



• Rev. Ade Osinilu, Principal 1956 set of MBHS and Aremo Olusegun Osoba, a student of the Liberation set in his school suit 50 years after entering the portals of his alma mater

When 'Old Boys' Celebrated 50 Years of Alma Mater

Penultimate Saturday, the 1956 set, fondly called the Liberation Set of the Methodist Boys High School (MBHS), Lagos, met to celebrate 50 years of their admission into the renowned institution. The event which held at the Centenary Hall of the school in Victoria Island, Lagos brought back memories of 'the good old days' as the old men behaved as if they were teenagers again. Olawale Olaleye, who witnessed the event, reports

enforced. This is because deviants are

Sensitive Periods: Their Significance to Montessori Education

By Bola Benson

Dr. Maria Montessori coined the phrase sensitive periods from the Dutch biologist, Hugo De Vries, who applied it to different stages of animal development.

Montessori extended the phrase to human development. She related it to mean the special time frame or window of opportunity when the child is driven by an irresistible impulse or a special sensibility to a certain facets of his environment, to the exclusion of all else, aimed at the acquisition of a particular characteristic or function. This special sensibility within this specific time frame can also be applied to the establishment or refinement of an existing characteristic.

Ultimately, the sensitive periods help the child achieve order and distinction as the unconscious mind develops into a growing consciousness. Sensitive Periods are universal i.e. common to all children in the first plane of development (0-six years). They are transient because once the particular characteristic they aim at accomplishing is achieved, it fades, to be replaced by another, which in turn is geared towards the accomplishment of another particular characteristic. However, they do not work in isolation and more than one period can be existent at the same time, for example, those of movements and language. Despite this, sensitive periods are not haphazard by nature but occur according to a well programmed natural timetable allowing the child to gain what he needs from the environment at the time best suited to his individual development.

Furthermore, sensitive periods do not operate in a linear fashion, but in a series

for language that the aim of speech is accomplished within the two phases. Within the first phase which begins at four months, the child begins to intently watch the mouth of the speaker as he is spoken to with an intense attraction. By six months the second phase has begun as the child has begun to practice sounds on his own or 'babbling' and will later work towards perfecting it.

Hence, we see that although the child has tendency for communication, and by relation language from birth, it is within this special time frame or sensitive period that he is irresistibly drawn to language, to the exclusion of all others sounds, which he first listens to with a special intentness, absorbing it, and then practices towards recreating it himself. Thus language began with a psychic absorption, not visible and resulted in the visible recreation of language by the child.

It is the psychic or mental development that has prompted the voluntary or motor development required for the desired action, that is speech.

This sensitive period is the most prolonged one that is lasting till the age of five, as it is the most difficult, involving not only the absorption of language completely with its infinite complexities, but also the complicated co-ordination of the organs of speech.

Despite these inherent complexities, the child during the sensitive period accomplishes the goal without apparent effort and untiringly with joy.

Generally, ensuring the child is surrounded by rich language is beneficial to

The feeling was meretricious. Not a single one of them could hold back the glee. Though all aged over sixty, the 'old boys' all seemed to have deliberately allowed the teenage feeling run freely through their nerves in the open.

The 1956 set of Methodist Boys High School (MBHS) recently came together, 50 years after leaving school and related the way they used to do, clearly recalling the jokes and banter of those years. Ten years ago when the Liberation Set, as it is called turned 40, 53 of the old boys gathered to celebrate the milestone. But only 50 of them celebrated the golden jubilee, the others haven gone the way of all mortals.

Compared to what was held 10 years ago, the celebrants said this year's event was intentionally designed to be low-key, entirely dedicated to God. The programme came in two parts, the first being a thanksgiving service, held at the Patriarchal Methodist Church, Tinubu, Lagos; and the other, the reception held at the 128-year-old school's Centenary Hall on Victoria Island, Lagos. Though, the event was remarkable in every respect, the high point was when one of the old boys and former governor of Ogun State, Aremo Olusegun Osoba wore the same school jacket that he wore 50 years ago to both the church service and part of the reception. Still looking as good as new one, the jacket still had its badge and design intact. None of the other old boys could find their own jackets.

In his welcome address at the reception, Chairman of the set, Alhaji Muniru Muse recalled that "the story of the LIBESET started 17 years ago and our goal primarily was to support our alma mater in such a way that both the tutors and the students would be in a comfortable learning environment. This has been demonstrated and practiced in many ways to the extent that Liberation Set has fondly become the darling of the parent MBHS Old Boys Association. Even though, many of us are now retirees, we are still taxing ourselves to continue the good work we set out to achieve." Typical of such days however, Muse's speech stirred emotions as the 'boys' lined up for recognition. The brief ceremony was followed by a lecture titled, "The Challenge of Our Time: Musings of a Septuagenarian", delivered by Prof. Gabriel Olusanya. He said though the choice of topic was his, as he was given the freedom to do so, as a man of over 70 years of age, he could not have settled for anything less. The 14-page lecture dwelt on the life style of people in his age

bracket, especially after retirement. "Retirement period", he said, "is one in which one ought to rest and be thankful to God. And, in any case, life is like drama. It is a play in which each one plays his/her part and leaves the stage for others. To attempt to continue to play active part as some do, is to head for an anti-climax and invite boos rather than ovation".

Anchoring this on the 46th independence anniversary celebration of the country Olusanya said the picture as presented of the present day Nigeria "is a picture of a country still wandering, uncertain or confused as to where to head for. There is no collective vision of our goals and aspirations. It is also a picture of a country with great possibilities and yet with not much to show for it; for it is a country that has been so well-endowed by nature both in terms of men and natural resources and yet, many of its inhabitants live in abject poverty and misery and in a state of near hopelessness."

According to him, "one of the greatest challenges confronting us today is the erosion of societal values - the imperceptibles that underpin any society and give it its vitality and its push. In the old society, societal values were held in place by religious sanctions which were strongly

bound to exist in any society and the number of such people tends to increase when sanctions are either absent or not enforced. "Unfortunately, today", he continued, "violation of societal values is done with impunity as there are no effective sanctions to keep deviants in check. This is because the indigenous religions which played such a crucial role in the society have been eroded by western education. And although, western education was brought to us by the Christian Churches, Christianity has not yet taken deep root because of its relative newness. It is still skin-deep", he argued.

He added that, "The newly introduced religions do not instill as much fear as the old. This is because they deal with the hereafter and that is, their sanctions are not immediate in their effect."

Olusanya urged the old boys to do as much as they can to re-introduce some of the already debased values in some of the groups or organisations that they find themselves, saying, "You may think you are too few to make a difference, but history teaches us that it is not the multitude that brings about change, it is a group of highly dedicated people with value, vision, focus, courage and tenacity of purpose that makes a difference in any society", he concluded.

of peaks and troughs; so that the flame or light that is directed toward a particular facet of the environment burns brighter at certain times than others whilst it accomplishes its aim. It is also evident that sensitive periods have two distinct phases; an internal one and an external one.

The internal phase is the initial one. It occurs within the individual and is only visible when manifested through external activity. Montessori refers to this phase as the 'psychic factor'; occurring within the mind of the child. This phase is gradual and is the longer of the two. The second, latter phase is more readily visible as it is the manifestation of this first phase and is the external activity of that accomplished by the first phase.

Sensitive Periods identified by Dr Montessori include those for language, order, movement, small objects, refinement of the senses and social behaviour.

The sensitive period for language provides a clear illustration of these 2 phases.

As a result of the child's tendency for communication, the child is urged to learn to speak. This is evident that even at birth the child can cry; enabling his vocal chords to drop into position. Finally the child learns to speak.

It is during the child's sensitive period

this period. There should also be clarity in expression. Language activities in the Prepared Environment of the Children's House are ideally tailored to aid language development.

As with the sensitive period of language, with its accompanying tendencies for communication and language, the sensitive period for order also works with the tendency for order.

The child possesses a tendency for order from birth. The child with the aid of his absorbent mind absorbs everything from the environment unconsciously. However, as a result of the tendency for order and its particular sensitive period, these impressions are stored selectively. It is upon this foundation that the child will add the further impressions that he makes; allowing him to effectively classify and categorise the impressions he gains.

As a result the child is driven towards the establishment of order in his environment; in relationships, things and time. Just as the child has an internal order, he requires an external order to support the mental, internal order.

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fact ensure the achievements of the original ideals upon which Federal Government Colleges were established that have been sacrificed as a result of corruption and lack of transparency in the management of public institutions and resources in this country. I think as we provide more information on the way we are proposing to run these schools, people will get an understanding that this is definitely the way to go in order to get us to the journey ahead.

"We have 11, 000 secondary schools out of these the Federal Government provides secondary education to only 102 Federal Government Colleges otherwise known as Unity Schools. In secondary education in Nigeria we have 6.4 million out of these 122,000 are from the Unity Schools.

"The idea of the Unity Schools was really a noble idea 40 years ago when the first set of them came into existence and was the rallying point for our national unity and created the meeting point of integration of the cultural backgrounds of our different and distinct ethnic roots. So that when our children interact as Nigerians at

very early ages, they form very strong bonds that would last a long time and do the nation a lot of good.

"Forty years after, we are today seeing Federal Government Colleges that are anything but the original intension. Federal Government Colleges were designed in a kind of way that they offered the students admission on the basis of merit, opportunity and access to quality education. But today, that concept of merit has been totally sacrificed there is a lot of abuse in the process of admission. Federal Government Colleges are supposed to be emphasising merit and equity. In other words, addressing the issue of balance and ensuring that all states are reasonably represented during admissions.

"Many years after all these have fallen into trash. The child of the poor in the past had higher probability of simply taking the National Common Entrance Examination, passing and being placed in a Federal Government College. The truth is that it is not quite so today.

"The Federal Government Colleges today constitute an eyesore to the provision of education by government, the reason is

that the learning environment of these 102 schools would make even the hard hearted to weep because of the whole state of disrepair and malfunction and this is in spite of enormous resources that have over the years been ostensibly allocated to these schools.

"Federal Government Colleges have been places where the routine transfer of staff and teachers occur; you know it has become a continuum of the Federal Ministry of Education. You get sent to the Federal Government College then you get sent back to the ministry and you do some administrative work and the next minute you are a teacher, so the issue of teacher quality has been so completely bastardised within the Federal Government Colleges.

"The worst is that the total of our payroll in the Federal Ministry of Education is about 27, 200 and out of this 23,400 are staff of the Federal Government Colleges, now that is about 86.6 per cent or thereabout. Imagine the Federal Ministry of Education that has the responsibility for policy and monitoring and assuring quality control across the six spheres of education for the entire nation is busy with most of its

energy and its resources and its talents dealing with a level of education that services only 122,000 of 6.4 million people demanding that level of education and basically having only 102 of the 11,000 schools that service that level of education, is a dysfunctional system and create a major reason for distortion and disequilibrium in the sector. What it means is that the Federal Government with this kind of very lopsided dedication of all the personnel to 102 Federal Government Colleges in terms of the performance of these schools with all the investments that had happened, that has not been in fact reflected in what you see, showing that this big issue of corruption, of the poor governance of our public resources underlines a lot of the failure we see in the education sector. Now if that is so, with all the resources not showing up in terms of good learning environment and quality teachers, is it any surprise therefore that of the 62 reporting schools that reported their results over the last five years, only 12.5 per cent on the average had 50 per cent of their students passing the West African Senior School Certificate Examination?