



Language and Value Orientations in Higher Education

An African Socio-Ethical Understanding

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Language, value orientation, higher education, ethics, diaspora, Africa.

Abstract

Language plays a central role in the life and activities of our world. This article is a theoretical analysis of the dynamic powers of language in driving possible value-based orientations in higher education. The multilingual nature of the continent of Africa and its bilateral lingual experiences during the colonial eras should be considered as both factual and impacting factors in evaluating language dynamics within value orientations and learning in the African case study. To this end, the article attempts to contribute to the fact that there is a need to find or reinstate value in Africa's linguistics dynamics and its complexities, as well as give them properly structured orientations within the new phase of repositioning Africa in the global spaces.

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1. Introduction

One of most influential philosophical works of the 20th century, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, has been presenting great difficulties of interpretation, although it is clear that the relation between language and thinking for Wittgenstein or between language and the statement of facts – as representing the world of realities– are grounded in the understanding of logic¹. Should this entail that we can *define* in a *definite way* the *world*, or formulate a logically well-formed *worldview*, is much less clear following Hans Blumenberg and Otto Neurath critical reception of the Austrian's philosopher's early philosophy of language. Following logical positivism, words can only describe reality if they follow logical forms, but terms as world are not scientific, therefore should not be captured by positivist terminology without further explanations (Monod, 2016, 123)². Mere and pure logical propositions cannot or may not be integrally sufficient to depict everything that language is or can stand for. Some possible unspeakable parts of reality, or what shows itself without words, are limits to the idea that human natural language or systems of signs based on logic exhaust the richness of all possible worlds. Nevertheless, language has powerful dynamics rooted in life and existence, which, apart from formal logic, can be intuitional and inspirational.

Thus, human volition, recognised as an intrinsic human faculty, is not just a calculator waiting to add, subtract, divide or multiply information with which

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. by C. K. Ogden, 1922, Standard Books, 2019. <https://standardebooks.org/ebooks/ludwig-wittgenstein/tractatus-logico-philosophicus/c-k-ogden>

² Hans Blumenberg's reading of the metaphors of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, are certainly worth, see in particular: Monod, Jean-Claude. "'The world is. . .'" Readings of *Tractatus* by Blumenberg", *Archives de Philosophie*, vol. 79, no. 1, 2016, pp. 121-134. For a nice short introduction to Wittgenstein's logical positivism at the time of his *Tractatus*, discover: Buckingham, W., P. J. King, D. Burnham, M. Weeks, C. Hill, J. Marenbon, S. Tomley, eds. 2011. *The Philosophy Book, Big Ideas Simply Explained*. Great Britain: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 250.

it is fed. Volition also encompasses the capability of certain forms of first ideas, the formulations of which could be experience-based or intuition-based. When formulations of such microstructures (values) become acceptable modes and conventions in any human society, they form an integral part of the powers and dynamics on which the language of such society could be based in matters of valuation.

In relation to the citadel of human intellectual and character formation, higher education, it becomes not just relevant but deeply inevitable to recognise both the need to teach values and the powers and influential dynamics of the mode of knowledge and communication – Language. This is deeply important because the status of values in social and human sciences has generated a debate over time between those interested to keep linguistic statements their normative power in practical human activities - such as ethics, religion and politics, whether or not their measure be justified scientifically (Adorno, Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School), whereas others affirm that deductions cannot be ignored in practical fields of human activities, which are not simply a matter of communicative debate or based on the ground of a democratic principle of rational discourse (Popper, the Vienna Circle), but primarily related to a purely formal projects of unifying all sciences, distinct from the way scientists and philosophers may debate, in case bas case contexts, on the subject of knowledge or it’s epistemological methods (Vrahimis, 2020, 562)³.

If we argue that knowledge and learning sit predominantly on the volition platform where the perceptive capability cannot be disassociated from the lingual mode that carries the message or information to be communicated. Furthermore, in this case, since the fundamental relationship between perception and knowledge lies in the very nature of their unifying focus, namely the examination of the forms, scope and origin of an image or object of learning, the applied didactic powers through the scientific and sensorial choice of language, must be able to provide the volitional faculties with the

³ Andreas Vrahimis, “Scientism, Social Praxis, and Overcoming Metaphysics: A Debate between Logical Empiricism and the Frankfurt School”, *HOPPOS*, Vol. 10, 2, 562–597, 562, Fall 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1086/710184>

communicable principles necessary for proper examination of possibilities and reliability regarding objects of knowledge. In other words, the lingual choices must aid sensory differentiation and classification (Detel, 2017)⁴. This is to say, on the line of the Frankfurt school, that proper value orientations are correlational to the scientific choices of language, didactics and communication methods.

2. The concept of value: A theoretical approach

There are diverse approaches to what value in itself means and the elements that could be associated with it. Henckmann proposes that under the concept, values are those “circumstances of any kind that satisfy a need or interest, evoke a feeling of pleasure, deserve recognition, appear to be desirable, and as such worth striving for” (Heckmann 2003: 648)⁵. In other words, value encompasses such expressions as ‘veritable, the good, beautiful, holy’ (Fees 2000: 12), worthy, acceptable, applicable, etc. The central focus of the value concept is on what counts and qualifies as practicable, adaptable, suitable and sharable. In philosophical contextualisation, value is considered central from the point of view of ethical decision-making. It serves as the reference point upon which actions and their moral impacts are to be evaluated. Again, in its sociological connotations, value stands as the empirical image through which a people's defined and acceptable mode of life could be measured and dimmed operational (Lindner, 2017)⁶.

⁴ Detel, W. 2017. *Grundkurs Philosophie, Band 3: Philosophie des Geistes und der Sprache*, Philipp Reclam jun. Stuttgart. Also: Detel, W. 2017: *Grundkurs Philosophie, Band 4: Erkenntnis- und Wissenschaftstheorie*. Stuttgart: Reclam Universal-Bibliothek.

⁵ Henckmann, W. 2003. “Art. Wert I. Philosophisch”, TRE 35, 648–653.

⁶ Fees, Konrad, 2010. “Bildungstheoretische Sicht”. In: Zierer, Klaus (Hg.). *Schulische Werteerziehung: Kompendium*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verlag Hohengehren, 95-101. Lindner, Konrad. 2017. *Wertebildung im Religionsunterricht Grundlagen, Herausforderungen und Perspektiven*, Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh.

Furthermore, based on the conceptual background above, this article agrees with the post-metaphysical opinion of Jürgen Habermas, who, in his *discourse ethics*, opined that any meaningful discussion about values should be predicated on their cultural and contextual relevance⁷. In other words, they constitute specifics upon which individuals or groups measure their relationship with one another. Hence, the binding character of values needs to be predicated on the power of intersubjective forms of ‘rational discourse’ concerning forms of mores that should guide what is to be taken as common or communal. The realm of this rational discourse is, for Habermas, the realm of morality (Lindner 2017), which remains an inseparable correlate in all bodies of formulations to which the name value can be ascribed. Thus, for Habermas, that which is moral, and by implication valuable, is “the sum of the intuitions that inform our behaviour towards being careful and considerate in relating to one another and avoiding the exploitation of the extreme vulnerability of people” (Habermas 1991: 14)⁸. Against this backdrop, there are six dimensions of understanding the ethical (philosophical) importance of values in relation to their sociological connotations and relevance:

Values are culture-dependent

Values flow from an individual’s or group’s feelings and volitions about a particular way of life. They relate to what is suitable for a person or what can be shared collectively on a relatively enduring basis. Thus, values shape the identity of individuals or groups, and Habermas ‘sees in them integrated parts that are culture- and person-dependent’ (Lindner 2017: 86)⁹. Values, as culture-dependent, influence the attitudes required for specific collective behaviour.

⁷ Habermas, J. 1991. *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik*. Frankfurt/Main.

⁸ Habermas, J. 1991, op. cit.

⁹ Lindner, K. 2017. *Wertebildung im Religionsunterricht Grundlagen, Herausforderungen und Perspektiven*, op. cit, 86.

Values are teleological

While norms spell out obligations and, therefore, are deontological, values themselves have a teleological character in the sense that they provide the content upon which the normative orientations and purposes of individual and collective interests are based. They help assess what should be “ingrained or adopted as a society’s way of life” (Habermas 1992: 72) which eventually would give rise to norms¹⁰. They provide moral exclusivity for behaviours and actions that should be deemed permissible. In other words, what becomes or should become adopted as permissible is the moral destination of values (Birnbacher 2016) since what is known as moral judgement is often ‘all that reflects the value standard and their interpretations within specifics of cultural and intersubjective world picture’ (Habermas 2004: 311)¹¹.

Values are not independent of their agency – the human person

It would be contra-intuitive to accept the existence of values that are conceivable without their agency, the human person. Thus, in the post-metaphysical pluralistic society, the emergence of values themselves is intrinsically predicated on the first challenges placed on the individual human persons to defend and master their freedom of choice about what is best for them, the identity they want to preserve and the person each of them wants to be (Habermas 2002)¹². This central role of the agent is also the background upon which Sen’s capability approach is built, where all *capabilities* are first taken to be individual values, which should integrate with the collective values to create the needed *functionings*, in other words, ‘a focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be, that is, on their capabilities’

¹⁰ Habermas, J. 1992. *Faktizität und Geltung. Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats*, Frankfurt/Main, 72.

¹¹ Birnbacher, D. 2016. “Heiligen die Zwecke die Mittel? Einführung in die Konsequentialistische Ethik”. In: Johann S. A./Kurt B./Michael Q./Ludwig S. Eds. *Grundkurs Ethik: Grundlagen I*. Ventis Verlag, Münster.

¹² Habermas, J. 2002 “Werte und Normen. Ein Kommentar zu Hilary Putnams Kantischen Pragmatismus”. In: Raters, M./Willasschek, M. Eds. *Hilary Putnam und die Tradition des Pragmatismus*, Frankfurt/Main, 280–305.

(Robeyns 2003: 5)¹³. This means in effect that in the agents subsists the responsibility for “the development and setting of values and contribute to the reproduction of such values in support of their socio-cultural contexts, all in a socially integrative manner” (Lindner 2017: 89, op. cit.).

Values are intersubjectively communicable

Values need to be communicable for them to be legitimate. The expected action of communicating happens intersubjectively and, therefore, gives values acceptance and authenticity. With reference to Habermas, this communication factor is the prerequisite for defending and legitimising values. It is the weapon for reconciling conflicts of action and interest (Lindner 2017: 89, *ibid.*). The intersubjective relation to values, therefore, must be able to integrate and incorporate the interest of the ‘other’, admit mutual exchange of perspective, and, in this way, bring about a form of ‘We-Perspective’ that has inclusive character in approach (Habermas 2002, *ibid.*). The known traditional forms of solidarity are built upon this characteristic of values, where partners entrust one another with their intersubjective interests and value orientations.

Values are universalisable (generalisable) through norms

When the intersubjective level is made functional and legitimate, it would lead to the emergence and recourse to integrated and generally accepted norms (Habermas 1983). The universalisation of values, in other words, the possibility of collective participation, therefore, becomes drawn from the socio-culturally mediated (negotiated) norms. The character of such collective participation should support the application of general and shared

¹³ Robeyns, I. 2003. “The Capability Approach: An Interdisciplinary Introduction”. Preprint. https://www.academia.edu/621260/The_capability_approach_an_interdisciplinary_introduction.

moral insights and foster motivations for translating them into individual and collective moral actions (Habermas 1983: 119).¹⁴

Values are relative

Because values are fundamentally anchored in particular systems and are primarily encountered by individual freedom of choice, they are considered relative. However, in a situation where this relativity elicits conflict of interests, disagreement or consensus disorder, which often characterises the post-metaphysical age with its strong affinity for plurality, the choices would need to be negotiated, thereby giving rise to shared norms of behaviour (Habermas 2002: 295f; Lindner 2017: 91). Nevertheless, the emergence of such norms does not destroy the relative independence and freedom of the subject himself or herself. It instead coordinates its intersubjective value of it.

In line with the above-discussed properties on values, it is revealed that the general discussion on the subject is an intrinsic part of the way of life that is operational among individuals and groups. Higher educational institutions themselves are forms of human and intellectual societies where intersubjective levels of life mingle to produce intellectuals, leaders, innovators, managers and motivators. Thus, the value orientations employed as formation instruments play a decisive role in shaping both individual person's approaches and volitions, and the norms that guide character, behaviour and relationships in a given society. So, what then defines these value orientations?

3. Value orientation in higher education: A normative ethical approach

To define an approach as normative and ethical is to see in its forms of moral impacts that affect individuals and society. Value orientation as normative, on the one hand, means that values fundamentally help in the prescription and

¹⁴ Habermas, J. 1983. *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln*, Frankfurt/Main.

evaluation of both actions and omissions. The mode of assessment based on known value orientations is often associated with words like “good, atrocious, friendly, holy, illegal, delicious”, etc. (Bayertz, 2018)¹⁵. On the other hand, value orientation as ethical means that they provide the contents upon which shared principles and norms that guide behaviours and attitudes in a society are based – the guiding principles of actions for good and acceptable life. It is against this backdrop that this article tries to understand the concept of value orientation.

Value orientation as a concept

First, orientation is an attitude, an approach or interest directed towards a purpose that is related to things and activities. In the Afro-Igbo understanding, orientation is defined by the word *nhàzí*, which relates, by extension, to such concepts as leadership, governance, or management. Thus, value orientation, in its most everyday understanding, would describe the state of managing, governing or administration of values to harmonise individual lives with shared interests, especially with regard to the plural society and the global spaces. The very act of orientating oneself towards established value systems is already a normative attitude to the norms that emerged due to those values and which tend to be universally applied. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck mentioned such values as “honesty, courage, peace and wisdom” (Hills 2002: 3)¹⁶.

The attitudinal basis of value orientation is predicated on the essential biological traits which characterise and form the basis for the development of cultures. With such characteristics, individuals or societies always have the intrinsic feeling, in other words, the orientation that ‘their own cultural beliefs and practices are normal and natural, and those of others are strange, or even

¹⁵ Bayertz, K. 2018. “Drei Moralitätskriterien“. *Vorlesung: Modul I, Theoretische Grundlagen der angewandten Ethik. Weiterbildungsstudiengang Angewandte Ethik VIII*, Westfälische Wilhelm-Universität, Münster.

¹⁶ Hills, M. D. 2002. “Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s Value Orientation Theory”. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 4(4)*. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1040>. *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education* 2(2023)

inferior or abnormal' (Hills 2002: 4). Value orientation by inference, therefore, represents both the implicit and explicit character of an individual or a group adopting socio-cultural desirables and making them available modes, means and expected ends of actions and volitions (Hills 2002; Kluckhohn 1951)¹⁷.

In the end, value orientation becomes the orientation towards the normative levels of both individual and intersubjective relationships under such shared principles and modes of living as prudence, the observance of customs and traditions, religious beliefs, applicable laws, aesthetic norms, norms guiding professions, institutional norms, technological norms, environmental norms, human rights laws, etc. Inbuilt into such norms is their prescriptive power which awaits conformity with individual or group orientations.

Value orientation in higher education

Perhaps, the most standard description of a Higher Educational Institution for the ordinary person on the street would be an institution that imparts values. Thus, the fundamental question about the quality of education in a given society is invariably the question about the value it holds for its products (the beneficiaries) and the general future of such a society. To this end, discussing value orientation in higher education is to ask fundamental questions about the integrative and sustainable platform upon which the philosophy and ideology of the institution are built. It is, in the context and focus of this article, to evaluate and emphasise the critical role which language and modes of communication play in the formation and transformation of the beneficiaries of the institution.

This article considers values orientation as having three characteristics, namely cultural, educational and normative. Its cultural character defines the fact that it is integrally attitudinal and volitional. In other words, it is built on modes of life, motivations and aspirations of the human agents themselves,

¹⁷ Kluckhohn, C. K. 1951. "Values and Value Orientations in the Theory of Action". In: T. Parsons and E. A. Shils. Eds. *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

whether as individuals, groups, institutions or society. The educational character defines the communicability of values and their intersubjective relevance. They can be learned, transferred and shared by agents or groups who form the recipient of their emergence and operation. The normative character of values attaches to them moral meanings and responsibilities. Thus, they are looked upon as principles upon which shared patterns of behaviour can be based and practised.

With reference to higher education, value orientation builds on vital ethical policymaking towards “a top-down political (and administrative) willingness” (Ozumba 2018: 28) in the pursuance of value-based transformations and in reducing the ills of entropic institutional attitudes which may lead to dishonesty and irresponsibility¹⁸. This oriented platform for policymaking is foundational to institutions – educational, political, economic, cultural or religious. When we interpret Hills with reference to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s Value Orientation Theory, a common denominator would be that the orientation itself is always the power to discover values, challenge problems and institute alternatives and solutions as responses (Hills 2002), whereby, “All alternatives of all solutions are present in all societies at all times but are differentially preferred” (Hills 2002: 4). It means that value orientation accounts for all the efforts to be invested at any time among a wide empirical range of opportunities, possibilities and alternatives. All of these go into the systematics in building strategies for containing the demands, problems and challenges of a given society. Following the analyses of Hills, this article reflects on and develops a unique form of five integrative and interrelated ideological focuses predicated on the five criteria given by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck as determinant factors for problem-solving and the eventual orientation towards differentiated values proposed to be present in any known society:

¹⁸ Ozumba, B. 2018. “Going Ethical for University of Nigeria. Global Implications for Policy and Practice”. In: Obiora F. I/Onyia, C. Eds. *Ethics in Higher Education: Foundations for Sustainable Development*, Education Ethics Series No. 2. Geneva: Globethics Publications, 27-35.

- **Time-Consciousness (-Differentiation) Value Orientation**, which suggests that the temporal phases like the past, present and future influence the shared orientation of a people in a given society. Thus, while some cultural conventions lay emphasis on the central role of the past, mainly identifiable with the teaching of traditions and belief systems, others concentrate more on planning for a more safeguarded future, perhaps through forms of belief and practice, reconstructions and modifications, for example, through economic savings, sustainability discourses, etc. Again, the third group invests more in the ‘here and now’, evaluating what the givens are and their relevance in making everyday life bearable and liveable (Hills 2002).
- **Ecology-Based Value Orientation**, focuses on the relationship and dialogue between humans and their natural environment. Differentiations in this dialogue elicit forms of orientation like submission to nature, harmony with nature or dominating nature: “In certain cultures, people submit to nature, in others, there is harmony between the actors, and still, others want to dominate nature” (IKUD Seminare)¹⁹. The contemporary debates within the focus of this value orientation have given rise to the developing discourses on Anthropocene. Vogt proposes, in line with this value orientation, a form of modern anthropology which would support “a kind of *human-ecological* Anthropocene research (on the conditions and criteria of responsible coevolution of ecological, socio-cultural and economic systems” (Vogt 2016: 97).²⁰

¹⁹ IKUD Seminare, “Value Orientation Theory von Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck”; <https://www.ikud.de/glossar/value-orientation-von-kluckhohn-strodtbeck.html>.

²⁰ Vogt, M. 2016. “Humanökologie – Neuinterpretation eines Paradigmas mit Seitenblick auf die Umweltenzyklika *Laudato Si*”, In: Haber, Wolfgang/Held, Martin/Vogt, Markus, Eds. *Die Welt in Anthropozän: Erkundungen in Spannungsfeld zwischen Ökologie und Humanität*, München: oekom.

- **Intersubjective Value Orientation**, seeks to establish specifics between the individual and communal levels of relationship. It is an orientation to answer questions about autonomy and heteronomy, individual and community, hierarchy and consensus among *lineal* (higher authority or authorities within the group) and *collateral* (consensus within the extended group of equals) groups (Hills 2002: 5).
- **Volitional Value Orientation**, where the emphasis is placed on the ‘life activity and self-realisation’ (IKUD Seminare) of the human person, seeking the ‘prime motivation for behaviour’ (Hills 2002: 5). This level integrates the self-actualisation concepts like *being*, *becoming* (to grow, to progress) or *doing* (achieving), as found in a nutshell through the whole post-metaphysics thought of Amartya Sen.
- **Ontology-Based Value Orientation**, concerns itself with the constant effort to grapple with the ‘nature of human nature’ (Hills 2002: 6). In relation to society’s experiences and the observed behavioural patterns of the humans themselves, emerges the orientation to understand the dynamics of the good, bad or a mixture of the two, the mutable or immutable (Hills 2002: 6) regarding the human person, his or her natural self, as well as other conditionalities that may impact on character. H. G. Wells once opined that laws are made for the recalcitrant. In other words, there exists, in actuality, behavioural traits which could inform some kinds of *human-nature-based* categorisation as good or bad, mutable or immutable.

Based on the above categorisation, value orientation in higher education is none other than the expounding of these basic levels of approaches through institutional policymaking and curriculum structuring. It is the orientation to form the human person within the individual’s self-awareness, in relation to the *other-selves* outside the individual and, of course, with regard to the natural environment. To this end, the general purpose of higher education (or education in general) is to build in the beneficiaries a mindset capable of

engaging the outer societies and the world with a sense of freedom, autonomy, intersubjectivity, responsibility, etc. Therefore, both the general academic programmes and choices of the language of communication must integrate to achieve the orientations needed to answer the sensitive question about ‘the purpose of schooling and the nature of the society we want to create both now and in the future’ (Scoffham 2020: 23)²¹.

4. The role and power of language in value communication

Culturally speaking, language itself is a value. It is a value in communication, relationship and interaction. Iroegbu described the role and value of language by alluding to the fact that ‘the linguistic expression of a people is definitional of their essential being and acting. For it is the soul of culture, the heart of the environment and the spirit that innovates and directs a people’s life’ (Ozumba 2017: 135; Iroegbu 1994: 134)²². The three metaphysical terms employed by Iroegbu – soul, heart and spirit – are pointers, not just to the mere use of language, but to the mental and psychic powers and influence embedded in it. To this end, one can rightly say that language is motivation, the force of influence, instigator and action initiator. It can shape and determine behaviour, etc. With regard to value communication and orientation, language is not just spoken. The choices of words have and should have meaning in relation to the desired value orientation.

When we discuss the role and power of language within the philosophy of language, it would be ascertained that this power lies in integrating the three most basic characters of ‘speech acts’, namely the descriptive, which is the subject of the statement made; the expressive, which defines the attitude of

²¹ Scoffham, S. 2020. “In Search of Core Values”. In: Bamber, P. Ed. *Teacher Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. Critical Perspectives on Values, Curriculum and Assessment*, New York: Routledge, 23-30.

²² Iroegbu, P. 1994. *Enwisdomization and African Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities, 134-5.

the speaker himself or herself, the statement carrier; and the appellative, which represents the quality and ability of the statement to lead into action (Detel, 2017, op. cit.). It means that there is always, in the first instance, a unity between the statement carrier, the statement itself and the intended purpose. In a second instance, the three characters of speech acts mentioned above are bound by the subject known as the *interlocutor* – individual, group or the public. Furthermore, between the speech act and the interlocutor, two categories of linguistic effect are identified, namely, first, the *illocutionary effect*, under which are to be found the descriptive and expressive speech acts and which carries explicitly formulated language conventions meant to be direct assertions, declarations, commissions or directives; secondly, there is the *perlocutionary effect*, under which one finds the appellative speech act and which elicits characteristics like persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring, motivating, etc., (Detel 2017, 142ff). This article argues, therefore, that value orientation in higher education is shaped by the quality of the perlocutionary language of communication.

The above position taken is predicated on the definition of education itself, based on the Latin root *educatio*, which translates such expressions as breeding, bringing up, rearing, etc., or the verbal form, *educare*, meaning to lead out from something (etymology: *e* and *ducere*). To this end, the prime language of such leadership or upbringing should be the *language of instruction* – a choice of language that communicates, persuades, motivates and inspires. In this concept of the language of instruction, an active dialogue is established between the communicator and the interlocutor. All that qualify as values with their activated orientations are all products of this intersubjective dialogue – cultural, institutional, socio-political or socio-economic. However, the very act of making a choice for such language remains as delicate as it is complex. While it may be more unilateral and easily adaptable in most homogenous societies, it is more complex and unstable in other socio-cultural pluralistic societies. This is the case in Africa.

Linguistic conundrum in higher educational value orientation:

The case of Africa

The *designate-language* for value orientation in the experiences of most African states suffered varieties of mixtures due to exogenous encounters during the colonial and missionary periods. Before the colonial experiences, however, the indigenous African people had their cultures and traditional values upon which the then-existing societies, communities and relationships were based. This article maintains that what happened was a cultural encounter which left some imprints of ethnological, political and economic excesses. Since then, approaches to and from Africa have always been to reconstruct, rediscover, re-evaluate, redefine, resolve, recover, etc. That aside, one of the peculiar transformations that happened during the encounter was the emergence of public schools in the form, structure and system as they exist today in most African states. However, the issue of language and the role it played during the colonial era have had impacts on matters of value orientation and the governance of higher education.

The above claim is predicated on the linear fact that the educational institutions that emerged and stayed after most of the African regions gained independence were all colonial establishments. These continued with their bequeathed legacies, structures and systems. The initial curricula told more of transnational and international histories. Thus, exogenous language was made the priority for easy access to the trends and standards of the time. Of course, it became a socio-political culture in almost all African states that an average African is bilingual, if not multilingual. This article defends the emergence of this situation as a value and an enrichment. As history shows, efforts remained sporadic at the initial stage but later intensified to retreat and restructure curricula, develop more indigenous works of literature and develop history from within. A most recent effort is the current partnership within the African Union (AU) to publish the Africa Fact Book.

However, there was a form of 'linguistic conundrum' which attacked and debased African indigenous languages while institutionalising and professionalising colonial languages even to date in institutions of higher learning across Africa. With respect to backgrounds and differences in

experience, this article uses Nigeria as an example: stringent measures were adopted and passed into education laws that a non-negotiable criterium to gain admission into higher institutions must be a credit-pass in the colonial language. Developing the system and structure, as well as interest in your own language, did not necessarily matter; penalties and punishments were inflicted in schools for anybody who dared to use the local language or the mother tongue outside the limited period it was permitted; the ability to speak the colonial language became criterion to acquire status and respect, while your inability in doing so makes you the so-called bushman, an illiterate or a *village champion*. Furthermore, because Nigeria is a multinational federation under a forced embrace of unity, varied administrative demands helped catalyse the need for linguistic homogeneity. This led to the insistence on the colonial language as the official language and, of course, the language of commerce.

While this experience enriched the linguistic culture of Nigeria, the indigenous linguistic value orientation, which is integrally tied to culturally shared values, was detracted. Today, many cannot boast of writing or speaking the indigenous language coherently. A majority of the children born in suburban, urban and metropolitan areas of the Nigerian polity cannot speak the mother tongue of their parents, which already severs them from their real identity, culture and people. All these ambivalences unite to constitute forms of conundrum which challenge the precise and successful development of the core values which should characterise higher educational policies for the formation of cultured, disciplined and patriotic beneficiaries of the institution. However, waves of postcolonial mentality and discourses are ongoing and identifiable with varied groups of scholars, governments, NGOs, individuals and societal groups to reposition the mindset and revalue methods and approaches.

5. Specifics for African value orientation in higher education: A postcolonial reflection

Postcolonial discourses with African backgrounds are predominantly concerned with research and studies towards recovery and repositioning. Mastering the not only linguistic skills but refined historic and cultural orientations and consequently delivering a precise communication on given values and precise identity is central to such a recovery process. Where such orientation becomes noticeably deficient, it elicits varied forms of sociocultural struggles predicated on the confusion of identity. This was precisely the imagery portrayed in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, in the dialogue between Obierika and Okonkwo concerning the ambivalences surrounding the clash of civilisations involving the colonial (Whiteman's, missionaries') ideologies and the indigenes of Umuofia²³. While answering Okonkwo's question on whether the Whiteman actually understood the custom about land, Obierika, in a concise form of suspense and soliloquy, was able to extoll the power of language and its centrality in the protection and promotion of values:

“ How can he when he does not even speak our tongue?
But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (Achebe 1959, 2010: 124).

²³ Achebe, Chinua, 2010. *The African Trilogy. Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God*. Everyman's Library, London.

The above argument references the power of language in the communication and development of values within the colonial past, which met both the masters and their subjects with different consequences. Again, this language deficiency eventually expunged mutuality in relationships, leading to mere rejection or discarding of what seems unintelligible to one due to linguistic gaps. What followed was an uneven promotion of the language of communication which helped to boost colonial and missionary administrations, religion and commerce. However, the communication, transmission and transitions of indigenous cultural values suffered forms of latent disdain. Furthermore, there seemed to be a crisis of identity bemoaned by Obierika when he regretted that even “our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad... (they) have turned against us...” (Achebe 1959, 2010: 124).

The Africa of today exists within a postcolonial era being shaped by research and critical study of the past in order to understand and participate better in the *great transformation* movement of our world. To do this better, its higher education policies must be regenerated and reformed to mirror its identities, integrate more the indigenous language(s) of its value systems, redefine the colonial and missionary encounters with tools of adaptation, assimilation and diffusion, as well as investing on further research programmes and efforts to balance better and close its multilingual gaps. This article argues that value orientation in postcolonial African higher institutions can no more be tracked down or forced to be exclusive to the indigenous linguistic formats. That would amount to persistence in viewing Africa predominantly from some irredeemable ‘crisis perspective’ (Quayson 2013: 628)²⁴. Contemporary value orientation discourses must begin to understand postcolonial Africa and the concept of *diasporas*. According to Quayson, the approach would be to open up a new form of understanding the impactful socio-cultural changes that have taken place and permanence in the case of postcolonial Africa: ‘the dimensions of nation and citizenship; the significance of both intrinsic and extrinsic migration ebbs and flows that have served to structure African

²⁴ Quayson, A. 2013. “Africa and its Diasporas”. In: Huggan, G. *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
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society over the past four centuries; the relation of these to transnationalism and globalisation' (Quayson 2013: 628).

Based on the opinion above, the specifics of value orientation in higher education should re-develop the perlocutionary language of communication to better represent Africa's *diasporisation* status. Thus, when the African Union in May 2005 alluded to the African Diaspora as the 'sixth region' of the continent through its Council of Ministers (Quayson 2013: 629), it was to remind the continent itself that approach to Africa in all facets of its existence can never be unilateral anymore. Nevertheless, the *diasporisation* must not mean a further loss of identities. It would rather be a rediscovering of the core values within the indigenous tools and agencies of communication – the indigenous languages and people themselves – but in a multilateral process of interpretation, diffusion and transmission. In this form, the perlocutionary investment in higher education would work to rebuild at least intrinsically and integrally six value orientation specifics, namely identity remediation, endogenous capacity building, the resilience of character, investment in aptitude, subsidiarity consciousness and thoughts in sustainability.

This article proposes a further characterisation of the diasporisation concept to include its general sense, namely diasporisation ad extra (externally), and its narrow sense, namely diasporisation ad intra (internally).

The general sense treats Africa's postcolonial status which recognises that Africa itself exports its values (and should do so) in the teeming number of its human resources, estimated in 2010 to the tune of about 30.6 million all around the globe, putting "France (as) the highest recipient of African migrants at 9 per cent of the total, followed by the Ivory Coast at 8 per cent, with the UK and the US at 4 per cent each (Ratha 2011: 9-11, 15-26)" (Quayson 2013: 629). These figures may be changing now. It describes an African status with a *diasporic identity* and not a *dispersal identity*.

Thus, it is only the diasporic identity that reserves the agency that could be identifiable with the values of the homeland, however, in a way predicated on notable conditions that need to be met, namely:

“ the time depth of dispersal and settlement in other locations; the development of a myth of the homeland...; the attendant diversification of responses to homeland and host nation; the evolution of class segmentation and conflict within a given diaspora; and the ways in which contradictions among the different class segments end up reinforcing different forms of material and emotional investment in a utopian ideal of the homeland (Quayson 2013: 631).

This condition of linking the diaspora with the emotions of the homeland is the defining consciousness that should link diasporisation with the indigenous forms of value orientation.

The narrow sense reflects the influence of the diaspora on the lives, experiences and encounters of indigenous Africa, be it cultural, institutional, educational, economic or political. This began already with the colonial experience,

“ the period between the early 1800s to roughly the 1960s, the period in which the current forms of diasporic Africa and black identities came to be consolidated in the ways in which we recognise them in the world today (Quayson 2013: 631).

Again, it represents the influence of the diaspora with the *diasporic experiences* of the Africans themselves, who are either pure- or quasi-products of exogenous orientations. Consequently, there is a growing diversity of influences from such diasporic categories, which participate in dialoguing and shaping modern thoughts, strategies and approaches within the homeland. Such encounters also bring conditionalities that should be met with dialogue, evaluation, integration, diffusion and assimilation. To this end, therefore, the language of communication might well be powerful and

perlocutionary enough to incorporate the two senses discussed, while at the same time preserving the distinctness of the indigenous value orientations.

6. The Socio-ethical implications of language dynamics in higher education for Africa: an evaluation

Based on our arguments regarding the specifics of appropriate language dynamics in higher education and the African case, some moral implications are consequential to the need for ethical guidance. Again, the application of the word, moral, is also indicative of all the critical effects that actions, omissions, inertia or concessions would have on a given society faced with value-based options for harmonious and shared interests. Thus, a socio-ethical evaluation, in this context, focuses on the society called Africa with its tool as an enquiry towards the ethical criteria upon which the opinions and arguments of this article find justification. This is the core of social ethics – “the extending (and application) of ethical questions on the changing (and transforming) order and structure of the society” (Vogt 2017: 1096).

The social structure which provided the specimen for reflection in this article is the institution of higher learning.

The ethical evaluation here, therefore, takes up the issue of language dynamics provided by this moral object as a social concern, which this article has tried to examine in the context of Africa, its experiences with the colonial cultures and what those experiences have engendered within the continent. The opinion is, that the language dynamics have a struggle between indigenous and exogenous language speech acts, as well as between cultural diasporisations that have forever impacted mixtures in orientations, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, there is a moral need to recognise and define the specifics involved in the general encounter between indigenous Africa and its linguistic uniqueness, and the colonial (and now postcolonial) Africa with all its influences, restructures, impacts, as well as socio-political and economic structures. This single moral need, the article argues, can never again be

brushed aside in matters of contemporary social transformations and value orientations. To this end, if higher education should still play a central role in crafting and shaping the models of societies that should be transformative and sustainable, the policies and communication dynamics must be forceful enough to equip the beneficiaries with the necessary tools for both individual self-mastery and true socio-cultural citizenship. Christian social ethics would locate this tool in not just education, but rather in purposeful and value-based education.

As an ethical criterium, such value-based education must recognise that its linguistic dynamics should be persuasive enough – perlocutionary – as to integrate sufficiently the socio-cultural necessities and specifics that drive the generic sphere, in other words, the realm of shared values and orientations. Concrete ethical criterium from a Christian ethical perspective is to, *first*, perceive and pronounce the language disparity in value and cultural orientations as a socio-political and socio-cultural challenge. *Secondly*, to see the need for a transition from a crisis perspective with regard to Africa’s multilingual climate to an adaptive and integrational perspective; and *thirdly*, to convince the indigenous societies that concrete actions should be realised to make the mitigation of this challenge one of the demands of *social security* – both for the individual persons, who have the right and freedom to protect their choices of value orientations and for the generic sphere, where the society plays a central role in developing, communicating and educating shared value systems.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above specifics, value orientation dynamics in higher education for Africa remains an ongoing educational investment in repositioning the polity itself, remodelling the Africans’ minds to face the reality of identity and linguistic conflicts due to colonial encounters. This reference to the word *conflict* is to re-enact, on the one hand, the varied forms of existent crises which higher educational institutions in most African states are facing in their postcolonial eras, notably the dispossession which most indigenous cultures and value systems suffered in the face of colonial and exogenous standards.

On the other hand, the conflict-awareness is to trigger the already discussed sense of *diasporisation* in order to institutionalise modern diffusions for a liberated and decolonised value orientation in education. Orientation as *nhàzì* is, in the main, an attitude which begins first with the autonomous self, be it that of an individual, a group or society described as a moral person—a perspective based on ‘innate human propensities’ (Scoffham 2020: 23), and which is to be harnessed and garnished with the powers of the adaptable means of communication²⁵. Therefore, the language of instruction in higher education must see this as a necessary sign of the time.

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²⁵ Scoffham, S. 2020. “In Search of Core Values”, op. cit.

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9. Short biography

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