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## Re-Evaluating Value Systems for Kenyan Youths for Social Transformation

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**Abstract:** This paper sought to re-evaluate value systems for Kenyan youths in order to experience social transformation. This discourse takes a moralist perspective and believes that there is an ideal body of values, one that over-rides others. In this paper, it would be appropriate to ask pertinent questions such as; what forms societies' value systems? What value systems are there for Kenyan youths? How can value systems of youths be useful for social transformation? The first two questions concern a present analysis of value basis of societies while the last question is a positivist futuristic question of building a gap. Using a qualitative approach, this study sought for relevant literature from other scholarly articles which formed the basis of conclusions and recommendations. In overall sense, value systems are good, and if re-evaluated, social transformation is bound to occur. This transformation is likely measured by the meaningful socio-eco-political input to the society and the acceptance thereof. Value systems of Kenyan youths have been influenced by; one, familial relations; two, peer pressure; and three, the external factors. This study recommends that for social transformation to occur, re-evaluation of such value systems ought to take place both horizontally and vertically.

**Keywords:** Systems; Value Systems; Morals; Re-Evaluation; Youths; Kenyan youths; Social; Transformation; Social transformation.

### 1. Introduction

This paper is very timely and important to all of us; First, as educators; Secondly, to us as parents; and thirdly, to us as students and more to it 'leaders'. Another catchy part of the discussion in this paper is the phrasing of the topic itself; '*Re-evaluating*' whenever it is used in English phrasing means something has been evaluated before thus additional evaluation may mean, crisis or emergency point is somehow at hand. Again, the topic seems concerned with a particular group in the audience (Kenyan Youths), this could be probably informed by their vulnerability to value systems. To note also is use of '*for Kenyan youths*', a certain amount of particularity is exercised here. This paper did not want to delve in issues such as '*among the youths*' hence value systems for, meaning at the end of this, some action should be taken by the different stakeholders. This burdens the discourse with much expectation from the readers and consumers of this information, I hope, I will meet the expectation gap.

Let me say that indeed one must affect his immediate environment positively if s/he has to make sense to another environment. Environment makes people and people likewise shape their environment. Ultimately, I have a desire and know people have desires that are concerned with a common good – that is social transformation. In other words, when the re-evaluation is done and successfully done, there should be some change in society. I would suggest at this very beginning that this re-evaluation involves '*individuals*' and '*cooperate society*'. None is exempted if social transformation as a goal has to be attained.

### 2. Background

The pre-eminent question in social transformation is the conflict of pluralistic values and the key to balance and harmonize the pluralistic values is to rebuild a monistic value system. When we refer to the rebuilding of the value system, it means to establish a monistic value of fairness and justice, and, based on its foundation, to promote the harmonious development of pluralistic values, which is the underpinnings and preconditions for the smooth and successful transformation of the society (Rui-jie, 2016). Monistic value systems imply unity of origin for all things and to many philosophers it postulates that values are beyond self and society if they have to cause transformation, the two must thus cohere.

Rui-jie again opines that people increasingly identify no matter in experience or in theory, with such a fact that the value system has a decisive influence on individuals and the society. We may even safely assert that the value system of the individual decides one's way of life and that the value system of the society decides the development patterns of it, which is exactly expressed as that the mind decides the realm and the horizon decides the world.

### 3. Study Objectives

With the major objective of re-evaluating value systems of Kenyan youths for social transformation, this study sought to;

- i. Find out what forms societies' value systems,
- ii. Assess value systems of Kenyan youths, and
- iii. Examine how value systems of youths can be useful for social transformation.

### 4. The Study Based Questions

The objectives were later translated to form the following research questions that guided the study;

- i. What forms societies' value systems?
- ii. What value systems are there for Kenyan youths?
- iii. How can value systems of youths be useful for social transformation?

### 5. Methodology Guiding the Study

This study guided by a qualitative approach, sought for relevant literature from other scholars across the globe. From most of their writings, value systems are tied to societal morals. The researcher had to look for relevance in themes and content to adopt materials for citations. This also shaped the review in this article though under different objectives.

### 6. Theoretical Framework

Body of knowledge in regard to value systems and social transformation may seem at certain times to be in conflict but in overall this portrays the diversity of thoughts built around core principles, assumptions, and beliefs of any society. On the other hand, the differences emanating from theories clearly distinguish the school of thoughts orientations that exist as what others call values may otherwise represent no values to others. The theoretical framework used in this study is a combination of theories for those who do not consider themselves amoral. Not to say others may not benefit from it.

According to [Fawcett \(1991\)](#), Principles are the fundamental scientific, logical, or moral/ethical "truths," arising from experience, knowledge, and (often) values, on which we base our actions and thinking. In the case of the Community Tool Box, they are the underpinning of our understanding of community. Moral and ethical principles are where values come in. One of the clearest statements of moral/ethical principle is that of the American Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson (with Benjamin Franklin's help) in 1776: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;...". This statement is actually a good demonstration of how values and principles form a loop.

Assumptions are the next level of truths, the ones we feel we can take for granted, given the principles we have accepted. If we accept, for instance, that life is an "unalienable right" – a right of every human being that cannot be taken away – then we will usually assume that killing another person is wrong, or at least that we don't have the right to do it. Assumptions are often unexamined. They are the facts or beliefs that we don't question, because we "know" they're accurate, even though they may not be.

The underpinning theories in value systems surround their being part of social networks thus aptly no value system may escape being guided by the social rule system. This in essence generates into existence social rule system theory. *Social rule system theory* is an attempt to formally approach different kinds of social rule systems in a unified manner. Social rule system theory notes that most human social activity is organized and regulated by socially produced and reproduced systems of rules. Social rules systems include institutions such as norms, laws, regulations, taboos, customs, and a variety of related concepts and are important in the social sciences and humanities. Social rule system theory is fundamentally an institutionalist approach to the social sciences, both in its placing primacy on institutions and in its use of sets of rules to define concepts in social theory ([Lotman, 1975](#)). Another theory that guides value systems is theory of basic human values propagated by [Schwartz \(2012\)](#). It asserts that values form a circular structure that reflects the motivations each value expresses.

In this dialectic analysis of theories in relation to value systems, it can be pointed that Schwartz appreciates values as basic and dependent on each other. Without giving details, he finds them interconnected. 'Some values' would be hard to change while others are easily changeable. Again, he points values to be intricately linked to societal rules and within this frame they also form a network of systems. In this scenario, values may be structural and institutionalized. Value systems from this analogy again portray values as regulated by the society. In re-evaluating value systems for social transformation of Kenyan youths, would prompt careful look at these theories in form and context. For social transformation to occur, one value system should not take precedent over others and neither should one individual or group transform against others level as they possess dependence. Additionally, for values to bring social transformation, they need to live within the societal norm framework.

## 7. Paper's Authoritative Discussions

In creating clear understanding to us in this forum, some terms need to be defined as we move on in this paper; value systems, and social transformation. Customizing their meanings will make us understand them from the perspective of my paper today.

Value systems can be termed as set of values adopted or evolved by culture, institution, organization, and governments, and is considered to be coherent to it as a standard of guiding its behavior in preferred situations. It can also manifest itself in some rules which are not scary or thought of in practice. This means they are protected because of their liking to the subjects. Value systems are practicable in a society in terms of morals. Morals are accepted but evolving standards of what is good and desirable. Let me suggest and emphasize that value systems in a society are horizontal and vertical at the same time. It is horizontal because there is a tendency for equals to tend to want to share values yet at some point in life such could be very weak values.

Society can be defined as “a grouping of humanity and distinguished from community as being larger, it may contain various groups of communities; more diffused and pluralistic in its components; more specific in its goals as the central motive of its component parts; and more progressive as it can be linked with the formation of larger modern political entities”. The definition of society must include the facts that:

- i. In a hierarchical and ascending order, individual citizens, families, clans, villages, towns, wards, local governments, states constitute the society at large;
- ii. Both those who govern and the governed constitute the society. (African Leadership Forum, 1993).

The social transformation refers to the change of the society from one type to another, that is, the change of the social structure. With the transformation of the society goes the radical change of the value system, which refers to views and ideas about the needs of human beings and about how to satisfy those needs (Rui-jie, 2016). Social transformation has closeness with culture; in this discussion culture does not necessarily mean your ethnic orientation. Culture is diverse as to; school culture, work place culture, home culture, institutional culture, country culture, e.t.c. Just like in the culture of politics, it has its limitations; it can be a cause of chaos. Whether it causes chaos or conflict, does it in any way imply social transformation as fake? Not at all! It means social transformation needs to be scientifically and artistically undertaken in all organizations.

## 8. The Basis of Societies' Value Systems

Thinking of values is important to all in life. Each of us holds numerous values (e.g., achievement, security, benevolence) with varying degrees of importance. One value may be important to one while being unimportant to another (Schwartz, 2006). The value theory (Schwartz, 1992;2005a) adopts a conception of values that specifies six main features that are implicit in the writings of many theorists:

(1) *Values are beliefs* linked inextricably to affect. When values are activated, they become infused with feeling. People for whom independence is an important value become aroused if their independence is threatened, despair when they are helpless to protect it, and are happy when they can enjoy it.

(2) *Values refer to desirable goals* that motivate action. People for whom social order, justice, and helpfulness are important values are motivated to pursue these goals.

(3) *Values transcend specific actions and situations.* Obedience and honesty, for example, are values that may be relevant at work or in school, in sports, business, and politics, with family, friends, or strangers. This feature distinguishes values from narrower concepts like norms and attitudes that usually refer to specific actions, objects, or situations.

(4) *Values serve as standards or criteria.* Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. People decide what is good or bad, justified or illegitimate, worth doing or avoiding, based on possible consequences for their cherished values. But the impact of values in everyday decisions is rarely conscious. Values enter awareness when the actions or judgments one is considering have conflicting implications for different values one cherishes.

(5) *Values are ordered by importance* relative to one another. People's values form an ordered system of value priorities that characterize them as individuals. Do they attribute more importance to achievement or justice, to novelty or tradition? This hierarchical feature also distinguishes values from norms and attitudes.

(6) *The relative importance of multiple values guides action.* Any attitude or behavior typically has implications for more than one value. For example, attending church might express and promote tradition, conformity, and security values at the expense of hedonism and stimulation values. The tradeoff among relevant, competing values is what guides attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz, 1992;1996). Values contribute to action to the extent that they are relevant in the context (hence likely to be activated) and important to the actor.

It is important to try and prod the basis of values in societies, where for our case we think of Kenya as our society. I want to state categorically that first and foremost values are ideals that are inherent and unmistakably found in every human being. Because people do not exist on their own, values must be transferrable from high powers (divine being – God). Again because human beings live in an environment, it also provides values thus a value system. Once attained (values) they are transmitted from one source to another, usually from a superior source to an inferior source (*God to man, parents to children, leaders to the led, clergy to worshippers, teachers to pupils/students, e.t.c.*). Once values are passed on and cherished they people become passionate about them and they can even die for them. Freud (1895) notes that the *original helplessness* of human beings is the primal source of all morals. To this you find that value systems emanate to help man and that is why despite other explanations that I will give point to God. The Bible, a book that many think should not advice academicians is a primary source of morality

and speaks about the divine. Isaiah 1:18, “come let us reason together says the Lord of hosts ...”. In this process, an opportunity to be taught values is presented (vertical for horizontal good).

Values are as much a product of society and individual development as they are based on available dispositions in the growing mind (Ekstein, 1964). This is a radical thinking and a reality even though at some point I may want to rate some perceived sources of values in our normal thought lines. Emphasis should be made here that whether students or teachers, adults or young people, name it. There are things that you believe as a grownup out rightly to be wrong without being told.

Education (Rabie, 2007) is the principal method through which societies transmit knowledge from one generation to another, learn how to develop and accumulate knowledge, preserve certain values and transform others, and introduce social and cultural change in the form of new, non-conventional ideas and values and attitudes, and non-traditional ways of thinking. It is through education that people learn how to become more socially and politically conscious, and how to increase their ability to acquire and use knowledge to improve the quality of their lives. But for education to instigate the desired socio-cultural transformations in society and produce the know-how needed to achieve material and cultural progress, education has to come with certain things, most important among them are the right knowledge and the right attitudes.

There seems to be connections between social values and economic growth and for our case in this twenty first century social transformation. The concept of values widely used in current research is defined as ideals that guide or qualify personal conduct, interaction with others, and other situations of social interaction (Braithwaite and Blamey, 1998).

Social values are principles that indicate how you relate meaningfully to others in social situations, including those involving family, friends, and co-workers. Evolution of values is not a completely unstudied research area. There are several studies looking at the dynamics of social values. Psychologists Melton and Hoke (2003) tracked changes in personal values. They measured values of freedom and equality in American society in period of 1968-1981 and found that community value orientation has increased substantially over the studied period.

Ekstein (1964) further states that a child comes to school system already prepared with certain basic ‘ego virtues’ which can be considered basic ingredients out of which value systems are built. Teachers and clergy only then expand and enhance; things like curiosity, industriousness, love, obedience, independence and interdependence, e.t.c. And since these are not firmly established, in a school system, educators subject them to further growth and development through correction.

In my evaluation, the bigger societal value systems transform into individual values for them to be useful because without of self ownership, values cannot be fully developed. This concurs with Hereford (2016) who says that a personal value system is a set of principles or ideals that drive and/or guide your behavior. Your personal value system gives you structure and purpose by helping you determine what is meaningful and important to you. It helps you express who you are and what you stand for. If you are unaware of, or become disconnected with your values, you end up making choices out of impulse or instant gratification rather than on solid reasoning and responsible decision-making. Your values define your character. They impact every aspect of your life including:

- i. personal and work behaviors
- ii. your interactions with family, friends and co-workers
- iii. your decision-making processes
- iv. the direction you take in life.

This is why it is so important to know what you value, why you value it and what precedence it takes in your life. He further categorizes personal value system as comprising; personal, spiritual, family, and career values. On the other hand, he points desirable social values as; integrity, respect, loyalty, and responsibility. Value systems will push you to behave the way you do, to do the things you do, and to think about your life/self/others as you do. It will change your work culture, study methods and attitudes, as well as your relations. With value systems you can tell which associations and friendships are good or bad. It is proper to know that there is always right and wrong, no middle ground. At higher levels people debate about a concept rationalization (to me it is about forcing wrong to be right).

## **9. Value Systems for Kenyan Youths**

Value systems surround knowledge of roles. This is getting out of hand among many Kenyan parents today. It has been relegated today to instruments such as TVs and social media. Value systems are built through socialization and over time. However, in Kenya like many other African countries despite changing circumstances, it is poignant to point that (Muchira, 2001) inadequacy of parents in socializing their youth has its roots in the traditional African system of bringing up the youth. Personality development of the youth was not solely the responsibility of the parents but that of the extended families as well. Grandparents and other responsible adults counseled young people on: -

- i. Sensitive topics such as sexual behavior
- ii. Other society roles, values and traditions

Unlike today, they did so through storytelling, proverbs, songs etc. (Mutie and Ndabuki, 1999) Grandparents will have acquired guiding and counseling skills experientially while dealing with theirs and other youth.

At this very start, Muchira notes with disdain that “one of the problems of formalized schooling today is that parents tend to assume that teachers will provide for all the learning, disciplinary and socialization of the youth,

including the ethical values of society. The schools as they are today do not have the capability; time or even motivation to teach the values of society. This is because the schools are geared almost entirely to the passing of final school examinations. In other words there is expectation which most likely is not being met. Parents relegate to teachers/educators their role while at the same time denying them the 'rode' – the instrument for their office assumption yet they expect them to perform where they have failed. All the same, majority of teachers being also parents and out of doing their work as calling fit in the two roles quite well. In my thinking much value basis among our youths begin at schools after a transition from irresponsible parents and inexperienced house-helpers/maids who protect their jobs by allowing and supporting children to do anything.

Having suggested that values and roles are intertwined, "parents also do not encourage their youth to undertake practical and vocational subjects because white-collar jobs are viewed as more prestigious than vocational and technical oriented jobs, (Tessier, 1984) many parents today have built negative attitude towards 'dirty jobs', they have become protective to their children. Other than stimulating initiative, and innovativeness and entrepreneurship through technical education, some feel it is enslaving and have led their children to resentment of non-academic education. Thinking that teachers will do it effectively also collapses badly since their concerns are quite different; the schools as they are today do not have the capability; time or even motivation to teach the values of society. This is because the schools are geared almost entirely to the passing of final school examinations. The Kenyan schools are ever in competition; teachers among themselves, forcing pupils to compete similarly sometimes for reasons they don't understand, as many irresponsible 'first educators' watch and put pressure on educators for grades without caring whether learning took place.

According to Brown (1965) "All societies face the problem of training the individual to think, feel and act in accordance with patterns of a particular society of which he is part. This gap has now left Kenyan youths with few options; *media, friends, governments, teachers, clergy, and parents*. So to ask a moral question, who is the right person to impart these moral lessons? And which is the right medium? Value systems are left to become accidental issues. If left to reach universities, some may never attain values apart from getting certification for careers.

The desire for values as I said can never be vacuum less; it must be filled at any point in time. In the order prescribed above, the parents and the clergy ought to be the most trusted medium of values despite a few cases where such have failed. However, friends and media are avenues for everything in a sense that they may not guide each other effectively that is for friends. Where now youths cannot engage in outdoors, the possibility of learning drugs, crime, sex misuse, and violence is an open avenue from the 'movie star teachers' which are very creative even in families with no power to afford daily bread. This moves the youths to elevate their desires to live lives they cannot as they progress because today they see people who virtually do nothing being adored by the society; owning storey buildings, state of the art cars, and mirage clothes of the 'season'. The results of these have created zombies in form of people.

Kenyan young people like others nowadays experiences large transformations, from technological, economical and political changes to values and mentalities changes, as parts of the globalization process. Let's take some examples of transformations and see what seems to be good and what seems to be bad. As good sides of globalization we have youth mobility, freedom of expression and extensive means of communication, open societies, human rights and tolerance.

On the other hand we see various trends which we perceive as negative: consumerism, restriction of freedom of expression, disappearing of centuries long values atomization of life, and so on. At first sight, these negative trends together with others seem to be chaotically and without any sense. Globalization brought us internet which brought us blogs, forums and discussion groups. Young people talk, everybody talks. This creates the feeling of the freedom of expression. But expression about what? What freedom and with whom?

Identity in search of values has spoilt many a lives of youths. It is being felt in Kenya as in other parts of the globe. When youths experiment with their value system it can take many forms. For example, a formerly shy, quiet, and agreeable youth may suddenly become argumentative and begin to speak out about a great many topics. Some youth may alter their appearance by wearing a different style of clothing, getting a tattoo or body piercing, coloring or styling their hair in unusual ways, or "bending" their gender such as boys wearing cosmetics. They may also change their musical preferences to include music their parents may find objectionable (e.g. lyrics that condone violence), give-up cherished activities such as sports in favor of role-playing games, or attend other religions in defiance to their family religions.

Experimentation may go a step further by testing the limits and boundaries set by their parents, teachers, and other authorities. They may oppose and resist restrictions of any sort, and may intentionally break long-standing rules about curfews, homework, chores, and other responsibilities. During times such as these, it is helpful to recognize that rules and laws are inextricably attached to values. Thus, when teens intentionally challenge rules or laws, they are ultimately challenging the values these rules and laws represent. In a sense, these youth are conducting their own "experiment" to see what happens in the absence of these values. Unfortunately, many of these "experiments" can have dire consequences when youth experiment with sex, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. While some values exploration may be quite painful for youths' families to witness or experience, other values exploration can be a source of great pride for their families.

## 10. Making Value Systems of Youths Useful for Social Transformation

As Gandhi puts it, if you go back to history of any nation, the social transformation is got about by the revolutionary power of the youth. We cannot forget that Gandhi started bringing about social transformation in his young days (Dukle, 2016). In adding to this I want to posit that the beginning of Gandhi's advice is self-transformation. You cannot expect zombies to cause this kind of transformation.

Values are learnt thus they become systemic once learnt and become part of us as they affect our societies. Bigger systems, persons with responsibility, and environment shape systems. Taking the example of a country as a system, people may want to see values from leadership who are expected to be role models. In the building of base-line ethics and morality cultivation, (Rawls, 1998) the government and members of the government shoulder the responsibility of demonstration and guidance, and all the citizens bear the unshirkable social duties.

Value systems are progressive and not static. Neither are they a preserve of few but they must be recognized by people. This is the most challenging part because not all recognize and the reason why they need a communicative channel to reach prospects even before social transformation is thought of.

And that's why Rawl suggests, "We teach you not to make you change your minds but to help use your minds." "Smart students do not sit back and let things happen to them; they do not wait for opportunities to come knocking at their doors. Instead, they get involved, take the initiative and make things happen for them; they are always focused on their careers and future, always able to recognize and create new opportunities to exploit. They do every task with eagerness and enthusiasm as if they are doing it for the very first time, always striving for perfection."

Cultural transformation and hence values systems as a cause to this may not often receive the desired acceptance as required. According to Rui-jie (2016), "Cultural Revolution" as was in China, caused chaos in politics and slow development and stagnation in economy. Even worse, the "Cultural Revolution" influences negatively on ideology and value system of people and forms a single polar way of thinking and value evaluation standard. And as such, a likely way to "class struggle". When horizontal and vertical values interact, it is normal to experience conflicts which of course can be solved especially by knowing the source of a group's value system.

In order to make value systems useful for social transformation, some highlighted recommendations might need to be re-considered after re-evaluation of different situations. These can include;

- i. Enhancing each individuals role within the value system and this requires knowing that each has a role,
- ii. Values are learnt and once you learn do not experiment new ones which contradict the core of your beliefs,
- iii. Appreciate value systems as being progressive but do not over bear your progressiveness.
- iv. There is need to re-emphasize a mix of vocational outdoor activities to academic pursuits in our age than we have done,
- v. Manage identity well in search of values to preserve your lives. The Bible in I Timothy 4:12, "set an example for others ...."; and again as in I Timothy 5: 1-3, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need." What the scriptures narrate here is a call to proper communication. If values are not practiced in language, it generates another value (anti-thesis to an intended value),
- vi. Societies should not tire training the individual to think, feel and act in accordance with patterns of a particular society of which he is part,
- vii. The basis of all value systems you like or not, is knowing the true God and Saviour Jesus Christ and living his principles. All these others are fallacies.

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