

# **QUALITY EDUCATION AND THE MORAL REBRANDING OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY**

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria holds a strategic place in the African continent and the global community. This is not unconnected to the fact that Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. Despite this, it is still counted among the developing countries in the world that are going backward instead of moving forward due to the deplorable moral status of the nation. The loss of moral sanity of right and wrong has caused sporadic and alarming decadence in the society. Because of this, Nigeria is been branded with negative names and attributes which include corruption, insecurity, land of darkness, God-forsaken country, a country where nothing works amongst others. For this reason, this study examined quality education as a rouse in the moral rebranding project of Nigeria using the philosophical research method. It x-rayed the concepts of education, morality, quality education, rebranding, and education and morality. Findings revealed that quality education has a significant role to play in the rebranding of our moral values and attitude because every good system of education must bring about positive behavioural and social changes in the life of the educated. It concluded by recommending that moral excellence and other worthy values such as human integrity, hard work, dignity, selfless service, self-reliance, dedication to duty, and others should be encouraged. Awards of excellence should be given to outstanding individuals to encourage good works

## **Introduction**

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in Africa with a population of over 140 million people. It is situated in the Western part of the continent, occupying an area of 923,768,64 square kilometres. The country as an entity has been sustained by some moral values over the years which were handed down from one generation to another. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has not made much progress as expected despite the abundant blessings of natural and human resources at her disposal. There is hardly any period of political transition

that is not characterized with loss of lives and property. Current trends in Nigeria show that the nation is entangled in the web and clutches of moral degeneration and this has been a major hindrance to rapid national development. Terrorism, money laundering, ritual killings, religious crisis, indiscipline, insecurity, human trafficking, drug trafficking, conflict, insurgency, bribery and corruption, among others appear to be a norm or order of the day.

The situation is so bad that in the past years, the federal government of Nigeria initiated various programmes to correct the negative impression, image and perception about Nigeria and Nigerians who are internationally known to be fraudulent, corrupt and dubious; people who cannot be relied upon or trusted in any official or business transaction within and outside the country. One disturbing question at this juncture is, whether these eloquent programmes have been able to attain the goals it ought to achieve? A cursory look at the extent to which these programmes have achieved their desired goals reveals that they are more utopian or theoretical than practical.

It is against this backdrop that this work sifts the relevance of quality education in morally rebranding the Nigerian society. This is imperative as a result of the abhorrent moral state of the country; the economy of the nation, along with other institutions (political, social, and religious), have crumbled, thereby subjecting the population of this esteemed nation to unparalleled hardship. In this paper, it is our contention that quality education will serve as an elixir in building a nation free from moral vices. With this in mind, this paper will begin with an effort define or describe various concepts involved in this paper.

### **Education**

Education has been variously defined by different educators at different times and places. For instance Esu and Ntukidem (2003) defined education as any process of bringing up or rearing children in a given society. They stressed that education is a process used for transmitting the accumulated knowledge and culture from generation to generation. For Oji (1982), education refers not only to the process by which we acquire knowledge, skills, habits, values or attitudes to be able to become useful and justly related members of society; but also the results of that process, and involves both learning and teaching. Okolo (2009) on his part sees education as a vehicle for social change and unavoidable means of physical, social, economic, political, religious, moral development for lifelong learning and survival. Education can also be seen as something worthwhile and being worthwhile, it has moral implications. This brings us to the description of morality.

### **Morality**

The term ‘morality’ derived from the latin word ‘*mores*’ meaning ‘manners’ or ‘morals’. It is an indispensable condiment of life that covers a vast arena of human conduct and examines our interaction with other human beings. It touches every aspect and every moment of our life. As a concept, morality is the ability to establish the differences between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. It is related to conduct of individual’s behaviors or attitudes. It deals with the goodness and badness of an action, character and disposition. The Oxford Learners Dictionary defines morality as the principles of good behavior. It is distinction between right and wrong as it affects a person or what he does. It denotes the

ability to understand the difference between right and wrong. Hence, it is generally agreed that a person's action in a moral way of his behaviour conforms to the norm of the society.

Morality provides the rules by which people love each other, fight each other in every conceivable way. It governs all our contacts with members of our family, with co-workers, with our church and with all aspects of our government. From the above definitions, it is imperative to uphold that morality deals with human behavior to his fellow human beings. Thus, Illori (1994) sees it as right or wrong action, rules of conduct based upon the principles of right conduct rather than on custom or law. On his part, Amaele in Mgbomo and Amaele (2018:338) avow that morality as a social phenomenon involves the evaluation of the consequences of our actions for others and their actions towards us.

### **Quality Education**

Quality education is a dynamic concept that has no universally accepted definition, due to variations in definitions by researchers. It evolves with time and is subject to economic and environmental conditions. To Bocean, Popescu and Logofatu (2018), quality education means an approach to quality management at all levels of educational system. Quality education according to Briggs and Desmond (2013) has to do with continuous improvement of inputs, processes and outputs required in delivering educational services, which covers student enrolment and retention, gender ratio, student teacher ratio, facilities, curriculum, assessment, training and development of students and teachers, improved result in external and internal examination, high moral standard, obedience to rules and regulation etc.

In another perspective, Nagoba and Mantri (2015) averred that quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question and the community, given the particular circumstances and prospects. Quality education is an education that provides students with the tools to deal with and find solutions to the challenges confronting mankind. These suggest that quality education creates in individuals the necessary competences which can uphold and convey the ideals of sustainable society.

### **Education and Morality**

Education is widely regarded as a moral enterprise. It presupposes ideas about the nature of knowledge and of what is valuable. It is that field of activity which seeks to expand the mind, to give direction, to promote awareness, to allow us to see things which the undereducated do not see. And as a functional part of a total society, its purpose is the inculcation of knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes by means of institutions that have been created for this end. Its purpose is to equip the student to fulfill himself in the larger society, where greater opportunity prevails, rather than to perpetuate old inequalities and disparities (Amaele & Mgbomo, 2018).

Education and morality are inseparably linked. Plato as presented by Okolo (1996) argued in his laws that it is education which determines whether man becomes the tamest or the wildest animal on earth. In his view, man becomes "the most savage of beasts" not from lack of education but from lack of morality since education has no meaning without morality. It is the development of excellence and hence morally integrated individuals that education aims.

Even, the main aim of traditional education as professed by Babarinde, Olufowobi and Bolaji (2011) is to develop in individual's moral integrity, honesty and other moral qualities.

However, it seems that while the modern education has opened the world and man's mind, advanced science and technology, it has, though, indirectly fostered social vices which have serious implications on the individual in the society and the society itself.

### **What is Rebranding?**

Rebranding is not a new concept. Rebranding have traditionally been associated with products and services from companies and individuals, as such it is a common expression in marketing and business. Hornby (2005) defines rebranding as the activity of giving a particular name and image to goods or services so that people will be attracted to them and want to buy them. It is believed that those who rebrand are seeking to sell a product and to maximally target a clientele.

The definition above suggests that rebranding is the practice of giving new looks and name to an existing product with a view to making it more competitive, more attractive and more marketable. Thus, country rebranding means remolding or revamping a country's negative image in the outside world as a means of attracting direct foreign investment (Nworah, 2000). Rebranding therefore, as a Nigerian government project is the process of making Nigeria and Nigerians more competitive, admirable and acceptable nationally and internationally.

### **Rebranding the Nigerian Society: Why?**

In the traditional Nigerian society, morality was founded on two perspectives; on the Divine theory and the humanistic communalism (Udoiem, 1992). The Divine command theory emanates from the Supreme Being who demanded good character from citizens and good character implies the rejection of vices and honouring of virtues. On the other hand, the humanistic communalism posits that morals are the products of individual and community experiences and therefore are man and community-centred rather than through divine revelation.

Contributing, Akinpelu (1993) proclaims that the traditional Nigerian society has some social cultural values, which formed its foundation in the past but the impact of western civilization in Nigeria created many problems and changes in the lives of the people of Nigeria. the colonial and post-colonial moral lives of Nigerians were based on new forms of socio-political and economic values introduced by the colonial masters. The colonialists and missionaries believed that without the goods and moral values, Nigeria would remain in the dark. They therefore pressed on Nigerians to abandon their codes of honour and system of morality and adopt the Western ones. One major effect of the traumatic contact between the traditional moral values and the western moral values as submitted by Elechi and Nsirim (2011) was the lowering of the moral commitment to both the traditional and foreign moral values as Nigerians found themselves in a moral dilemma of subscribing to double moral standards. The end result of this, as Udoiem (1992) puts it, was "the shift from traditional near equalitarian communalism to individualism".

This is why today; it needs no empirical study to state that Nigeria has been experiencing immoral and unethical inclinations in all aspects of life. Any right thinking person that has been following the developments in Nigeria in recent times will declare that Nigeria has degenerated into a jungle where morality and ethics is no longer respected (Ruwa, 2011). Amaele (2010) commenting on the Nigerian society avows that the Nigerian society generally is a bundle of immorality. It has reached a very high point of moral decay.

Immorality is practiced and encouraged in all spheres of national life. The control of power and wealth are the main targets of an average Nigerian. Moral values are therefore relegated to the background. What matters in the country is no longer how you become rich but whether or not you are rich. The law respects wealth, so also the government and the masses. Brothers and sisters accord respect to wealth. The case is same with friends and our various religious groups. There is money value as against moral values. Generally speaking, money is considered first by almost every Nigerian. The celebration of money and its pursuit has placed money value above moral values. This placement has made many people to draw conclusions that almost every Nigerian is corrupt depending on chances and positions. The man of virtues who has no money is regarded as a foolish man. His counterpart who lacks virtues and wisdom but is wealthy is regarded as lord. The latter is recognized on the high table in any occasion. He is showered with one chieftaincy title or the other. His words are always regarded supreme. He is served as master and worshipped as lord. His children enjoy all privileges. But the former is disregarded even among members of his immediate family. His presence in any gathering attracts no important attention. His words are turned down as foolish, his advice on any issue, no matter how well intended, is not considered serious.

Simply put, Nigeria as a society does not recognize value, industry and efficiency. There is, therefore, the urgent need to inculcate in our youth, a strong sense of values and direction through education. Education is in better position to give enormous contribution to the ongoing reordering campaign. People are not born as values-aware. Different forms and evaluation of values in different societies show that they are learned later in life. Since values can be taught, experienced and learnt, it is responsibility of education to redirect the value system of a culturally, multinational society like ours to a common, functional, enduring and realistic values system and teach them to our youths. Students or youths are the limelight of their respective communities, future leaders of tomorrow and figures worthy of emulation. Value inculcation and reorientation should therefore, be emphasized through our educational systems.

### **Moral Rebranding of the Nigerian Society through Quality Education**

The presence of a Nigerian poses threats to many nations of the world today. The name Nigeria or Nigerian connotes evil to many, because they assume that every Nigerian is deceitful or a cheat. This explains why many persons and countries hardly allow Nigerians entrance to their countries while some that do, subject Nigerians to humiliation in the name of security screening and searching, what a disgrace? The call to rebrand this nation morally is timely and the only way to achieve this is through quality education.

Quality education has a significant role to play in the rebranding of our moral values and attitude. It provides the cause and effect of any negative values. It is highly valued and this aids inculcation of the “dos” and “don’ts” to the individual(s). It helps direct the child on behaviours that are desirable and undesirable, so that any departure from the desirable behaviour is sanctioned negatively while compliance with the right moral values is reinforced. It provides to the learner the sense of discipline and respect for the dignity of man. The NPE (2014) avows that education is an instrument “par excellence” and therefore has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, social, culture, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. In fact, it is a powerful tool for the inculcation of the right moral values and attitudes for the survival of the individual(s) in particular and the Nigeria society in general. Supporting the above, Anwuka (2005) declares that the success or failure of moral values orientation hinges on quality education because the degree and quality of participation in the life of the society depends on the type of education for her citizens in order to achieve her purpose.

Quality education aims to develop the necessary, knowledge, skills attitudes and values that are acceptable as desirable by the members of the society. This helps to equip the individual(s) for survival as a member of the society. This promotes progress and stability. According to Kenty (2003), through quality education, education will be channeled to secure democracy by sustaining shared values for justices, equality and freedom. Both young and old should be reoriented to ensure that the lost glory is regained. Hence, all hands must be on deck to ensure its aim is achieved.

However, it must be noted that quality education as a concept cannot effect any meaningful change in the already deteriorated situation. It is the human elements who have acquired the education that will apply their knowledge to their lives and the work they do (Nwafor, 2011). The real educated person is one who respects not only universal moral values, but also his own cultural moral values, one who puts the knowledge he/she acquired into the development of society, and one who condemns evil and uphold what is good. This kind of person must be a product of an educational system that imparts qualitative education; a system that has a curriculum that ensures an all-round development of the individual, i.e, mental, physical, social and spiritual. Simply put, the education system must equip the head, the heart, the hand, and the soul for the meaningful development of the whole man. Peter (1966:27) applauds a system that ensures the “development of intellect and character” because its aims give content to the notion of developing what is worthwhile, which is what it means to be an educated person.

For this reason, the Nigerian education system should wake up to the challenges of moral laxity, values conflicts and wrong attitude. This situation according to Nwafor (2011) can be improved through curriculum review and emphasis on moral education in addition to all traditional subjects. Indeed, the educational system should be able to integrate the teaching of basic societal values, while stressing that indigenous moral values are not inferior to foreign values. There is no doubt that a well-educated citizenry will make governance easier; social, economic and political climate will be stable and discipline the order of the day.

## Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, it is believed that the following measures if adequately implemented can enhance the achievement of the moral rebranding of the Nigerian society through quality education:

- Cultural organizations, artistic associations, specialized institutions and agencies should organize cultural centres to sensitize our youth toward civic and moral responsibilities. For example, cultural music, drama and so on relating to the achievement of past heroes should be promoted in our schools and in our society to strengthen moral disposition
- Let the rule of law take its course, let the culprits of indiscipline and immorality be meted with sanction and punishment as the law demands so that others will be afraid of doing the same thing.
- In addition, moral excellence and other worthy values such as human integrity, hard work, dignity, selfless service, self-reliance, dedication to duty, and others should be encouraged. Awards of excellence should be given to outstanding individuals to encourage good works.

## Conclusion

There is no gain saying the fact that the level of immorality among Nigerians is disturbingly alarming and has affected the pace of meaningful development in the country. In this regard, there is the urgent need for moral rebranding with the view to actualizing our potentials and harnessing our resources both human and materials for a greater, purposeful, egalitarian and vibrant society. To achieve this, all hands must be on deck. Due to this fact, teaching of morality must be restored to its central position in our educational systems and every citizen must imbibe the culture of recognizing moral values. This presupposes that every social institution such as the family, the school, church, the government, and mass media must step up their effort in combating these social vices that keeps staring us in our face every day by teaching, preaching and practicing good moral values.

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