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Collapse of African Values: Implications for the Education of African Child With/Without Exceptionalities

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ABSTRACT This paper is a philosophical discourse on the crisis of African values and its consequences on the education of African child with/without exceptionalities. The paper conceived values as that which determines the conduct of a rational being. It is the hallmark and the influence in all matters of human choice and decisions. The paper synthesized what is African values. It discussed the issues that led to the gradual collapse of African values. An analysis was made on how African values could be utilized in the education of African child with/without exceptionalities. Some implications and recommendations were proffered and conclusion drawn.

KEYWORDS : Philosophical discourse; African values; Exceptional children, Special education, education of African child; human choice and decision making.

Introduction: Understanding the Concept of Values.

The concept of values occupies an important position in all human endeavours. It may be referred to as those things which man cares for, admires, cherishes or places worth upon. Etymologically Kalusi (2011) maintained that the term value is derived from the Latin word **Valere** which means "to be strong" or "to be worth". The adjective 'strong' implies an act of the will power of the mind or body, to cherish or to pass judgment upon the nature of a thing and the reasonableness of its usefulness, as compared with something else. In the same development Anya (2010) explained that "to be worth" refers to an ascription of worth or merit one ascribes either to an object, idea or a person for personal social subjective or objective reason. It refers to what is considered as worthwhile and so being worth the time or effort spent. It is also the response of a rational man. Values indeed determine the conduct of a rational being. It is the hall mark and the influence in all matters of human choice and decisions.

Based on the above, Aderinwale (2003) argued that to admit that ideas underlie values is to allege that values are something one can put into words to describe what one believes in. If this is all that is meant by values, it would lead to a very intellectualistic view which locates values entirely in the head. In this regard it should not be less known that some values are rated highly and people live by them because of the feeling that is involved. For instance when one values one's family, health or friendship, there may not be anything deeply intellectual about that, it rather evolves values because one feels strongly about them. In the context of the ongoing polemic, Brubacher (1969) Langford and O'Connor (1973), as well as Amaele (2011), pointed out that values are different as there are different cultures. What some cultures cherish as the basis of their own norms as values, may be frowned at by others. Be that as it may such position could not be true in all situation, for there are core universal values such as the values of life. Since Africa is made up of several nation states as a consequence of colonialism what is African value and what do Africans hold as their great value?

What is African Value?

A number of things influence the development of values and attitudes. The most influencing factor as Goldens (2009) highlighted is a person's belief system. The society in which a person lives determines to a large extent his beliefs. The development of one's values and attitudes has foundation in one's cognition, emotion, and behaviour. African nation-states are made up of diverse tribes with differences based on divergent religious inclinations, languages, and traditional occupations, attitudes, beliefs, values and a host of others. Nevertheless, de-

spite these differences, there is a meeting point as regards what they hold to be their great value.

Corroboratively Egbeke (2012) attested that Africans have a peculiar value systems which they endeavour to live out or practice over the years. African value systems inter alia include: African way of dressing, communal life, respect for human life, and sense of hospitality. As a matter of fact, Wiredu (2012) averred that the mode of being African is characterized by all sorts of relationships, the anthropological dimensions the relation of man to man, and one individual to another are dominant and central. The human factors or concern is indeed most outstanding. This pursuit to socialized living in which the human concern constitutes a centrifugal force is popularly known as "African humanism"

Thus African humanism according to Mbiti (1969) is the philosophy of "being-with". It is with such philosophical concept that the African respects human life for its supreme importance or great value. It therefore implies the African concern in man-for-man, or an involvement of man-with-and-for-others. In the argument of Aderinwale (2003) African philosophy of humanism goes beyond the universe of man to include God, spirits or ancestors, nature or reality in the essential extensions or dimensions. First of all the horizon of the African in his cultural relation-to-others includes God as the **Ens Supremum** (highest being) in his own hierarchy of beings. What is important to note is that "being-with" as "involvement with" in African metaphysics means that the African in his day to day existence holds the supreme being as his utmost value. God is not at all a **Deus Remotus** (distant God), a **Deus incertus** (an uncertain God) nor even a **Deus otiotius** (an idle God), and **Deus ex machina** (a mechanical God)

Relatedly, Gyekye (2009) maintained that a major conception of African values is that they are very practical and pragmatic. They are products of individual and community experiences and hence they are man-centred and community-centred. African values are not based on divine revelation as the Islamic and Christian religious values are; nor on a supposed rationality of man according to the western mind. African values are peculiar values on life both past and present, with emphasis on past experiences. Notably this paper's pot of thesis lies in the submission of Awosika (1992) that, the wind of modern civilization has crept off the known African values. He further alleged that there is some sort of value crisis amidst the African children. The situation has given rise to an ever growing negative influence gingered by the syndrome of westernization or modernity. The above argument lends credence to the idea of collapse of African

values.

Collapse of African Values

The famous novel "Things fall Apart" (1958) by late Professor Chinua Achebe marks the beginning of telling the African story. A story which is characterized by the lost of identity, deterioration of values, and moral decadence. In the same wake of thought some of the African socio-political analysts such as Awosika (1992) and Solbla (2008) highlighted that Africa is engulfed in so many ills, among which are excessive materialism and corruption, which affect both private and public lives of Africans. The political system, the religious system, the social system, the education system and others have been bastardized, mainly due to an obvious and sharp shift from values of human worth and dignity to materialism. People's worth is assessed by the quality of their outlook (dresses), the houses and cars they possess. The analysts further highlighted that African has become so materialistic that everything including education, is done by for the sake of material gain and nothing truly for its intrinsic sake. Anything that cannot bring immediate material gain is assumed to have no value. Such cargo-mentality has encroached into the African society and derided the society cherished principles. For instance:

(a) African Manner of Dressing

African way of dressing is no more found in contemporary day's as co-operate wears and English styles of dressing seem applaudable by the African community. Today most of the young Africans as Bem (1995) alleged have forgotten what made up African manner of dressing. Africans wear baggy trousers, flowing gowns and as head gear either turbans or skull caps (soft felt caps). Africans as well put on the Sokoto-baggy trousers, buba, iro, pele, iboru and dansiki. Occasionally their women dress in blouse and wrapper (called up and down), while the older women would prefer two pieces of wrapper. Their men put on simple shirts, with wrappers tied at one end around the waist and reaching down to the toes, while the young girls prefer one pieces or two yards of cloth for a loin cloth or gown.

With time the Europeans in the guise of civilization enforced their way of life-wholesale on Africans. This was a way of life born out of a western natural adaptation. As years rolled by, the African realized that he is nestled between and betwixt complex imitation and domination of alien values, tastes and life styles. To this end, the African wished to build a new image and personality which was distorted and caricatured by the colonial master. Regrettably, the African ended up in aping the dressing culture of the white man which is utterly antithetical to establishing a viable indigenous culture.

(b) African Languages

One of the distinctive characteristics of man in the "Animal kingdom" is his language and, more pointedly, the ability to formulate and comprehend the written word. According to Ogbe and Chibueze (2013), the colonizers of Africa realized what was the most sensitive variable in group formation of Africa, and capitalized on it. This variable is language. Language is a powerful element in African social formation, in the sense that people of the same language group perceive themselves as coming from the same ancestral stock. Regrettably it has become a common practice in most parts of Africa that when a child is born, the parents prefer teaching the child English or French language in place of the child's dialect and fight hard to prevent any mention of the local dialects.

Such an unbridled quest for the European language or way of expression is a parochial cultural arrogance. Language (dialect) is a very important aspect of culture, and when forgotten or relegated to the background, the people who own the dialect will simply exist. Language is the engine of culture. That is why whatever happens to a people's language happens to their thought pattern. Language therefore is the weaving thread with which a culture is interwoven into a people's life. The tendency to devaluate African language is a devaluation of African thought and existence. In the argument of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) as sustained in Akam (2012) language is that creative ingenuity in man which enables him to write down thoughts, paint images, model figures, or compose a melody thereby adding to and enlarging the content of human artifice whose material is language.

(c) African Communalism

Existence for the African is not individualistic. He is not a lone ranger but essentially man-in-community. This community goes much beyond nuclear family relationship. Supportingly, Ruch and Anyanwu (2008) maintained that:

In the extended African family system its characteristic is that everybody is linked with all the other members, living or dead, through a complex network of spiritual relationship into a kind of mystical body (2008:328).

The African is never isolated. Several persons are assimilated by extension into the role of father; his mother's sisters into the role of mother; his patrilateral uncle's daughters into the role of sister. This is the extended family system of the African. Notably the prototype of African socialism or communalism is not Marxism based on the proletariat, nor even Chinese collectivism whose basic unit is the commune. What is more, socialism is not new to African since the traditional African was profoundly socialist in his mental outlook, and his life was governed by indigenous socialist rules, customs, and institutions which were not at all the products of Marxist ideas. On the part of Nyasani (2007) the African sense of community life has gradually fallen apart. Today's African society has degenerated into mind-your-business syndrome.

(d) African Respect for Human Life

African people portray a way of life emphatically centred upon human interest and values, a mode of living evidently characterized by sympathy and empathy. Such value of compassionable consideration and sense of good human relation, recognize the worth of the human person in the African culture of the antiques. Everyone is accommodated in African community. Little wonder in this culture, the weak and the aged, the incurable, the helpless were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere. Today in Africa the idea of "old people's home" is being introduced. Such idea is contrary to African value for human life. It is rather akin to western individualistic way of life.

A heart rending instance according to Anya (2010) is an event that made headlines in German televisions and media in 1999. In the big seaport city of Hamburg, a woman was found dead in her residence but only the bones were to be found. Why? She was dead in her room since five years. None took notice of her death or life. Of course, the bills got paid at the months end some money got paid into her account, and a mercenary mowed the lawn. There was no particular need to visit her or worry about her whereabouts. So she decayed, but what a classic case of western value and respect for human life.

(e) African Hospitality

Hospitality had been among the common values in Africa. According to Nwabuisi (2000) Africans are known to sacrifice their convinces in most trying situation in order to assist strangers. This value still persists among many Africans. Spontaneous welcome to strangers in general and to visitors in particular characterizes the African society. Visits to relations and sharing of meal's are not necessarily preceded by notifications. Such attitudinal acts of hospitality not only make families lovable, but it is also for the generality of the people to learn how to cultivate the spirit of sharing generously.

The sense of hospitality as Egbeke (2012) alleged is an African value that is still quite alive, but the sense of hospitality within the pre-colonial era is obviously of greater immensity than today's ostentation. During the pre-colonial period as Aderinwale (2003) submitted, Africans easily incorporated strangers and gave them lands to settle. Africans of that date and time thought that the strangers would go one day and the land would revert to the owners. Be that as it may, the strangers or settlers were always welcome any moment. For the Africans one cannot opt out of his original community completely. Indeed little wonder did they (the Africans) imagine that others would have done so too. In the same development on traditional African society, there are no atheists because everyone is of the traditional religion, but due to the collapse of these values some Africans are now atheists. These are the reasons behind the lost of these values to other misappropriations.

Argument on African Values and the Education of African Child

The African child is to be taught that the underlying value in a per-

son's dressing is not only for cultural identity, it can also be used to indicate time and season, even moods such as joy, sorrow or ceremony peculiar to Africans. Since people's manner of dressing is a means of projecting pomp, culture and personality expression, it has significant impact in international or terracial relations. For instance in every international gathering, newsmen and commentators go to great lengths describing the dresses of celebrities and royalties on august occasions.

On the other hand, parents who lay great emphasis for their children to learn only foreign language in place of their dialect is detaching such children from their cultural root. African child who adopts foreign language in place of his cultural language (dialect) often experiences cultural melange because it is from the home that the child is groomed to know the values and, to appreciate the beautiful things in African culture. Any education that fails to inform the learner about who he is and his culture, can never transform such a learner into what he aspires to become. Education of this type distorts the past and truncates the future of the learner. African child who is devoid of African cultural way of expression, will certainly fail to do certain things the way his fathers did them. He will end up as a misfit in his own culture. In the same development, the learning of African child concerning African values would be incomplete if his education fails to inculcate in him that an ideal African is founded on a basic kinship of belongingness and other regardedness.

The African is a community man. The community is the origin of the life of each of its members, both at the micro-level of the parents who gave birth to each, and at the macro-level where the community is the cradle that welcomes, gives name and creates the existential space for the new born to take his place, grow and flourish. The community relationship is ontological. To act is to act in community, towards the community, for the community, from the community, and at any rate in relation to it.

Relatedly, respect for human life is one of the African major values. In this regard the educator of African child has to teach him how to perceive life as an unbroken chain, in which the past cannot be divorced from the future. The African child is to learn that for Africans, human life is sacrosanct. A violation of human life in any way is considered as the greatest crime anyone could commit. Shedding of blood is abhorred in the African community. People who were killed were those whose continued existence constituted a sort of threat to the life of others, and the peace of the society. War was taken to, only as the last resort when all normal courses of actions to search for peace proved abortive and futile. The African child is to know that it is materialism in toady's African society that has led to the unmeditated destruction of life. Other factors not *de facto* excluded.

With reference to the value of African hospitality, the educator of African child has to know that the child learns what he does by imitation, observation and by example. It is within the home environment that the child begins to learn the value of hospitality. This is possible during the child's interaction with the adults and his peer group. Man learns by doing, and according to Aristotle (384 – 322 B. C.) in his philosophical aphorism, *faber fabricando fit* (one becomes a bricklayer

by laying bricks). On the contrary, the indifferent or harsh attitude of parents or other adults towards visitors or strangers use to have great negative consequences on the watching child, who learns by observation or imitation.

Implications of African Values on the Education of African Child with/without exceptionalites.
Since values are the products of individual and community experiences, and Africa is characterized by loss of identity, deterioration of values and moral decadence, these negativities by implication will certainly affect the education of African child in his choice of values and human decision.

Ideally, it is not outlandish for one culture to borrow and integrate elements of other cultures into its value system in order to keep pace with modern civilization. By implication this does not allow total assimilation of foreign culture by another, as well as a total eradication of one's cultural value under the canopy of being a primitive and mythical cultural value.

Recommendations
1. There is need to solve the crisis of African values for better education of African child, such need demands an original approach peculiar to Africa. Thus, Africans have to sit down and chart a course for their lives which should take account of their environment, thoughts and beliefs and care of African child with/without exceptionality.
2. Since Africans now live in Africa, but with a life that is not original to them, devoid of native framework which constitutes local ancestral customs, norms, languages and culture in general, there is need to rediscover the place of African rich cultural heritage which appears to be at the brink of extinction with foreign and incompatible culture.

Conclusion
This academic exercise has striven to prove that Africans have values they cherish. It includes African way of dressing, their languages, communal life, respect for human life, and sense of hospitality. They are very practical and pragmatic. As products of individual and community experiences they are man-centred and community-centred. The paper attributed the gradual collapse of African values as a result of excessive materialism and corruption. The paper also contended to maintain that despite the gradual collapse of African values, they are relevant in the education of the African child.

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