UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
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FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES IN GENERAL STUDIES:
THE HUMANITIES APPROACH

EDITED BY
PROF. WAHAB O. EGBEWOLE
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PREFACE

On assumption of duty as the Director of the General Studies Division of this great university in October, 2015 I looked at the textbook in place for GNS 211, *Fundamental issues in General Studies: The Humanities Approach* and resolved there is need to review the contents in terms of update as well as bring on board emerging contemporary issues in order to meet the challenges of Nigeria today and tomorrow. There was also the need to make the textbook more student friendly and was also observed that the textbook should be more of an instructional material. These goals have been largely achieved as this book now has an Abridged Courseware which directs the minds of the students to the basic thrust of this course. We have equally succeeded in adding a few more chapters in this book and some chapters removed. The new chapters include *Ageing in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects* by Prof. Isaac Olakanmi Abimbola, *Announcing Grief: The Place of Strategic Communication* by Prof. Tunde Ajiboye, *Anti-Corruption, Integrity and Societal Development in Nigeria* by Prof. M.A. Belewu, Dr. M.A.O. Oyebola, and Dr. A.A. Muhammad, *Understanding Peace, Security and Development* by Dr. Mahfouz A. Adedimeji, *Social Media and Performance of Students in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions* by Dr. Abubakar Saidu and *Masquerade and the Masquerader: Theatrical Producing for Traditional Cultural Festivals* by Dr. Segun Oyeleke Oyewo.

No doubt, these new additions will go a long way in broadening the horizon of the students and further expose them to the issues for which the course was originally designed. It is important to stress that we have gone a bit further to provide a full courseware, power point presentations of the chapters, a detailed work plan which will be available to students through their portals once they complete the registration process. It is hopeful that the idea of video presentations will be achieved before the end of 2017/2018 session so that our students can benefit maximally.

We wish to put on record the unflinching support of the University Administration under the able leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Abdulganiyu Ambali OON, The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, Prof N.Y.S. Ijaiya, Prof. Bayo Lawal, the Coordinator of this course Dr. Abdulrafiu Adebayo, Dr. Muhtar Etudaiye and all the staff members of General Studies Division.

This new textbook in our view is very rich in content, reader friendly, generally designed to expose the students to the nitty gritty of the course and truly make the students fully prepared for the 21st century world.

Prof. Wahab O. Egbewole
Director, General Studies
September, 2017

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CHAPTER TEN

CHARACTER TRAINING FOR NATIONAL VALUES: A RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATION

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Introduction

Today, man undoubtedly stands in his globalised village, on the edge of a precipice. He is groaning under the agony of the evil effects of corruption. His present is unpalatable and his future is unpredictably murky. Corruption has eaten up the societal fabric into its marrow.

In Nigeria, corruption has become endemic in its various forms - moral degradation, embezzlement of public funds, bribery, rape, child abuse, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, ethno religious conflicts, militancy, assassination, political violence, examination malpractices, bank and online fraud and acts of perfidy at various levels to mention but a few. All these have hindered economic balance and stability as well as stunted the progress and development of the nation (Ahmed, 2006).

Many crusades against corruption have not yielded much result. Laws and sanctions have been invoked to no effect. It is in this light that a religious framework in arresting corruption has become indispensable. As a divine system devoid of human manipulation, it will no doubt reduce the problem to the barest minimum. In other words, if character training is being given credence from the religious perspective, all these will bring about a u-turn and social change in the Nigerian nation, the African continent and the world as a whole, thereby leading to sustainable socio-economic development.

Objectives of the Chapter

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:
  i.   define Good character training;
  ii. explain what is meant by national values;
  iii. identify elements of national values
  iv. mention the agents that inculcate good character training
  v.   explain the role of religions in good character training

Definition of Good Character Training

Character training, simply defined by a lay man, is the act of training individuals, people to know what is right and wrong, caring about what is right and doing what is right for the benefit of all humanity (Dzurgba, 2000). Good character has three basic parts, namely: knowing it, feeling it and doing it (Bidmos, 2017). The *Collins English Dictionary* defines character training as the act of improving certain good or useful traits in a person's character, especially self-reliance, endurance, and courage (Collins, 1978). Obasola (2015) defines it as **a term** used to describe the teaching of people, basically children, in a manner that will help them develop variously as moral, well-mannered, well-behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant or socially acceptable beings. Concepts that falls under this term include social and emotional learning, moral reasoning and cognitive development, life skills education, health education, violence prevention, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and conflict resolution and mediation (Obasola, 2015). Character training can also be explained to mean, the act of moral upbringing for individuals at various levels to maintain a vice-free society and to curb moral degradation. It has been certified that character education is indeed a verifiable tool to bail out the society from its societal menaces (Abogunrin, 1998).

From time immemorial, the quest for moral principle is an intrinsic phenomenon which makes social life governable and blissful. As such, every person, irrespective of age, colour, sex or social standing is subject to the dictates of the moral principle (Adeleye, 1998). This is because the concept of morality serves a holistic function as it serves as the bedrock upon which the edifice of a truly righteous and egalitarian society rests. Implicitly, moral principles form a fundamental aspect of every culture as it outlines comprehensively, codes of behaviours or conducts for the individual on the one hand, and the society on the other. However, technological development orchestrated by globalisation and civilisation have attenuated and grossly affected our moral ethos. This has brought about a breakdown of the social structure on which society rests. Civilisation has had and is still having a lot of negative impacts on the life of the Africans, most especially Nigerians (Arisi, 2013).

The problem of decline in public morality and national discipline in Nigeria is very alarming. Every sphere of life is not spared by this cankerworm which has eaten deep into every facet of the society. This prevailing situation has been incisively portrayed by Iwe (1991) who submits that "over-concern with one's self-importance and pre-occupation with self-aggrandisement naturally lead to total indiscipline or moral decadence from the self to the society." Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing its share of moral laxity and vices especially as depicted in political instability, corruption in high and low places, drug trafficking, smuggling, advanced fee fraud popularly called 419, increasing crime wave, theft, robbery, religious and ethnic violence, unemployment and injustice to mention but a few (Iwe, 1991). Abogunrin (1998) therefore states categorically that "there was never a time when humanity was so degraded and spiritually blind as is evidenced in the madness we see around us daily in Nigeria". Apparently, therefore, meaningful

development has been halted and the nation is in the throes of disintegration (Abogunrin, 1998). It is against this background that the paper advocates for the re-orientation of moral values as a catalyst for development in Nigeria. Attention will be placed on some of the moral problems which militate against national development with a view to finding lasting solutions to them. In addition to this, we seek to examine the extent to which a solid moral foundation is indispensable towards actualising our collective goals for a speedy national growth and development and that this desire for development is contingent on moral discipline of every citizen in Nigeria. In order words character training means the training of people to be morally upright to correct and avoid social maladies (Abimbola, 2013).

National Values

When discussing about a particular concept, what readily comes to mind is what does the concept mean? Therefore, what are values and national values? Values is sometime synonymous with morality as both are oftentimes used interchangeably. Values share the same meaning with morality as it also depicts the acceptable conduct of behaviour in the society. Oyedepo (2003) opines that: value is the study of such concepts as good, bad, desirable, beautiful, ugly e.t.c. and it tends to examine the justification of judgments that involves these concepts; the logic of the argument by which they are supported or challenged. Dopamu (1993) summarises that for the purpose of maintaining law and order which in turn will enhance national stability and growth, values are respected and such values are the moral worth, principles or standard which the society holds in high esteem. Conformity to these value systems, no doubt, results in an orderly and purpose-driven society which ultimately brings in the desired development in the society.

Values are also the means through which people grapple with the needs and essentials of daily lives; it is that which people hold dear; what they cherish; and what they practice as a member of a society. It is that which serves as the basis for social co-existence and cohesion. It is the basis on which sound moral and wholesome judgment is based. Therefore, moral values are those intrinsic attributes and characteristics which are innate in every person for the actualisation and promotion of social order, cohesion and peaceful co-existence which are fundamental indices for growth and development in the society. If value has been understood, what then are national values? National value is consistent ethics and ideological integrity applied on individual or collective will of the people.

Elements of National Values

Patriotism: It means love, devotion to one's country, which might or might not be the native land of the patriot. It believes in nationalism which is devoted to the national interest of a nation. It is a sense of unity among the country's inhabitants, particularly the natives of the land with a firm will to remain a sovereign government. It is necessary for protecting citizens and their way of life, freedom and participation

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in international organisations for major decision-making. Patriotism has to do with a person's support for his country by showing feelings and qualities of patriotism (Malomo, 1986).

Loyalty: Loyalty is allegiance to the sovereign government of one's country, personal reverence to the sovereign and the royal family. The word "loyalty" is traced to the 15th century, as fidelity in service and love to an oath taken. Britannica gives its meaning as one who is loyal in the feudal sense of fealty, lawful as opposed to outlaw, full legal rights as a consequence of faithful allegiance to a feudal lord (Malomo, 1986).

Honesty: It is a facet of moral character and denotes positive, virtuous attributes such as integrity, truthfulness, and straightforwardness with the absence of lying, cheating or theft. It comes from active resistance of temptation and links to the controlled cognitive processes that delay regards to reward. It is a variety of communication both verbal and non-verbal which implies the lack of deceit. It involves complete truthfulness; not telling lies nor cheating; being straight forward in whatever one does and always being conscientious (Malomo, 1986).

Dedication to duty: This is the act of binding intellectual or emotion to a course of action; total commitment to public service, allegiance, loyalty. It concerns attending your work regularly, going in time and dismissing at the proper time. Above all, carrying out the best of your ability. The big question remains, do Nigerians recognise these aforementioned national values? The answer to this question is "no" because there are a lot of evils pervading our society right from peasant to the bourgeoisie (Malomo, 1986).

The Visible Agents of Inculcating Good Character Training

When talking about training of any form, there must surely be teachers, instructors and personalities involved, who are in charge of teaching and inculcating the teachings into the concerned individuals (These are the visible agents, that is, they can be seen). It is pertinent to state that in the issues of ethics, morality and character training, nobody is exempted. In other words, everybody is a stakeholder in ethical matters. In ethical matters, who are the visible agents? They are parents, teachers, religious leaders, lecturers, writers, poets, entertainers, dramatists and the host of others who are saddled with the responsibility of good character training. The question that quickly comes to mind is: are these teachers of ethics also ethically inclined? This position cannot be argued as untrue because the visible agents saddled with the responsibilities of inculcating good character training are also found wanting in ethical matters. But nevertheless, it cannot also be opined that it is all the visible agents that are found guilty of immorality. For instance, good character is partly an individual thing because it allows for individuals who are matured and normal to use reason to make their own decisions.

In Nigeria, the moment a person is 18 years, he or she legally becomes an adult with all the duties and obligations of adulthood. However, the visible agents of inculcating good characters in Nigeria should understand the vitality and importance

of their roles in good character building in the country. They also serve as good examples unto others so as to achieve the desired national values. Parents are always the first teachers, and parents nowadays in Nigeria are not as strict as parents of the olden days. All the visible agents should be painstaking, dedicated, act and practice their teachings and serve as role models in the society.

Religion and Good Character Training in Nigeria

Beyond doubt, there are three major religions in our contemporary Nigerian society namely Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion. Although we are aware of the presence of other religions in Nigeria such as Judaism, Gurumaharajism, Eckankar, Hare krishna, Scientology, Rosicrucian and so on, but the predominant ones are the three major ones mentioned above, in terms of their adherents, popularity and population. The three major religious books in Nigeria are the Bible, Al Quran and the Ifa Corpus which contain the ethical codes inherent in each of the religions. Nigeria is said to be one of the most populous religious countries in the world. All these religions have moral injunctions to reconstuct the process of the nation in moral development. Leaders in Christianity, Islam and African religion should preach good character in the society thereby enjoining the society to be morally inclined. In a nutshell, as regards good character training in the country, religion has a role to play because there is interplay between religion and good character training.

Good Character Training: A Christian Approach

Early Christians made use of the Pentateuch which contains the Ten Commandments before the advent of Jesus Christ on earth as their moral guiding principles (Abimbola, 2013). The death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus brought about the New Testament which led to the compilation of a complete Christian Bible which contains additional rules and principles for the Christians. The moral guiding principle in Christianity aims at fashioning humanity into becoming people of good character include the following:

- I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me (Book of Exodus, 20:17, Rsv)
- You shall not make for yourself a graven image; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it Holy
- Honour your father and mother
- You shall not Kill
- You shall not commit adultery
- You shall not steal

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- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour
- You shall not covet (Christian Bible, Rsv)

The above are the teachings of Christianity. In addition, the Bible enjoins accepting the authority of those in power. If the visible agents inculcate these rules and regulations and Christians follow them faithfully, attainment of national values will be ensured and this will also stem the tide if not totally eradicate the menace of immorality in Nigeria.

Good Character Training: An Islamic Approach

> Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by (reason of) what the hands of men have earned; so he (Allah) may let them taste part of (the consequence of) what they have done that perhaps they will return (i.e. repent) (Q 30:41).

From the Islamic perspective, committing different types of sins are acts of causing corruption on the earth. The most grievous of these sins are the destructive ones which Allah and His Messenger threaten the perpetrators of with a severe punishment. Some of them as highlighted by (Ahmed, 2006) are: *Shirk* (Associating partnership with Allah), practising magic, committing murder, making interest-based transactions, usurping the property of orphans, mistreating one's parents, bearing false witness, adultery and fornication, drinking alcohol and taking narcotics, stealing etc. These sins according to Ahmed destroy man and turn him into an obedient servant of Satan.

Islam expects its adherents to forsake conducts that will not please Allah. However, areas that contain character training in the Holy Qur'an are many, some of them are the following:

- Take not life Allah has made sacred (Q.6:151).
- Worship Allah and obedience to parents and relatives (Q 17:23-28).
- And spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it (Q.49:11).
- Nor call each other by offensive nicknames, ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness (Q.49:11).
- Slander not (Q.49:11-12).
- Nor come neigh to adultery for it is an indecent and evil way (Q.17:32).
- Give just measure and weigh, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due (Q. 7:85).
- Come not nigh to the orphan's property except to improve it (Q.17: 34).
- Allah loves not the arrogant and the vainglorious (Q.4:36).

- Nor walk on the earth with Insolence, for thou cannot render the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height (Q. 17: 37).
- But squander not your wealth in a manner of spendthrift. Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of Satan and the Satan to his Lord ungrateful (Q.4. 37).
- The evil of rumour mongering and how best to prevent it (Q. 49:6).

If all Muslims and those who confess Islam follow these rules and obey them, Nigeria will surely be a great nation and indeed will be the giant of Africa.

Good Character Training: African Traditional Religious Approach

African traditional Religion is the indigenous religion of the Africans before Christianity and Islam surfaced on the continent of Africa. It is a religion that preaches morality; all these are evident in the existence of taboos which means the 'dos and don'ts'. Anybody who defiled the laws was made to face the punishment. Some of them were instantaneous punishment like thunder strike, seizure of properties, banishment, beheading, thunderbolts and insistence on suicide for the perpetrator(s).

According to Chief Ifayemi Elubuibon, Wande Abimbola and E.B Idowu, the ethics inherent in the African Religion includes forbidding shedding blood of innocent people, fornication, infidelity, stealing, bearing false witnesses, pervasion of justice, mockery, human rituals for money, alcoholism, cultism, gangsterism and corruption (Awokoya, 1978).

The African Indigenous religious adherents also preach and advocate good and virtuous characters. Though the religion is a bit stricter anyway, because for instance, while Christians and Muslims may not hesitate to swear falsely using the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an, these same people will hesitate to swear falsely with iron, or Ogun the symbol of the Yoruba god of iron (Dzurgba,1993). It can reasonably be argued that African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam teach and preach good character training in the society, and if this is being considered, our national values will be redeemable and achievable.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss how good character training from a religious consideration can lead to the development and implementation of our National values. Attempt was made to define and explain what is meant by character training, values, national values, and the visible agents, the approaches of good character training from Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. It was showcased in this chapter how the Nigerian Nation had been bedeviled with series of challenges, and how good character training through religious point of view can serve as bail-out from social vices that have plagued the Nigerian Nation such as examination malpractices, cultism, fraud, drug abuse and addiction, drug trafficking, bribery, corruption, adultery and prostitution, fake

products, armed robbery, terrorism, adult criminality, rape and so on.

It is a fact that there is decadence of culture and moral values in the African societies, especially Nigeria. There is also high rate of neglect of indigenous societal norms, ethical values and culture to the embrace of foreign culture and values (Edema, 1988). The present system of education laden with foreign traits is the means through which foreign culture and values are transferred and these are inimical to the African culture and values. The neglect of indigenous culture and values, in preference to foreign ones, results in vices and problems in the African societies (Obasola, 2003b). In view of this, we hope the visible agents inculcating good character are aware of this as all hands must be on deck to truly embrace good character training inherent in the religions. It is easier to point accusing fingers at people than forgetting or ignoring one's own flaws. It is pertinent to brainstorm on how individuals could bring about positive changes in the transformational agenda that Nigeria needs now.

Revision Exercise

1. One of these is not an element of national value.
   a. Loyalty
   b. Dedication to duty
   c. Embesslement
   d. Honesty

2. *Shirk* means
   a. Disobedience to parent
   b. Associating partners with Allah
   c. Maltreatment of orphans
   d. Submission to Shaytan

3. These are instantaneous punishments for moral offenders in African traditional society except
   a. Thunder strike
   b. Seizure of property
   c. Banishment
   d. Forgiveness

4. One of these is not an agent of good character training.
   a. Parents
   b. Church
   c. School
   d. Cult

5. Which of these is not a law guiding good moral training in Christianity?
   a. You shall not make for yourself a graven image

b.   You shall not kill
c.   You shall not take alcohol
d.   You shall not steal

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