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Need for Human Development in Nigeria: Imperative of Incorporating Moral Education

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Abstract

In a bid to proffer solution to Nigeria's ubiquitous societal problems, many have argued that what the nation needs presently is a solid human development for all its citizens. Sadly, human development in our present society is at its lowest ebb due to decadence in values. Stories of human killings, kidnappings, cultism, nepotism, corruption, rape and many other vices fill the air. Nigeria cannot develop if her citizens are deficient in values. Hence, the need for a reflection of what is best for the country. These writers argue that moral education is the panacea for these social ills. They believe that students at all levels of education should be taught moral education as this will help in bringing out that rationality in them as well as help them to attain self-autonomy at which stage, they already know what is best for them and their society and will consequently choose to practice what is right at all times.

Introduction

The role of moral education in human development cannot be over-emphasized. It becomes very relevant especially in our present society where there is decadence in moral values. Such education will help in reorienting students in the right way by exposing them to values which are worthwhile and useful in the society. Hence, they [will be](#) reoriented in worthwhile values such as truth-telling, honesty, compassion among others; which will facilitate their overall improvement and well-being.

Moral education is clearly reflected in the country's education objectives as in:

1. To inculcate national consciousness and unity.
2. To inculcate right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.

4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competences-both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.¹

The Meaning of Moral Education

Moral education is an important process which enables students to learn and acquire elements or virtues of good living. It attempts at making the society a nice place for living through positive character formation in individuals. A morally good and rational society values, encourages and restores human dignity.² Moral education is that type of education which builds in individuals the right type of values and attitudes necessary for coping with ever increasing moral problems brought about by increasing societal, political, economic and technological changes.

It is believed that moral education is teaching or instruction in morals or ethical codes of conduct.³ It is also the fundamental tool for ensuring good moral behaviour; which aids teaching by giving instructions for human character development with special emphasis on right and wrong; and on the rule and acceptable standards of human behaviour.

The morally developed man should demonstrate some fundamental characteristics such as being committed to achieving moral values; ability to identify which moral values are desirable at what time; ready at all times to cooperate with others; ability to understand the feelings of others or have the knowledge of human feelings; as well as have situational, social and skillful knowledge for life challenges.⁴

In order to achieve all that is required to make a moral citizen, various views expressed in approaches of moral education may be considered: First, the home is considered as the first responsible agent to create moral consciousness in the child. This, some claimed should be the most challenging job of the parents. Children must be developed by the parents into truly responsible adults in the society. Parents can address the challenges by:

- i. Providing an environment conducive to the offspring's growth and development.
- ii. Setting socially acceptable and psychologically satisfying goals for the psychosocial development of the offspring,
- iii. Making the appropriate material provisions for the biological, social, psychological and spiritual nurturing of the child; and
- iv. Providing appropriate forms and levels of developmental guidance and counseling to the child at every level of development.⁵

Thus, the parents initiate or provide as well as clarify moral and social values that have good psychological factors for their children's well-being. Also, they should monitor closely, the child's developmental stages and subsequent changes with a view to modifying his behaviour and actions to be in consonance with the societal norms.⁶

Second, there should be strategies for the effective provision of moral education. Many educationalists accept the influence of heredity and believe that a child may be born with some characteristics, which may be strong enough to influence his behaviours. In contrast to the.

heredity is modeling, which is a process whereby a child who got attracted to someone's way of life tries to imitate him.⁷ Modeling is not only the commonest way the child acquires behaviour but also the simplest way to acquire it. It may be a blind imitation of the adult by the child; and any behaviour he acquires in the process becomes his ways of behaviour whether good or bad. To avoid bad imitation, moral education at infant level becomes primarily the function of the parents in the family before others! One may ask that, assuming someone already acquired some bad behaviours or wanted to know the best way(s) he needs to associate with the members of the society, what should he do? What he can do is to apply effective moral education, through modeling.⁸

Third is the model of moral education. Both philosophers, psychologists and sociologists agree on the three important dimensions of moral education viz, the emotional, intellectual and the connotative or behavioural; which can be measured using five models namely the rationale, values clarification, cognitive development, consideration and social action models.⁹

In the rationale building model, values are seen as standards and principles of judging worth.¹⁰ Criteria and principles are set to determine what desirables are and how they are applied and learnt. Similar to rationale building model is values clarification model, which deals with the building of an individual's behaviour. This model holds that the understanding and the clarification of values assist the individual to exhibit behaviour that is positive and purposeful.¹¹ The cognitive development model helps the child to avoid apathy and irrationality in embracing dialogue over some issues. Kohlberg¹² maintained that this model helps in identifying moral and non-moral values. Moral conflicts are resolved by a good reasoning process.

In the view of Ruths,¹³ consideration model of moral education should be based on the fundamental sentiment of consideration which all people naturally possess. They argued that moral behaviour is self-rewarding; therefore, moral education should not be based on rules and prohibitions only. The social action model is an integrated approach which deals with people's involvement in all social actions.¹⁴ This model comprises promotion of moral reasoning skills, emphasizes trust, commitment and increased effectiveness in various actions including resolution of social problems.

Concept of Morality

Morality is an aspect of human behaviour basically concerned with what is right and wrong, good and bad, etc. Moral decadence has assumed an unimaginable dimension in the Nigerian society. For instance, in 2004, the country was rated the third most corrupt nation in the world by the Transparency international (T.I.).¹⁵ To this end, Amadi in Osaat¹⁶ had previously called on the different communities to enforce their norms and cease to accept practices through traditional sanctions. The modern practice of morality actually frowns at the use of sanctions to enforce morality. Most of the people think that western civilization expressed in the principles of democracy has to be blamed for the upsurge of moral decadence.

Omeregbe¹⁷ asserts that the problem as to whether morality is the function of reason or that of the passion is by no means a resolved one. It is argued that philosophers have been looking at this issue from wrong ends and have reasoned from a wrong premise. They created an

unwarranted dichotomy between man's reason and his passions; and assumed that reason and the passions occupied two separate compartments in human nature, each exercising a function antithetical to that of the other. On the basis of this dualistic conception of man, they divided themselves into two camps, the one arguing that morality is the function of reason while the other arguing that it is the function of the passions.

Thus, we have philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle the Stoics, Aquinas. Spinoza. Toulmin and Wilson on the one hand, arguing that morality is the function of reason, while on the opposite side, we have philosophers such as Pascal, Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Hobbes, Hume, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Unamuno, arguing that morality is the function of the passions.¹⁸

Plato considered morality mainly in terms of self-discipline. To live a moral life is, for him, to live a life of self-discipline, and this means bringing the passions under the strict control of reason. It is reason and not the passions, which should dictate and control human behaviour. To allow the passions to dictate one's actions or to control one's behaviour is to allow oneself to go as thereby living an immoral life.¹⁹

Plato also compared the role of reason in morality to that of a charioteer whose chariot is being driven by two horses. One of the horses (corresponding to the higher emotions) is tamed and easy to control, while the other horse (corresponding to the lower emotions) is wild and intractable. It always tends to lead the chariot astray, thereby making it difficult for the charioteer (reason) to lead the chariot in the right direction. Morality then was for Plato, emphatically the function of reason; and it consists mainly in reason; always keeping the passions in check in order to lead the whole of man in the right direction.²⁰ Underlying this view of Plato is a dichotomy between man's reason and his passions which Plato simply assumed to exist.

Aristotle differed from Plato in a number of ways, but the pupil could not completely shake off the heavy influence of his master and teacher. He succeeded in modifying Plato's views in some respects. Thus, for example, in his ethics, he tried to give a balanced account of morality by stressing the importance of moderation in his doctrine of the "golden mean". Yet, even in his ethics, the powerful influence of Plato was very prominent. Some passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* could have been written by Plato, for they are expressions of Plato's ideas. It is asserted for example, towards the end of the book, that the ideal life for man is a life of contemplation, that contemplation is the ideal activity from which man can derive the *Summum Bonum* - his highest form of happiness.²¹ The life of contemplation, Aristotle claimed, is the life of the gods but since man has a divine element in him, he should endeavour as much as possible to live like the gods by living a life of contemplation.

Bases for Moral Education

The concept of rational morality should be the fundamental basis for moral education. This approach basically aims at the development of autonomous character or person that follows rules in a rational manner. Rationality here implies a discriminating power to apply rules intelligently and diligently in different situations and circumstances.²² The ability to coordinate and reverse decisions in the light of continuous changes in various places, time, situations and the knowledge of the consequence of the application of such rules/decisions and regulations

are basis of rationality in moral education. The principles of rational morality/moral principles effectively imparted stimulate a critical thinking. This gives rise to the creation of an autonomous moral agent. Rational morality and rational autonomy (moral dynamism) demand an environment for intellectual stimulation for the selection of moral values and the development of value system. Therefore, the discussion of rational morality must bring about an examination of rational or moral autonomy.²³

Furthermore, autonomy is an aim in moral education. An adult requires to be freed from moral indoctrination by developing personal autonomy which is the principal aim of all endeavours in moral education and in education generally. The essence of autonomy is the formation of one's ability for independent rational judgement on the basis of general principles /criteria. When this ability is developed, the individual can assess and reassess himself on values already selected. The aim of moral education in this regard, is to make the child learn how to indulge in moral reasoning and make rational decisions about moral issues both simple and complex in the society. The criteria for a satisfactory theory of moral autonomy include logical consistency, empirical possibility, value conditions, ideological neutrality, normative relevance and judgmental relevance.²⁴

In addition, the principle of logical consistency demands that concept becomes internally consistent and logically consistent with other known concepts. This is similar with Kohlberg role-taking strategies in moral development.^{25,26} The autonomous person is logically consistent in approaching issues. This makes rational morality the mother of and a more modern strategy to all others.

Another task of moral education is to help students acknowledge and to some extent become tolerant of differences in moral codes without being led into an extreme moral relativism.²⁷ While some relativism in moral matters is justifiable, in academic and popular thought of recent decades, it has been taken to an unfortunate extreme. That there is considerable diversity in moral codes both within single societies and around the world cannot be denied. For instance:

- (i) "Criminals" and "respectable citizens" within the same state often have different moral codes, at least in some respect.²⁸ For an individual brought up in a slum with gangster friends and little chance of getting an education or a job, stealing, may be part of his everyday life, something that he cherishes as a way of gaining respect from his friends and obtaining money so that he can purchase food and clothing, among other things. For the respectable citizen, it may be important for the same reasons to remain "respectable" and not allow stealing (at least of an obvious kind) into his system of values and rules.
- (ii) In some communities old people are highly respected and given considerable power; in some others, they are sent out on their own to die; while in others they are placed in unpleasant old age homes; and in others, they are either given help at home or placed in very attractive nursing homes.
- (iii) A view that has often been held by moral philosophers is that the ultimate objective of morality is happiness; though, some may disagree.²⁹ Freedom and self-respect, for¹ example, derive a great deal of their importance from the fact that they are means to

happiness, whereas happiness derives little of its importance from the fact that, in certain ways, it is a means to freedom and self-respect. Happiness is a goal that needs to be "rediscovered" in the present age and given a great deal of emphasis, at least as a major, ultimate goal of morality.

Conclusion

Values are deteriorating everyday in Nigeria. In fact, the country is at its lowest ebb when it comes to values. Killings and kidnappings have become the order of the day. There is cultism in various schools practiced among students; even some workers are not left out. The doctrine of "hard work leads to success" has been thrown to the dust bin; even as the "desire to get rich quickly/immediately" is gripping almost everyone. There is corruption in both high and low places; exam malpractice in schools is no longer news. The negative examples abound. The slim hope the nation now has lies in teaching moral education in our institutions of learning.

Moral education has always been considered as an effective tool in disseminating worthwhile values. It is hoped that what students receive in schools should be worthwhile enough to reorientate them in a positive way. Thus, all hands must be on deck to actualize this goal. Teachers should lead as role models. School administrators should rise to their responsibilities. Finally, students should know that what they give to the society is what the society may give back to them. This implies that if they work hard and are useful to the society through their actions and works, the society will be kinder to them. You cannot eat your cake and have it.

Recommendations

The following are hereby recommended:

- 1) Moral education should be thought at every level in all our institutions of learning.
- 2) School administrators and curriculum planners should work in synergy to have a workable curriculum for all levels of education. Such curriculum should be filled with everyday values that are relevant.
- 3) Education should emphasize on moral values; including democratic principles such as freedom of speech, rule of law, accountability and collectiveness among others.
- 4) The spirit of "get rich quickly" which has destroyed many lives should be discouraged.
- 5) Offending students should be disciplined depending on the level of offence.
- 6) A society that is corruption free, that respects people, promote human rights, etc should be embraced.
- 7) Teachers should always stand as role models in a decaying society in terms of standards. They should be impeccable in character so that students can learn from them.
- 8) School administrators should periodically review the curriculum in tandem with present societal realities. This is aimed at maintaining, preserving and improving our society.
- 9) The government should ensure that only right education policies that can improve our education system are formulated.

- 10) Government should also create an enabling environment where graduates can function properly in the society. This includes providing employment opportunities for job seekers, providing social amenities such as electricity, good roads, among others. These will help to reduce crime in the society.
- 11) For young entrepreneurs, loan schemes can be created; payable at a comfortable time frame.

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