ISSUES IN MORAL EDUCATION OF THE YOUTHS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The inability of the Nigerian nation to develop as it should is strongly linked with moral bankruptcy in our youths. Moral education is, therefore, needed to inculcate moral values in our youths who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow. An improved image of the youths will ensure rapid social and economic development for the nation. This paper posits that it is moral education that is needed to overcome the moral decadence that has beclouded our nation. It has also taken care of some basic concept as morality, education, agents of moral education of the youths, techniques of effective moral education; and further looks at issues in moral education of the youths for national development in the 21st century. The recommendations include the fact that the teaching of moral education in our schools be intensified and the teachers that teach moral education to be model for our youths among others.

Moral education is an issue that is currently being widely discussed as a result of the moral decadence of youths. The Nigerian society particularly is now in serious crisis for the high level of immorality that prevails in our society. Today so many adolescent and adults are delinquent and divided in character. Moral education, therefore is not merely to cushion the disastrous effects of the social evils but also to reduce the incidence of delinquency and deviancy.

This is because the basic task in socialization in every culture is the communication of moral standard, shaping and enforcing the practice of “good” behaviours in the development child. The specific values and behaviour regarded as good, however varies among culture. The child is expected to learn the rules of his or here society and experience emotional discomfort or guilt violating them and satisfaction when conforming to them.

However, moral issues have been neglected in the present time which resulted into serious moral decadence. It could be argued that the neglect of moral education is responsible for the rampant cases of armed robbery, unwanted pregnancies, child abandonment, examination malpractice, cultism, drug trafficking, embezzlement of public fund, corruption, dishonesty etc. This negligence could be part of the explanation for the disorders, crisis and anxiety that are so common in our society.

Ideally, there should be an orderly social life and for this to happen, there must be understanding guiding principles as well as rules of conduct as every human society must have well established rules and code of conduct. Moral education has only recently received serious attention it deserves. A morally decent society would have citizen that obey and respect those virtues that society hold into high esteem and would not be involved in social vices.

As moral education is an invaluable tool for any nation is search of a meaningful development, and the moral behaviour of any people to a large extent determines the position of that nation in the community of nations. Nigeria, though blessed with abundant human and material resources has continued to remain a nation shunned by potential investors from outside the country.

This paper will therefore examine the concept and the underlying principles of moral education, agents of moral education of the youths, techniques of effective moral education, issues in
moral education of youths for national development, in the 21st century and recommendations to abide by those principles will be made.

**Conceptual Framework**

i. **Morality**

According to Bull (1989) *morality is code of conduct in society or community which is often seen as a means of pursuing virtuous life, a way of life and a set of principles regulating attitude and behaviours of one towards his fellow men.* Morality guide people in doing what is right and good for their own sake and that of their community; and this implies that morality cannot exist in a vacuum.

From the operational or practical perspective, Mbiti (2000) defines morality as the pursuit of the virtuous or a way of life that determines relationship in any given society which ultimately would produce a cohesive, harmonious, peaceful and stable society.

Morality, therefore, is primarily concerned with conduct and duty. It presupposes rules of behaviour as well as our relationship with and consideration for one another. Morality arise out of man’s consciousness of belonging to God. This means that morality is the offspring religion. It can be said than, that the two concepts are quite independent of each other for national development.

ii. **Education**

According to Okafor (1984) education is a process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of his potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary according to right reasons and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment.

Here, education is seen as the process of socialization which involves a number of factors including family, church and the government, apart from acculturation process. Furthermore, Ukeje (2004) defines education as a process of social reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. Here, the role of education in reconstructing, rehabilitating and reconciling values become apparent.

Articulating these definitions, education may be seen as a deliberate effort directed towards the transmission of accumulated wisdom, knowledge and skills from generation to generation, imparted in four walls of the school. Thus education is a strong force, which could be utilized by the society for the solution of its social, economic, political and moral problems for national development.

**Agents of Moral Education of the Youths**

There are many agents that help to socialize the individual. These agents play significant roles in the moral development of youths. The agents socialize the youths into their own pattern and their own values.

a. **The Family**

The family is the major agents of socialization for the child though it does no more play the expected role adequately well as it used to. Uche (1984) consider the home as the centre of moral education where the family elderly members make sure that children follow the moral code of the society. Thus the author maintains that the family is universally recognized as the basic unit of a society. It then provides the national framework for the emotional, social, physical and mental support essential for the growth and well-being of the youth.

Ilori (1994) sees family as a primarily group whose close and intense emotional attachment are crucial not only as the prototype of subsequent ties, but also for adequate socialization and emotional development of the child. The family then has certain rituals just as the school, its rules and regulations, through which the morality of the youths could be developed.
b. The Peer Group
As a member of the peer group, the child is socialized into its pattern. The peer group helps the child to expand his social horizons and make him a more complex person. His experiences are varied and he becomes more reasonable and realistic as he grows among his members.

According to Ilori (1994), this group serves as a testing ground for the ideas and characteristic that the child has previously learned and develop. He further explained that the child learns to become more independents through the peer group. There is no doubt that one avenue for acquiring independence from parents is through the peer group.

c. The Mass Media
The mass media have become part and parcel of the child’s life in the present time. The child learns a lot about the ways of the society through the mass media. Among other things, the mass media present model behaviour of heroes, occupational, ethnic and personality type. Through constant exposure to different aspect of mass media, a child gains knowledge which goes beyond his immediate experience.

d. The School
The school is a social institution deliberately and formally arranged for the achievement of educational objectives. The school has a responsibility to give moral education to children. Therefore, the moral education of children should come high in the list of educational priorities since the establishment of schools is expected to meet the need for a direct and explicit contribution to the social development of the youths.

This is why moral education should be taken as serious as any other course in the curriculum. Kohlbery (1986) is also of the view that teachers should constantly teach the children rules and values as well as the expected students behaviour to one another. It is assumed that the exposure to the diversity of moral views of teachers is undoubtedly one of the enlightening experiences of growing children but the present situation of thoughtlessness as to which of the teachers’ moral attitudes or views he communicates to children is the problem since the teacher’s own level of morality is not certain.

Techniques of Effective Moral Education of the Youths
Moral development could be understood in term of moral attitudes therefore method which are able to induce attitude formation and change should be the techniques to the employed in the course of moral training. In order to ensure that moral growth in fostered, it is important to develop their personal potential as human beings. The teacher must also understand the nature of child and adolescent morality. Only then would he be able to device the best technique for advancing growth.

For effective moral education of the individual child work must be appropriate to his particular stage; and each stage must be catered for to ensure proper development. In this view Mcknight (1968) argued that for effective moral education the material of the syllabus should be accommodating to the limitations imposed by the development of morality. Also individual must meet and master the art of reasoning and relating to others among other thing expected of every human being. If they can’t they become a social problem.

Specifically, for the individual to achieve moral growth and development, for the youths Owu (1984:220) remarked that the following factors should be observed.
a. Emotional security, a sense of being loved and being wanted, a sense of companionship and opportunity for sharing.
b. opportunity for wholesome self expression, adventure and excitement, freedom from boredom.

c. Continued discipline in self control with repressing emotions, nor being forced to show adult behaviour in childhood.

d. Continually widening social horizons with experience of co-operation, tolerance, sympathy and consideration for the right and privilege of the youth

Other ways of acquiring morality are though unconscious imitation. From childhood, the child is in close relationship with people whose moral behaviour is of standard. The child watches and imitates with much conscious effort. What the people around him do. Moral behaviour is also acquired through constructive reflective thinking. There is need for the individual youths to think where certain behaviours are socially and ethnically acceptable while others are not.

Dzurgba (2000) confirmed that constructive thinking and practice to implement the knowledge constitute good moral behaviour. There should be conscious attempt to establish a system of more effective moral education since it is agreed that moral health is not only desirable for the individual but also essential for the well being of the nation for national development in the 21st century.

**Issues in Moral Education of the Youths for National Development in the 21st Century**

Education without moral excellence is like building a formidable house on a shaky and fragile foundation. Education devoids of the fear of God leaves man in grave danger destruction of life and property. Education is good, but it has to be achieve in a holistic manner; and of course to a desirable end which provides the youths with moral values, while education develops the mind and the intellect with which the people as a nation can forge ahead. Isah (2004) on this observed: that

If one’s body and brain are full develop while his spiritual standard remains undeveloped, then we will have moral corrupt and depraved intellectual who lacks wisdom and other moral values inspite of his high intelligence.

This means that both the moral values and intellectual aspect should be developed to avoid having figures of religious bigot, fundamentalist and fanatics who condemn everybody expect himself.

It is strongly believed that most yielding venture an individual society or nation could invest on is moral education, and for that, huge sum of money are launched by parents in achieving this goal for their children. It should be understood that individual make society, and the development of individual economically, socially, politically, psychologically and morally mean the development of the society because people are the world’s greatest assets. Achimugu (2000) observed that

The prosperity of country depends not on the abundance of its revenue nor on the strength of its army nor on the beauty of its public building but its citizens whose men are educated and morally enlightened.

This has confirmed that moral education is accepted as the engine of progress for any nation to develop. Thus moral education has affected the character, attitude and conduct of the nation by remodeling human character, advancing moral values and codes of conducts for development of youths who are future leaders.

Essentially, moral education covers all aspect of life be it politics, social, economic, culture and technological. Moral education thus serves as a spring board for both inculcating and improving
moral values which are fundamental to achieving approved human conduct among the youths in Nigeria.

Moral education, therefore, is the element with which a man organizes himself to be a perfect man or element, which he uses to transform himself from man potential to man actual, for moral transformation where there should be attitudinal behavioual change.

With moral education, the need to have a new focus, a new orientation and a new political, social and economic philosophy with clearly defined objectives and goals for our youths who are leaders of tomorrow; will be achieved. Thus a change from the old order to new order. A retraining of oneself, a new orientation to make a clean-break with ones past with a new life, a new living, new hope, new aspiration and finally a new ambition and new set-goals for our youths.

Now, Nigeria is in need of men and women who are selfless, sincere, truthful, honest, dedicated, committed and of proven integrity to redeem the nation totally from the present woes, and restore her to the path of honour and dignity.

Measures should be taken at making moral education effective, as this is the only way that we can move our nation forward in this age of technology and globalization. What is need is the concerted effort of all Nigerians, especially parents, schools, mass media, religious groups and from all walks of life to cooperate in ensuring the success of moral education with new moral character and virtues which will now manifest the new life of God and for the empowerment to pursues a new life in our youths for national development, in the 21st century.

**Conclusion**

What is considered here reveals that moral education has influenced the Nigerian polity economically, socially, politically, culturally and technologically. It has played a prominent role in the actualization of development in these dimensions. Thus, it is relevant to the development of our youths who are future leaders.

It has also shown that moral education not withstanding, Nigeria is plagued with a lot of problem which has brought about the breakdown of moral values, thus efforts should be made on how to create a new Nigeria with the fear of God in the minds of our youths who will be leaders of tomorrow.

Moral education should therefore be consciously inculcated into an learners who are youths at all level of education. So that we can have Nigerians who are morally sound in details of their training and practice for national development in the 21st century.

**Recommendation**

The practical moral behaviour that prevalent in the society are not encouraging for schools to relax in the pursuit of moral education. Homes, religious groups and the likes have been at work, though their effort cannot meet up with the rate of moral decadence in the society. This is because despite the school efforts, immoral behaviour are readily exhibited. For improvement in moral education for our youths in the 21st century for national development, the following recommendations are made.

- The teaching on moral education should be intensified in our schools and colleges while moral philosophy should be made. compulsory in our tertiary institutions.
- Our students should be encouraged to participate in those activities which will foster personal discipline and character training.
- The content of moral education should include ideals that emphasizes love, equality, sincerity, honesty, altruism and other virtues.
The teachers that teach moral education should be a model for the children to imitate. He/she should be simple, disciplined, tolerant and morally upright.

The religious groups be they Christians or Moslem should embark on vigorous religious preaching to lead notorious youths into the path of deep moral understanding.

Mission school should be returned to their original proprietors to effectively bring discipline and moral instruction to their schools.

References


