

ESSENCISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the adopted philosophy of education appears to be a set of policies of education, which was adopted from foreign policies, and these policies are not viable and do not match the nature of the Nigerian State. This research work, therefore, considers the philosophy of Essencism as a suitable philosophy of education in Nigeria. This work examines the origin of Essencism, and it studies Essencism as a philosophy of education. This research also looks into the prospects of Essencism and argues that through its principles, Nigeria can be better because of the indigenous philosophy that is adopted. The work examines the history of education in Nigeria and its contributions to the development of the country. This work asserts that it is the lack of a sound philosophy of education that hinders the development of the country; it therefore adopts Essencism as a philosophy of education for Nigeria as espoused by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem. This is anchored on the fact that it is only through a sound philosophy of education that the educative process can play its vital role of the development of man and society. Our approach to the work is basically analytic.

Keywords: Development, Education, Essencism, Philosophy

Introduction

Education is often described as the backbone of national development. It shapes not only the skills and knowledge of individuals but also the values and identity of a society through the individuals. In Nigeria, however, the education system has long struggled with challenges that hinder its ability to contribute meaningfully to the country's growth. This could be because of a lack of an indigenous philosophy of education, which disconnects the system from the rich cultural heritage and lived realities of Nigerians, making it difficult for students to see themselves reflected in their learning and, by extension, in the nation's progress. Hence, there is a need to fix this lack disconnect with a new approach, one that roots education deeply in the Nigerian person, identity, ethics, values, policies and community.

Enters Essencism, a philosophy of education developed by Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, which offers a transformative vision. Essencism emphasizes the essence of being African as the foundation for education. It is a call to make man and his indigenous values the center of the learning process. Instead of education being just about the acquisition of facts or skills, based on a particular curriculum, Essencism invites us to consider education as a journey of becoming. In simpler

terms, Essencism suggests that, education should be used as a means to understand and harness the being and capabilities of man from within them. This article explores Essencism as a philosophy of education that holds promise for Nigeria's educational reform and national development. It argues that by embracing Essencism, Nigeria can develop an education system that not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures a strong sense of identity, responsibility, and unity among its people. Such an education, grounded in authenticity and self-awareness, is crucial for addressing the social and economic challenges the country faces.

The Concept and Origin of Essencism

Essencism is a philosophy that sees man as the centre of all the happenings on earth. Essencism is coined from the word "essence", which refers to the basic nature of a thing or "the quality amongst other qualities that makes a thing what it is"¹¹⁵. Ontologically, essencism is about the defining characteristics that give man his identity. It's the 'whatness' that distinguishes a man from others, be it ideas, beliefs, experiences, history, background, opportunities, origin, even responsibilities. Essencism tries to make us understand what makes up ourselves, It's the must-have traits without which a thing would cease to be what it is.

Essencism as a philosophy originates in the Doctoral work of Samuel Asuquo Ekanem in 2005 titled *A Philosophy of Education for Technological Development in Nigeria*. It is a coinage from the word "essence", which according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, is defined as; "the essential or primary element in the being of a thing; the essence of an item". The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* further defines it as "that which makes a thing what it is"¹¹⁶. Essencism holds that man by nature is both physical and spiritual.¹¹⁷ This philosophy seeks to make known the essence of man on planet earth. This is because the other philosophies/schools of thought, such as Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism and essentialism, tend to diminish the importance of the essence of man as the controller of the earth. These philosophies also attempt to disconnect man from his creator and nature. It seeks to dehumanise and alienate man. Again, Ekanem, in his *Inaugural Lecture*, posits that Essencism offers an intellectual pathway for the recognition of the duality of man. It sets that man, by nature, is

¹¹⁵ Merriam-Webster. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2014).

¹¹⁶ Ekanem, S. Asuquo, *A Philosophy of Education for Technological Development in Nigeria*, Unpublished Doctoral (Ph.D) Dissertation, (University of Calabar, 2005.) 2

¹¹⁷ Ekanem, *A Philosophy of Education for Technological Development in Nigeria*, 3

both physical (body) and spirit (mind),¹¹⁸ this dualism forms the basis of true education: to nurture not only intellectual and technical competence but also spiritual, ethical, and moral awareness.

Essencism as a Philosophy of Education

Essencism is an African philosophy that sees man as the “centrality of all the happenings on earth” and the “determinant and the designer of the world that he lives and controls”¹¹⁹. It is an alternative to foreign educational philosophies like pragmatism, idealism, and empiricism, which Ekanem argues often neglect or diminish the central essence of man and his divine role on earth.

Ekanem traces the origin of education to the **divine purpose of man**, beginning from the Garden of Eden. In the book of Genesis, it is written that God created man in His image to have total dominion over all things, “And God said, let us [Father, Son and Spirit] make mankind in our image, after our likeness, and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts, and over everything that creeps over the earth”¹²⁰ As we see in this scripture, the importance of being created in God’s image is that we have dominion over the fishes, birds, beasts, and everything else that moves on the earth. This reveals that man controls everything that moves in the world; the man was appointed king over creation, and clearly, it is man’s purpose. Being the very last thing that God created before He chose to rest, man embodies the “divine authority of God”. Man is God’s representative on earth, and as a representative, man enjoys a high level of divine immunity. The creation story further confirms this found in Genesis, which tells us that man was put in the “Garden of Eden” to care for and watch over it.¹²¹ Hence, Education, therefore, must reflect this divine purpose and must be designed to unlock both the physical and spiritual potentials of man.

Ekanem and Ekefre also assert that man is imbued with divine intelligence and knowledge to fulfil God’s purpose on earth. His education must then seek to establish this essence: those essential qualities that make a man who he is by God. These qualities of man can be seen in the dual nature of man as both a physical

¹¹⁸ Ekanem, S.Asuquo. *The Value of Philosophy in Education and Technological Development in Nigeria: An Essencist Voyage*, First Inaugural Lecture, Federal University, Wukari: (Calabar: University of Calabar, 2021). 49

¹¹⁹ Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* (Edioms Research, Innovation and Career (ERIC): United States of America, 2018), ISBN: 978-0-244-98019-1. 1

¹²⁰ The Holy Bible (AMPLIFIED VERSION Genesis 1; 26

¹²¹ The Holy Bible Genesis, 2:8; 1:29; 2a;15

and spiritual being. This duality is what constitutes the essence of man¹²². Essencism is a philosophy that aims at putting together all the educative processes for the improvement of human society. Essencism tries to holistically put together all human aspects, especially the physical and spiritual aspects to achieve development¹²³. Ekanem asserts in his book *Essays on Essencism* that “essencism as the emerging philosophy in Africa is an effective combination of practical scientific education and the spiritual essence of man in the educative process to create a holistic technology that will seek to uplift and promote the heart of man positively”¹²⁴.

To Ekanem, Essencism is a philosophy geared towards utilising the educative processes to enhance man’s development in all spheres of his existence. Essencism, as a philosophy, promotes the development of the human personality that is physically strong and spiritually sound. It holds that the educative processes should ignore no aspect of this dual nature of man.

Essencism, just like philosophies such as Existentialism, Empiricism, Essentialism, Pragmatism, Rationalism, Idealism etc., is a creation from an African viewpoint which also seeks to solve educational problems and provide solutions to our society’s issues and, in turn, bring about development in all aspects of our human culture. Essencism insists that any meaningful educational philosophy must begin with **spiritual development**, for it is from the spiritual that true knowledge, values, and inspiration flow. This spiritual grounding then guides and empowers the physical, technical, and intellectual advancement and development of society. In this sense, technological progress, ethical conduct, and national development are not separate endeavors, but outcomes of a properly harmonized spiritual-physical education that respects man’s essence.¹²⁵

Human Development and National Progress

Human development has basic dimensions, including the physical and spiritual (moral and intellectual). These three dimensions of personality can be developed through the educative process. This is because the goal of education, whatever one looks at it, is to equip the educator to function effectively and adequately in society. Education is the bedrock of human development and is, in turn the forerunner of societal transformation. For Ekanem, “Education is generally seen

¹²² Ekanem, S. Asuquo. and Ekefre, E. Nyong. “Philosophical Foundation of Curriculum Development in Nigeria: The Essencist Model”. 232

¹²³ Ekanem, S. Asuquo. and Ekefre, E. Nyong. “Philosophical Foundation of Curriculum Development in Nigeria: The Essencist Model”. 232

¹²⁴ Ekanem, *Essays on essencism* , 24

¹²⁵ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism*, 4.

as a supreme value in human life. The actual meaning of existence is provided through education”¹²⁶.

Education takes care of the full development of the individual personality and the society of which all individuals are a part. Education helps in building the mind of the individual towards the right living. This means that if the individual is not given the right kind of education, the sense of such an individual cannot be soundly developed and positioned to be an agent of change in the society that could bring about social orderliness. For any nation to be transformed there is a need for a sound educational system built on a particular philosophy. Hence, no worthwhile development and progress can occur in any community unless the citizens are well educated and fully equipped to use their education to solve the diverse and complex problems facing that society, thereby bringing about meaningful change and positive progress.

Russell, also in Omoregbe, said that to understand an age or a people, we must understand its philosophy, because the philosophy of a people influences the circumstances in their lives¹²⁷. Therefore, a Philosophy of Education is the leading actor in developing both the individual and society. In other words, for our society to be transformed, the organization must have a system of education that will train and equip the minds of the individual to be just, innovative, creative and above all, responsible. This education system must be such that it seeks to train and unite both the physical and spiritual domain of the human person; it is only when this is achieved that person can be informed, and the society at large can be transformed.

National development, within the Essencist framework, is an outgrowth of human development. A nation cannot progress if its citizens are spiritually disconnected, morally bankrupt, or intellectually malnourished. Omoregbe posits that moral development is key to national development. A country cannot develop if its citizens are not morally developed. Moral development comes before economic, scientific and technological development.¹²⁸ Ekanem argues that Nigeria’s persistent underdevelopment is linked to its lack of a sound educational philosophy. What currently passes for a philosophy of education in Nigeria, according to Ekanem, is merely a policy statement without deep philosophical grounding.¹²⁹ He further argues that, most foreign philosophical systems have failed to provide Africa, and Nigeria in particular, with a solid developmental

¹²⁶ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 85

¹²⁷ Omoregbe, I. Joseph, *Knowing Philosophy*, (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers, 1990), 194.

¹²⁸ Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy*, 197

¹²⁹ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 76

direction because they tend to diminish the essence of man and disconnect him from his Creator and nature. These systems overlook the spiritual and moral dimensions of human nature and thereby perpetuate incomplete models of education, policy, and governance. And this duality is what constitutes the quality of man ¹³⁰. The spiritual aspect of education, according to Essencism, deals with the moral part of education, which is meant to mould the character of the individual.

Essencism, reasserts man's divine origin and mission. Man is not a passive observer in the world but an active co-creator, empowered by divine intelligence and designed to exercise dominion over his environment. The philosophy sees man as the image of God, divinely endowed with intelligence, authority, and moral responsibility.¹³¹ By implication, nature and moral training are at the core of the Essencist curriculum, which causes human development. Therefore, for any nation to develop meaningfully, it must begin by nurturing the essence of its people. In Ekanem's words, "the development of a country is primarily the development of the human dimension, which is the development of human persons."¹³² Furthermore, Essencism promotes peace, justice, and unity by appealing to shared spiritual and moral values. It holds that when individuals recognize their divine essence and interconnectedness, they become more inclined toward harmonious coexistence, civic responsibility, and ethical leadership. Thus, Essencism envisions national development not as a product of policy alone but as a function of the enlightened and spiritually developed individual.¹³³

Essencism as a Philosophy of Education for Nigeria

The Nigerian education system, though backed by ambitious national goals, suffers from foundational weaknesses that continue to stall national development. As Ekanem argues, Nigeria lacks a sound and coherent **philosophy of education**, often confusing policy with philosophy in its foundational documents. A nation's policy on education or philosophy of education is the government's way of realising that part of the national goals can be achieved using education as a tool. The Federal Education Guideline FEG (1981) asserts that Nigeria aims to build a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, and land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens, but fails to articulate a guiding philosophical

¹³⁰ Ekanem, *A Philosophy of Education for Technological Development in Nigeria*,

¹³¹ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 8

¹³² Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 11

¹³³ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 12

framework capable of directing these aspirations into practice.¹³⁴ However, based on these national objectives, the philosophy of Nigerian education has to be geared towards self-realisation, better human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress which is what Essencism as a philosophy is all about.

According to Ekanem, the current system as being deeply rooted in foreign philosophical imports, including empiricism, idealism, and pragmatism, which often prove metaphysically incompatible with the Nigerian socio-cultural setting. These philosophies are criticized for diminishing the spiritual dimension of man and failing to recognize the essence of human nature as both physical and spiritual. Other issues includes; poor funding, high cost of living, poor governance, corruption, lack of infrastructural facilities and amenities, lack of responsibility and control, Politicization of Education, Poorly equipped libraries and laboratories, indiscipline, poor management of schooling, Poor Planning, Flexible system of education and curriculum, poor parenting and guiding added to the lack of sound philosophy of education. As a result, the education system remains fractured. It does not address the holistic development of the human person, thus reproducing citizens who may be intellectually equipped but morally and spiritually indigent.

In contrast however, Essencism offers a **clear, indigenous, and morally anchored educational philosophy** capable of unifying national purpose, healing societal divisions, and driving holistic development. Essencism encourages methods that are **reflective, dialogical, and value-oriented**. Teachers would no longer be mere transmitters of facts but facilitators of moral and spiritual awakening. Learning would prioritize **self-discovery, ethical inquiry, and critical engagement with life's purpose**, enabling students to become "authors of their own lives" and stewards of national development. By placing man at the centre of educational thought, Essencism provides not only a guiding compass for Nigeria but also a potential model for other developing nations seeking authentic philosophical direction in education.

Ultimately, Essencism, as a philosophy of education, does not only transmit knowledge but transforms the human person. It is the kind of philosophy that proposes that there must be a corresponding spiritual development for any physical product. It educates the whole man (body and spirit) towards the fulfilment of divine purpose, and national development. Essencism seeks to

¹³⁴ Ekanem, *Essays on Essencism* 7

develop the individual first through moral and spiritual education, the most important. Essencism then seeks to develop the individual, who will, in turn, create the society in which he lives. This has placed a lot of work on the shoulder of anyone with such education. For this task to be complete, such an individual ought to be very active in achieving this goal. Thus, Essencism is an action-oriented education.

The development of any nation and greatness depends mainly on the development and the effectiveness of implementing the appropriate educational system. This philosophy of education grows the individual to be a better learner or teacher, teaching the correct values and knowledge that will impose/develop in the society. The most important aspect of the development of any country is indisputably the development of human personality. It is, in other words, the moral development of the citizens that constitute the country.

There are other aspects of development, for a country is a living organism with many parts, each of which needs to be developed; this is sound logic and a fact that cannot be faulted or disputed. The development of a country is entirely dependent on the development of the people that make up such a country. This conforms with the Platonic notion that the state is “man-writ-large”. Also, if any part of the human person remains undeveloped, there is bound to be a problem with the developmental process of such a country. Nigeria, as a nation, needs Essencism as a philosophy since it is the combination of the physical and spiritual dimensions of man into a whole that will create a unique system, character and culture for the Nigerian state through education. This combination will help the country check and eradicate those vices that tend to retard and inhibit the country's development.

The spiritual story of man through Essencism will re-establish a direct link with God. And when God is involved in every affair of man, indeed harmony will be established, and development is bound to happen quickly. This spiritual foundation should be laid right from the primary level of the 6-3-3-4 system. Hence, emphasis will be given to moral, ethical and religious instructions at all levels of our educational system. Essencism provides Nigeria with a practical and workable philosophy of education, which will help cultivate in Nigerians a high level of “techne-sensibility”, Ekanem in his work asserts that;

Man was created to dominate his environment as established by God. So, man's stay at the Garden of Eden was to equip him with a religious education that would aid him in coping and dominating his environment outside the garden. This portrays

that historically; man's education was divinely designed to reflect his techno nature.¹³⁵

Therefore, Essencism will improve Nigeria's sensibility to scientific, technical and practical creativity. As Nwoko (1992) puts it, "...natural philosophy of technology must depend on a working philosophy as a sound philosophy of technology, is itself, in turn, an educational scheme."¹³⁶ A nation's philosophy of education determines the direction of its people's creative and productive development, a new culture and character that reflects the totality of a man as a person to dominate his environment while preserving it; and a national consciousness of peaceful co-existence that depicts peace and love, all the vices that breed crisis in Nigeria will be eradicated systematically and with ease.¹³⁷

Also, Essencism will bring about stability in government. Ekanem puts it that with Essencism, the country's leadership will learn to respect the spirit and letters of the constitution. This is because Essencism will bring all the knowledge of what is good and harmful to the consciousness.¹³⁸ Again, Ekanem states that Essencism emphasizes spiritual development. A divine assignment or purpose on earth will see every Nigerian as having the same divine appointment or sense. As such, there will be a high level of religious tolerance. This will systematically eradicate the problems associated with religious riots and intolerance.¹³⁹

More so, with Essencism as our philosophy of education, scientific and technological advances will manifest a reflective essence of man as both a physical and spiritual being. Essencism as a philosophy sees man as the centrality of all the happenings on earth and as the determinant and designer of the world that he lives and controls. Hence, essencism becomes a practical philosophy of education that will be holistic enough to correct the anomalies in the Nigerian educational system.

¹³⁵ Ekanem, A *Philosophy of Education for Technological Development in Nigeria*, 49

¹³⁶ Matthew I. Nwoko, *Philosophy of Technology and Nigeria*, (Claretan Institute of Nigeria; Owerri Nigeria, 1992). 14

¹³⁷ Ekanem, S.Asuquo. & Esien, O.E. "Creative Education and Technological Development in Nigeria: The Essencist Strategy". *Contemporary Journal of Inter Disciplinary Studies (COJIS)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2014. 12

¹³⁸ Ekanem, S.Asuquo., Zhema S. & Okolisa, C.Precious "Ethnic Agitations and Restructuring of Nigeria: Essencism as a Panacea for true Federalism and Peace", *Contemporary Journal of Inter Disciplinary studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2018. 148.

¹³⁹ Ekanem, Samuel Asuquo, and Ekeng Nyong Ekefre. "Education and Religious Intolerance in Nigeria: The Need for Essencism as a Philosophy." *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n2p303> 303

Lastly, Essencism as a philosophy seeks to establish a spiritual foundation for its education. This spiritual development can lead to inspirational advancement of knowledge that practical applicability will lead effortlessly to technological development. This then satisfies the physical essence of man since it is through technological advancement that man is provided with physical comfort. But for the physical comfort to be attained, there must be a corresponding spiritual level of development. Also, inclusive in this spiritual aspect of man's essence is the ethical value of what is good and evil. This knowledge Essencism will provide will lay bare to all Nigerian citizens and make it possible as a socio-cultural practice that honesty pays. Essencism is a philosophy of education that can effectively develop a balanced personality of the physical and the spiritual.

According to Samuel Asuquo Ekanem *et al.*, when Essencism is brought into the educational and environmental domains, it will help:

- i. Engage the citizens of all demographics to think critically and creatively when evaluating scientific, technological and environmental issues.
- ii. Assist the citizens in making informed and educated judgments about scientific, technological and environmental issues.
- iii. Develop skills and a commitment to act independently and collectively to sustain the environment and improve science and technology methods and qualities.
- iv. Enhance citizens' appreciation of science, technology, and environmental impacts.
- v. Moderate the citizens' explorative and exploitative tendencies, bringing about science and technology that will be environmentally friendly.
- vi. Re-orient education to empower individuals to make informed decisions for scientific, technological and environmental integrity, social justice, and economic liability for both present and future generations concerning cultural diversities.
- vii. Promote general education on climate change-related to science and technology. This will enhance public understanding of climate change, science and technology and their consequences and problems. Also, this will help to prepare present and future generations to limit the magnitude of these and how best to respond to this challenge.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ "Educational Policy and Technological Development in Africa: An X-Ray of Problems and Solution in the Nigeria Perspective", African Research Review. *An International MultiDisciplinary Journal* Vol. 4 (4), No. 17, 2010. 229-

The Relevance of Essencism as a Philosophy of Education for Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the problem of education can be traced back to colonialism. What we inherited as a philosophy of education does not have our cultural bearings. According to scholars of education, education must come from the culture of the people. There are many questions about what Nigeria has as a philosophy of education. In some quarters, it is viewed as just policies drafted without an indigenous philosophy that could make it easier to achieve educational goals. One importance of Essencism as a philosophy of education, according to Emmanuel Kelechi Iwuagwu, is to fill the vacuum created by a lack of philosophy of education in Nigeria.¹⁴¹ While, Ekanem and Ogar assert that examining and re-examining man's activities in society becomes a sine-qua-non for projecting and instilling a formidable, stable and violence-free culture. This is where ethics or moral philosophy is best suited.¹⁴²

Basically, Essencism seeks to develop the individual first through moral and spiritual education, which is the most important; then, every other development will follow. The philosophy of Essencism is a philosophy of self-realisation. Secondly, Essencism as a philosophy of education in Nigeria can help promote development in the country and assist in curbing the menace of religious intolerance. Thirdly, Essencism seeks to develop the individual, who will, in turn, create the society in which he lives. It will help Nigerians to have a single socio-cultural value, which all citizenry will pursue to achieve a national goal, which is the goal of development.

More so, Samuel Asuquo Ekanem, Magdalyn Aboh, and Kidzu T. Oweh in the article; *Essencism as an African Paradigm towards the Salvation of the Environment*, presented some significant relevance of Essencism as a philosophy of Education in Nigeria as follows;

- i. Establish a relationship between science and technology, environment and social issues.
- ii. Combine sound knowledge of diverse fields and professions.
- iii. Evaluate science, technology and the environment and their impacts and the general development of the society.
- iv. Critically estimate and reflect on scientific and technological impacts on ethical values, principles and standards.

¹⁴¹ Iwuagwu, E. K. "The Need for a Contemporary Nigerian Philosophy to be taught at Every Level of Nigeria's Educational Programme". *European Scientific Journal Edition*, Vol. 12, No. 26, September, 2016, 15.

¹⁴² Ekanem, S.A., Ogar J. N. (eds). *A Systematic Approach to Philosophy & Logic*, (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2008). 63

- v. Create and bring about the ability to solve problems and articulate decision-making skills that will help ease the negative impacts of science and technology.
- vi. Make the citizenry very effective, active, and participatory in issues related to science, technology, and the environment.
- vii. Create environmental impact awareness of science and technology.
- viii. Make science education to be social and practical oriented.
- ix. Define the social relevance of science and technology.
- x. Place man as the focal point of all developmental processes, especially in science, technology, and the environment.
- xi. Bring about a science and technology system that will be environmentally and socially friendly.
- xii. Create a harmonious relationship between man, nature, science and technological progress.
- xiii. Identify and correct a specific unfortunate image of technology through education, such as myopic accepting all technological innovations as good and indicating development.¹⁴³.

Ultimately, through Essencism, man will have the means and capacity to subjugate development through activities that favour and promote balancing nature's demands. Also, through Essencism, man will come to the consciousness of the universal law, which is anchored on the principles of equality, balance and harmony.

Essencism as a philosophy of education adequately satisfies the four identified aspects of education: education as a bridge between the past and the present that shares the future; education as a tool for social change and development; and education as a private function. The implication is that any practical, progressive philosophy of education that can engender development must necessarily recognise the culture, the past, the present and the future of society; such philosophy must also be involved in the adaption of social changes the holistic development of the individual.

Towards Development in Nigeria: The Essensist Path

According to Nwafor, the issue of national development has always been a subject of great concern to both developed and developing nations of the world. As a result of its importance to its citizens' socio-economic and political well-being, no

¹⁴³ Ekanem, S.A., Oweh K. T. & Aboh M. "Essencism as an African Paradigm towards the Salvation of the Environment". *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, September 2017. 227

government has ever failed to place its overall development on the front burner of its policies and programmes.¹⁴⁴

Again, for Nwafor (2006), as sighted in the article: *Philosophy of Education and National Development: A Philosophical Appraisal*; Development typically means “man’s effort to make the necessary impact on nature; his environment, and on himself to transform and improve himself and his environment.” Development in the broader context deals with society's socio-economic and political life; it implies the fulfilment, realisation or actualisation of goals and objectives, hopes and aspirations of that society. The completion process begins when an organisation distinguishes its insufficiency, sets goals for itself, and decides to make deliberate efforts to remedy perceived deficiencies to attain desired goals. And these goals of development can be achieved through science and education.¹⁴⁵

Education, no doubt, is the key to any nation's socio-economic and political development. Nwafor agreed that ‘This is because education essentially stipulates the quality of human capital, on which depends the development of the available material resources.’ This is based on the philosophy of the nation’s education system, which encapsulates her needs, goals, objectives and aspirations.¹⁴⁶

Nigeria’s truncated development can be explained by the fact that the vital aspect of man’s essence has not been keyed into the educative process of the nation. As such, the country remains underdeveloped. In other words, Nigeria’s development is curtailed because the importance of man’s spiritual being is not included in the process of education. However, Essencism emerged as a philosophy of education and has brought to light the need for the acceptance of the dual nature of man. Essencism combines man's physical and spiritual dimensions into a whole to create a unique system, character, and culture for the Nigerian state through education. This combination will help the country in her developmental effort and processes to avoid the mistakes of western civilisation which neglects the spiritual dimension but instead places more emphasis on the material (physical) aspect of development”¹⁴⁷

So, Essencism will help restore sound thinking about our educational system and bring to focus a new understanding of our culture and the national needs of students. It will make the teachers not merely the professional repertoire of scientific and technological knowledge they give as instructions; they will become

¹⁴⁴ Naboth, H. A. Nwafor “Philosophy of Education and National Development: A Philosophical Appraisal”, *Information and Knowledge Management*, Vol.4, No.6, 2014. ISSN 2224 896X (Online). 92

¹⁴⁵ Naboth, H. A. “Philosophy of Education and National Development: A Philosophical Appraisal”, 92.

¹⁴⁶ Naboth, H. A. “Philosophy of Education and National Development: A Philosophical Appraisal”, 92.

¹⁴⁷ Ekanem, Essays in Essencism, 38

reflective practitioners who will raise critical questions about our technological progress.

Also, Essencism as our indigenous philosophy will provide Nigerians with peculiar knowledge, logic, skills, and attitudes to develop a unique creative talent that will reflect the national character in terms of productive capacity. It will also provide a practical and workable philosophy of education which processes will aid in cultivating in Nigerians a high level of “techno-sensibility.”

In addition, Essencism helps to grow a complete human personality, with a rational, sentimental free, focused, just and independent mind-set that only wants to improve and not fight with one another over religion, politics or football. This philosophy of education is a response to the lack of indigenous philosophy of education in Nigeria. It emphasises the dual nature of man and seeks to educate both the physical and spiritual character for a corresponding development.

Conclusion

For Nigeria to achieve meaningful and sustainable development, it must rethink its approach to education starting with its philosophical foundation. A holistic educational reform grounded in Essencism would prioritize the development of the whole person, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. This includes embedding moral and ethical instruction in the curriculum from the primary level, as well as fostering spiritual consciousness alongside technical competence. In this model, education becomes not just a means of social mobility or economic productivity, but a transformative process aimed at actualizing the essence of the human person.

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