

MORAL EDUCATION: AN EMERGING NEEDS FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There has been an outcry in the dwindling state of morality in Nigeria. Hardly would a day pass without hearing a long discussion of moral decadence amongst the public. This paper tries to examine the challenges facing the Universal Basic Education. Past efforts made to boost moral education need to be revisited. Since the major goals of the U.B.E is to provide basic functional education there is need for this basic education to be complemented with moral education. The paper suggested some recommendations such as training of competent teachers to handle moral issues, formulating a separate curriculum model in the U.B.E programme for moral education, collective teaching of moral education etc.

Introduction

Since time immemorial the concept of morality has gained tremendous prominence amongst the members of any society. Essentially, moral education has been viewed as a means of providing possibilities of moulding the members of the society to adhere to those ethics that are considered ideal for the survival the society. Moral reflections have been linked up with people's convictions that no society could ever move forward without a strong and viable code of conduct that regulates and guides the conflicting behaviours of the members of the society.

Education in Nigeria and of course, all over the world is considered a weapon that triggers national development. Moral education on the other hand, is the greatest segment within the whole educational sturdier that warrants the acquisition of those skills that shapes and direct the actions of an individual to contribute immensely to national development.

Concept of Morality

The term morality has been defined differently morality in some cases is referred to as ethics which symbolizes general study of what constitute right and wrong conduct or behaviour. The World Book Encyclopedia Volume 6 page: 339 defined moral as "the actual patterns of conduct and direct working rules of moral actions" The New Websters Dictionary (1992 : 649) explained morality as. ethics, uprights conduct, conduct or altitude judged from the moral.

Morality therefore, should be considered as characters based on the customs. These characters are called morals. Morals are principles or standards of human conduct, morality is concerned with the norms of human conduct. Morality is an aspect of social life that is essentially the work of an individual in concomitant with the code of conduct established collectively through the effort of the society.

The outcry of Nigerian is that morality is in a serious threat, people now in the markets, offices, schools and all other public place talk much on various factors that affect moral education. Members of the public therefore, cling to education as a vital weapon for inculcating moral aspects in our youths. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defined education 1990:P396 as "the action or process of educating or of being educated, the knowledge and development resulting from educational process." The concept of morality could also be viewed as the function of the society. The concept of morality therefore, emanates from the operation of social system in the society. This social system emphasizes the clarification of various values.

In the Nigerian context and even universally, morality can be regarded as controversial issue. The diversity of the term makes it very hectic to have consensus on certain moral issues. The major source of morality in most societies is religion. Religion supplies forms of beliefs, code of conduct and even sanctions against violators. Other agencies of socialization like the family, school and mass media also complement religious beliefs in tackling moral issues. An important point to remember is that religious beliefs are numerous and they cut across regions, cultures and even families

Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy (2005), in Joshua (2006), stated that morality is an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behaviour that affect others and has the lessening of evil or harm as its goal.

Concept of Moral Education

Education is a means of societal survival and perfection. Education entail processes that supports acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills for functional living. Education is postulated the formal

activity that translate the yearning of the society into reality Nkom (2006:1), contented that

"two broad groupings are recognized in education which are sometimes seen as exclusive of each other. These are identified as originated by the Greek city states Sparta and Athens, as pragmatic and liberal education.

These two modes of education came about from the needs of their societies. Any society has its philosophy, the philosophy of Nigeria as a nation as contained in the National Policy of Education: (2004) include building:-

- i. A free and democratic society
- ii. Just and equitable society
- iii. A united strong and self-reliant nation and
- iv. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Moral education cut across these overall objectives, and the whole goals of education that cut across the whole educational structure are reflected from these 5 main national objectives. The changing nature of Nigeria requires re-fashioning of moral education Kelly & Downey (1986:152). contented that

"technological advancement affect the social life of the people, the most obvious features of that change of course are those that affected the material circumstances of our lives, those technological developments have transformed our life style of living, advances in communication, in facilities for rapid long distance travel, in mechanical aids of all kind in the home and at work, in industrial machinery, in medical and surgical devices".

The above assertion indicates that there is high relationship between the survival of the society and the various changes that sprang from the social and technological revolutions. This in turn, affects the moral aspect of the members of the society. The changes in moral issues are highly affected by many forces, either internally or externally. Moral education therefore includes teaching and developing of critical awareness and appreciation of societal values that leads to the acquisition of ethics for maintaining stable living together. Moral education emphasizes respect for knowledge and truth and ability to think rationally before acting on an issue. This therefore must be linked with the human experiences in the society. Kelly and Downey (1986), contented that "we do not normally accept that a person is behaving well morally if we discover that he or she has not thought out and deliberately choosing the course of action adopted".

Moral education provides those experiences and opportunities for developing the quality of pupils' thinking about moral issues. The approaches to moral education include the following:

- 1). Kind of moral upbringing needed by the children to carry them along in the society.
- 2). The content of moral education and how to identify and differentiate moral and immoral acts.
- 3). The relationship between moral education, moral training and moral instruction.

In the first place the child has to be made to understand that moral opinions are pluck from the prejudices inherited from generation to generation. Moral education entails careful and critical appraisal of the contents and must portray the significance of moral behaviour.

The term moral education is preferably adopted rather than instruction or training because moral education is a continuous and lifelong education and it cut across all the activities of an individual. The concern of moral education is to ensure the belief system satisfies all moral standards and the manner of transmission the child also be regarded as an active person not passive when teaching moral aspects. The history of Nigerian education has been tied with colonial education, which in the first place, emphasized moral education as a core curriculum and it is still reflected in Nigerian education. Various courses such as religion, general studies, civic and social studies form the bedrock of moral education. The various concepts that treat moral aspects are spread in the curriculum designs. Before the advent of colonialism, the indigenous system of education has been loaded with elements of moral education since it is a well known fact that no society has regards on any person that deviates from the ethics established by the society Fafunwa (1991) postulated that character training is the corner stone of African education. He stated that "the parents participate in the education of the child. Everybody wants him to be sociable, honest, courageous, humble, persevering and of good report at all times".

It is because of this assertion that many people believe that unless the indigenous elements of education are adhered to, moral decadence will still persist. Some even asserted that the intrusion of foreign traditions that contradict the indigenous culture is a major threat to moral development.

Moral education therefore is a universal phenomena, even the advanced countries have been clinging for an articulated and sound moral education that can curtail the social ills of the universal. The most serious

social ill is moral decadence amongst the youth. The Encyclopedia of Education (1971) stated some of the aims of moral education as follows:

1. To inculcate moral way of judging actions.
2. To foster a belief for adoption of some fundamental principles or ideas or values as a basis for moral judgment and decision
3. To foster a belief in on an adoption of a number of concrete norms, values and virtues
4. To develop a disposition to do what is morally right or wrong.
5. To promote achievement to reflect autonomy, self improvement or spiritual freedom even if it leads the individual to criticize prevailing ideas principles or rules.

Education worldwide is believed to be the weapon for worthwhile survival. Education therefore, must consider the individual, the society and the future existence of both the individual and the society. Okere (1983:54), contended that:

"since man is body and mind, complete education will entail training of our bodily and mental faculties and our mental faculties knowledge alone would not be enough, wisdom, skills, the virtues and other culture to make up an accomplished man an intellectual giant who was but a moral dwarf would be regarded not as an educated man".

Some Methods of Teaching Moral Education

In preparing to teach moral education, the aims and objectives of moral education which is a general statement representing the ideals and the aspirations of society, i.e. the aim of moral education is to train individual to behave in accordance with the societal moral conduct. From the aims then teacher moves to assess the goals which describe the actual destination in general terms e.g. the goal of moral education in Nigeria (in relation to its aims above) is the provision of series of appropriate courses, topics, issues that lead to the production of a sound morally behaved person. The next step for the teacher is to analyze the objectives which are statement of quantifiable and operational in nature indicating, an event of the mastery of the desired activities or skills.

Basically, moral education centers highly on the affective domain of learning. The teacher therefore, after considering implication of choosing a method decides on whether to use teacher centered method or child centered. The modern trend of education emphasizes child centered because teacher centered method is a method of teaching (hat has been regarded as autocratic. These methods depend for their success to a large extent to the teacher's performance. Curzon (1980:158), described child centered methods of instruction as a directed and facilitated learning within environment in which the teachers play the role of a mediator and active participation of the children is the norm"

It is vital to state that teachers are not restricted on the use of any method provided such method can support the attainment of behavioural objectives. The following could be some useful methods for teaching moral education.

- 1 Discussion method:- This has to do with examining a matter through a free flow argument. Essentially, all the members pool knowledge and ideas together in a cooperative task of endeavoring to understand a problem by learning from one another. The benefits of this method is that it encourages the exploration of knowledge and public evaluation of ideas.
- 2 Individual Methods:- A situation where by series of assignment are given to students, the learner does most of the learning by himself.
3. Play way method:- this method is for the younger children, the teachers is provide activities that are playful and should be highly attached with moral values.
4. Inquiry processes such as discovery methods that promote reflective thinking are highly important, e.g project method, other techniques that are useful in teaching moral education include are role play, dramatization, verbal instruction etc.

The concern of moral education is to ensure that the belief system satisfies those criteria suggested by the various social institution of the society should be endemic to the notion of education itself. The teacher therefore needs to be highly critical in the selection of method that cater for the identification and adoption of moral code of conduct accepted by the society.

Universal Basic Education Programme (U.B.E)

U.B.E is an integral aspect of education innovation in Nigeria. It could be referred to as a child of necessity. The U.B.E programme was launched on September, 1999. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria section 18(1) and (3) stated that Government is enjoined to provide free and compulsory basic education amongst other educational objectives. The U.B.E was therefore,

for-stalled in order to strive and eradicate illiteracy which thwarts development that consequently results into poverty and penury.

U.B.E programme was launched by the Federal Government in Nigeria to remove discrepancies and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education.

Goals and Nature of U.B.E Programme

The U.B.E is aimed at ensuring uninterrupted access to nine (9) year formal education by providing free compulsory Universal Basic Education for every child of school age. This will enhance the acquisition of literacy and numeracy, life skills and values for literacy education which will lead to useful or functional living.

The justification of the U.B.E is contained in Basic education Act. 2004 which stated that there should be compulsory, free Universal Basic Education for all children of primary to junior Secondary school (J.S.S) age in the Federal Republic. This even stipulated penalties to parents who denied their children access to such education.

The U.B.E programme is a step forward that reflects the reform programme. The programme emphasizes on curriculum diversification so as to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations. The issue of providing conducive atmosphere for the development of functional living is highly reflected in the U.B.E. programme.

The system also suspended exams for the whole 9 years but instead continuous assessment will be the major tool for assessment of the 3 domains of educational objectives i.e. cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The U.B.E programme emphasizes individualized teaching methods with some basic computer education. For the programme to be successful the issue of moral aspect should be pursued. The U.B.E programme also will encourage community ownership of schools including participation in decision making process.

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Recommendations

It is important to state that moral education could be described as the pivot upon which all other elements of education should revolve. It is through moral education whether at formal or informal level that we secure morality which is the ability to make a choice between right and wrong. Some of the possible causes of moral decadence in Nigeria could be attached to the falling standard of adhering to the established ethics. The consequences of this is that many children are now engage in immoral acts such as armed robbery, drug abuse etc. Since Universal Basic Education was designed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) there is need to expand the programme with issues that are highly related to moral development. This means that the subjects of the programme should consist of those issues that are highly affiliated to moral aspects.

To improve moral education under the Universal Basic Education the following should be considered

- ❖ A separate curriculum modules that address the issue of moral education should be formulated to supplement some of the topics that handle moral education in religious and social studies.
- ❖ Training of teachers should be highly geared towards producing conscientious teachers who will be efficient in classroom and possess all the desirable qualities that will be a model for students. These qualities include honesty, just and responsibility etc.
- ❖ Moral education should be seen as a collective responsibility of the various agencies i.e home, school, religious institutions etc. The use of resource persons to handle moral issues in schools will be a welcome development.
- ❖ Teachers should be encouraged to embark on extensive use of child-centred methods so

that

children will be free to participate in value clarification. This should be done through organizing workshops and seminars on moral issues to teachers under the U.B.E.

programme.

- ❖ All the subject in the nine year Basic education should contain some elements of moraleducation.
- ❖ Effective guidance and counselling programme must be accompanied the U.B.E programme. This will assist in guiding the children to make wise vocational choices that will make them functional, hence occupying them with tasks rather than leaving them idle, and there is popular saying that idle mind is the workshop of the devil

Conclusion

In this era of educational reforms, moral education as a challenge to the whole education industry must be pursued with vigour. The hindering factors to moral education should be addressed. It is also relevant to point out that no matter the intellectual skill of an individual, if he lacks moral consciousness, he can be harmful to the society. Progress in any society must be accompanied with sound moral virtues

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