirational motivation communicates high performance expectations through the projection of a powerful, confident, dynamic presence that invigorates followers; intellectual stimulation enables followers to think of old problems in new ways; individualized consideration devotes personal attention to citizens, regions or states who seem neglected. These factors are necessary skills for Nigerian leaders if they are to weather the storm of contemporary challenges of leadership. They ought to adopt strong transformational leadership style with strong moral base in order to turn around our nation that seems to remain irredeemably in tatters in all its facets.

All in all, the concept of leadership has to involve some basic elements like that of purposeful influencing of others, goal development and achievement, involvement of other people, having firm personal and professional values, and having a visionary insight. On another note, Burns (1978:18) made a subtle distinction between leaders and power wielders. He observes that leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to realize goals mutually held by leaders and followers. On the contrary, he was not inclined to considering as leaders those who obliterate followers. Instead Burns (1978:18b) labelled them “power wielder.” He argued and rightly too, that “Power wielders,” “may treat people as things. Leaders may not.” Nigeria is a case in point. When a nation is held hostage by power wielders there is an obviously flagrant break down of the rule of law, celebration of impunity, enthronement of mediocrity, a shameless boldness that is symptomatic of power grabbers totally bereft of what leadership is all about and sunk deep in an exaggerated show of self-aggrandizement and insensitivity. What a nation!

In fact, the art of leadership is deeply committed to helping leaders achieve their full potential. In order to realize such potential, leadership must be guided by proper use of reason founded on moral principles. For, leadership without the moral dimension of the appeal to the better angles of our nature is ultimately a hollow failure.

### **Understanding nation and art of nation-building**

One oftentimes hears the concepts like nation, state and nation-state. Nation which derives from the Latin deponent verb *Nascor-nasci-natus sum* meaning “to be born” in the words of Rostow (2017:7) refers to “a human group of common racial and biological origins and equally bound together by common solidarity.” Thinking in that line Nwoko (1988:5) refers to a nation as “a community of people, with common natural sentiments of loyalty and identity, common ethnic heritage, common territory, future, history and sovereignty not limited to specific purposes.” Further still, Njoku (2018) enthused that a nation or a people sharing the same ancestry and cultural attitude can organize itself into a state thereby giving rise to what is called nation-state. A nation may not necessarily organize itself into a State, just as we have the Igbo nation. In the same token, there are multi-national States like Switzerland comprising of German, French, and Italian nationalities and United States which is a conglomeration of the Spanish, Italian, Polish, English etc. nationalities.

It is important to note that the bond of solidarity that exists in a nation reflects what Mill (2017) described as nationality. However, such group of mankind makes up a nationality,

if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others — which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively. This feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past. None of these circumstances, however, are either indispensable or necessarily sufficient by themselves (p.126).

There are therefore two distinct characteristics of nationhood. We have the objective and the subjective. The former according to Rostow (1972:9) refers to elements like geography, history, economic structure; whereas the latter refers to consciousness, loyalty, will. There is a near indissoluble cohesion among members through the existence of community spirit. For Corbett

(1967:219), it is this “we feeling”, the existence of community spirit and a consequent will to national self-assertion in relation to other groups that serve as the key factors that guarantee the formation of a nation.

On the other hand, nation-building as Udoh (2011) affirms refers to the

creation of thoughts, expression of words and participation in actions that are focused on the nation rather than self. Such thoughts, words, and actions, are aimed at building and sustaining a nation that is developed in every sense of the word – economically, politically, socially and spiritually. The result would be a strong and durable foundation and structure for future generation. By nation we mean, a large body of people associated with a particular territory. This large body of people is a collection of communities and community is the coming together of families. Therefore, in simple terms, nation-building is about those thoughts, words and actions focused on our families and communities (p.2).

### **The art of nation building**

The arts are a vehicle through which human beings cultivate distinct social, cultural, and individual identities while transmitting values, impressions, judgements, ideas, visions, spiritual meanings, patterns of life, and experiences across time and space ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_arts)). It is such peculiar identity and social cohesion that is aimed at in the art of nation-building. In the Middle Ages, we began to hear of liberal arts. The term liberal is derived from the Latin adjective “*liber*” meaning free. Gondek makes a distinction between the “*artes quae libero sunt dignae*” (arts that are worthy of a free man) (Cicero, *De oratore libri tres*, I 16, 72) as opposed to “*artes serviles*” (servile arts). The opposition between *artes liberales* (liberal arts) and *artes serviles* or *vulgares* (commonplace arts) comes from Greek culture where the division is based on the fact that the liberal arts are mental arts that do not require physical exertion, hence they are free (as opposed to the commonplace arts) from the work of the muscles of the hands. On the other hand, art comes from the Latin “*ars*”. It refers to skill that shows a good acquaintance with an object. The Greeks also presented the liberal arts as forming a circle (enkyklos). It is therefore cyclical, universal, ubiquitous and a

diurnal activity. That implies that the knowledge of these arts is the foundation of all knowledge of reality and it forms the plan for educational programs.

The seven liberal arts include three literary objects (*artes*)— grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic— as well as four mathematical disciplines: geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music. At the basis of the liberal arts was the understanding that art is an ability to produce something under the direction of the reason. The element of direction by right reason (*recta ratio*) was especially important. It consisted in referring to the world by seeking real justifications based on things and by following the objective rules of production that originate from things themselves.

Based on the aforementioned classical analysis of what arts entail, the art of nation building therefore demands a sound mental construct that drives the nation towards the realization of the goals of nationhood which is basically geared towards seeing the welfare of the people as the highest law (*salus populi suprema lex esto*). Plan of nation-building is constructed in advance in the intellect, and it is later embodied in a definite material that makes a reality. When cognition correctly constructs the plan of nation-building that engenders a new reality, it is said to be *factibile*.

Evidently, nation-building is more than the construction of structures and superstructures. It is more especially the development of behaviours, values, and common goal. In fact, the art of nation-building demands skill and doggedness. We must have to strongly underscore the fact that nation-building does not depend on the external trappings of a nation. Nations, Ahmed-Gamgum (2014:116) avers, are therefore built by men and women of great repute and sustained by formidable institutions be it governmental or non-governmental organizations that could advance good governance and thus socio-economic development. So, it demands the coming together of focused, visionary and broadminded citizens that could chart the course of the nation. Such is tenable Alesina et al. (2015:1) maintains “when citizens share enough values and preferences and can communicate with each other. Homogeneity amongst people can be built with education, teaching a common language, building infrastructure for easier travel, but also by brute force such as prohibiting local cultures that are inimical to healthy living ...”

The liberal arts (or sciences) in ancient times were marked by their close connection with philosophy.

### **Value-oriented education as the fulcrum of nation-building**

The Greek classical *paideia* literally refers to the upbringing of the child which has to do with pedagogy. Jaeger (1986) reveals that originally the concept *paideia* had applied only to the process of education. Now its significance grew to include the objective side, the content of *paideia*—just as our word *culture* or the Latin *cultura*, having once meant the *process* of education, came to mean the *state* of being educated; and then the *content* of education, and finally the whole *intellectual and spiritual world* revealed by education, into which any individual, according to his nationality or social position, is born.” It emphasizes concrete thinking, analytical thinking and abstract thinking; which go in the long run to sharpen the reasoning ability. This reasonability is the bedrock of value-oriented education.

At this juncture, Perrin (2004) states that “almost universally, Christians adopted the classical model and invested it with theological assumptions and guidelines that were intended to serve the Church.” Therefore, Christian *paideia* is

the system of education in the faith that the early Christians created through a combination of Biblical revelation and the cultural patterns suggested by Hellenistic literature and philosophy, that is, Greek *paideia*. It had as its objective the achieving of the wisdom of God, through spiritual formation under the divine Pedagogue, the Logos or Word of God. Christian *paideia* looked to the formation of character and appreciation of virtues as much as it did the acquisition of knowledge. Its final aim was the true knowledge—Christian philosophy or worldview— whose end was fellowship and imitation of Jesus Christ.

So, Jaeger (1961) again posits that “the classical *paideia* is being superseded by making Christ the centre of a new culture. The ancient *paideia* thereby becomes its instrument.”

Greeks passed down their concept of *paideia*, their view that man is to be crafted like a work of art by a standard of excellence. As such, education is the making of a man not in terms of vocational training, but as “well-rounded, liberally-educated man.” In the words of Kelsey (1993) the goal of *paideia*, which is the cultivation of the excellence or *arête* of the soul, consists not in acquiring a clutch of virtues but in knowledge of the Good itself.”

In the same vein, Das (2012) opines that the ethical concept of good and bad conduct is an axiology which deals with the treatment of human behavioural instinct. Axiology is the science of values.

There is a common division of values that has been in instrumental and absolute values. Instrumental value is a means of producing, which is somehow apart from the moral sense of value. Here we are more concerned with absolute/universal value which refers to a thing that is good in itself and not because of its consequences. Truth, beauty and good are regarded as intrinsic values. They are absolute values. These values are beyond individualism which is always independent. Intrinsic values also consist of social values of association and character which help the craving of social being. Further still, the values of character are the virtues. They

are good in themselves and also means to self-realization. Courage, temperance, justice, love and wisdom are good in themselves and also means to self-realization. Aesthetic, intellectual and religious values are regarded as intrinsic value. It is important to note as Das (2012b) continues that education should engender not mere knowledge but also wisdom that comprises tolerance, understanding, empathy, compassion and open heartedness in outlook. According to Plato, the purpose of education is “not to fill an empty vessel but to turn the eye of the soul towards light.” In this connection, we may recall the Chinese proverb: “If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person, if there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house, if there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation, if there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.”

Nigeria education has to be more fundamentally oriented towards the inculcation of values. These values must be reflected in everydayness activity of the leaders so that it does not remain an empty jingle. Education for values has to aim at promoting broader capabilities, attitudes and skills that matter not just in schools but also life beyond schools, making the world a better place not just for themselves but also for their family, friends, colleagues and others. Education for values underpins the understanding that values are to be inculcated in students not just, for their own interest but also for the common good reflecting the balance between individual’s interest and larger interest. According to Comenius in his *panpaedia* (the universal education of the whole human race) all people should be educated, he says, “so that they prove themselves far superior to the animal kingdom through their three special endowments, namely reason, speech, and free and varied operation. *Ratio* finds expression in *Oratio*, which takes effect in the world as *Operatio*.” Such universal education guarantees universal wisdom (*pansophia*) in the long run.

Therefore, nation-building in isolation of proper attention to education remains a wishful thinking. That is why, it is quite *ad rem* to consider both in *pari-passu*, and not in polarity. A nation's *weltanschauung* (world-view) and *Sitz-Im-Leben* (life-situation) are implicitly and explicitly governed by the authority of knowledge. This knowledge is accumulated through several educational experiences; be it the parents, schools or government. A child that has not imbibed the respect for the transcendent being (God) can go at any length to perpetrate satanic crimes. As Arthur Wellington said, "educate a people without religion and make them but clever devils". Good family training is the pillar on which the child builds. Otherwise, he ends up in any form of delinquency. To know is one thing and to decide something and seek it is another. The latter is the volitive faculty which is the domain of the will. It is the will that plays the final role in the actual application of the knowledge. The last arbiter towards what the knowledge should be used for. On account of that, education culminates in the discipline of the will. "Any system of education which fails to discipline the will", says Fulton Sheen (1995:172), "also fails to train character." Such teaching may succeed in turning men into encyclopedias bereft of substance."

More still, education gets the citizens of a nation abreast with their rights, duties and obligations. A literate society is a liberated society. For, "literacy represents a vital key to knowing one's rights, duties and responsibilities. It represents access to the liberation of the mind and the body. It is a surest way of ensuring that individuals (citizens) know not only their rights but their responsibilities, obligations and the limitations imposed by certain forces in the society." (MAMSER Handbook 27). In a similar note, Okoye (1978:156) warns that, "it is one thing... to postulate highfalutin ideals about democracy and social justice, but without teaching the people to live and work for them, they will remain but a mere vote-catching jargon..."

### **Conclusion**

Believingly, education, despite the misfortune that might have beset it, is quintessential in any national development. Knowledge is the product of education, and it is thanks to knowledge that innovations and renovations are made. Education forms the mind and *ipso facto* forms character. Such education no doubt churns out individuals that have strong moral base. When such individuals assume the mantle of leadership, they will undoubtedly champion and ensure a value-oriented nation-building.

The gains of education cannot be gainsaid or over-emphasized. It could liberate a people from being perpetual hewers of wood and fetchers of water. It opens the way to conscientization. The more educated one is, the more one's ignorance is opened up. And the acceptance of one's ignorance is the beginning of knowledge. For, "education," says Will Durant, "is a progressive discovery of our ignorance", be it technological, social, political and otherwise. And these are the facets of nation-building, whose live-wire education is. It then behooves us to tap unreservedly the hidden treasures of value-oriented education for nation-building. No doubt Francis (2023) insists that, "universities ought to be "laboratories of dreams and workshops of the future, where young people mature by encountering one another, coming to know one another, and discovering cultures and contexts both near and diverse. In this way, prejudices are dismantled, wounds are healed and fundamentalist rhetoric is rejected." That time to begin the rebuilding of our nation is now; and the task is ours.

### **Recommendations**

1. Parents must remember that they are the primary value-educators of their children and occupy that role effectively.
2. Teachers at every level should be properly remunerated so as to give out their best in the training of future leaders.
3. Government should prioritize education so as to primacy to knowledge and proper use of reason.
4. The Judiciary must have to reawaken their role of checkmating the Executives.
5. The Judiciary should not allow themselves to be turned into mincemeat in the hands of the Executives.

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