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MORAL EDUCATION IN THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL SETTING: AN ANTIDOTE FOR CORRUPTION

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Abstract

In Nigeria, corruption has become a great impediment for the much expected dividends of democracy in the midst of many available natural and human resources.Every nation's educational system is to help it overcome her peculiar problems. Nigeria's educational system is supposed to help overcome the problem of corruption. The study therefore examined moral education in Nigerian schools as an antidote for corruption. The study explains the concepts, theories and needs for moral education as an effective way for reducing corruption in the society. It was however concluded that with the integration of moral education in Nigerian schools, the quality of the certificates acquired will be enhanced and high integrity will be accorded to the society by the members. The paper however suggested strategies for integrating moral education into Nigerian schools in the interest of reducing corrupt practices. The effective integration of moral education will surely accord high integrity for the learners, the schools, the certificates and the society in general.

KeyWords: *Moral Education, Nigerian Schools, Corruption,*

Introduction

One of the greatest threats to economic and political development of any nation is corruption. Therefore, the challenges of corruption remain a major devastating issue facing Nigeria since the colonial period. This phenomena has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigeria system (Usman, 2013).In Nigeria, corruption has become a great impediment for the much expected dividends of democracy in the midst of many available natural and human resources (Ojo, 2016). Corruption in Nigeria is not the exclusive preserve of politicians, civil servants, and captains of industry. Among the "common people" there is an instinctive honingof stealing skills. One should stop thinking people suddenly become corrupt when they join the government. However having been tutored and mentored on petty stealing from probably the age of five, Nigerians naturally explode when they occupy positions of authority at any level either in private or public sector. They join the bandwagon of selfish leaders after suddenly finding themselves in the corridor of power. Rather than use their positions to repair its ills; they conform to the enrichment craze (Philips &Akpokighe, 2014).

The most common corrupt practices are: Giving and receiving bribes,inflation of contracts,abuse of public property, lodging government fund in private accounts, examination malpractices, adulterated food or hazardous drugs, misappropriation and embezzlement of fund and money laundry by public officers.Thus, (Nwaobi2004) posited that Nigeria is one of the very few countries in the world where a man's source of wealth is of no concern to his neighbour, the public or the government. Wealthy people who are known to be corrupt are regularly courted and honored by communities, religious bodies, social clubs and other private organizations. National development is impeded by corrupt practices. Corruption is seen as the involvement in dishonesty or wicked behaviour which is destructive of the moral fabric of society.

Ethics/morality has important roles to play in the course of nation-building.Wiredu(1998) asserted that a society without any mode of morality must collapse. This is because in every society there are different individuals and groups with different and conflicting interests. It has been observed that if two men desire the same thing which they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies and they endeavour to destroy one another. The role of morality here is to regulate the affairs of these individuals and groups with opposing and conflicting interests in such a manner that there will be peaceand harmony in the society.Every enduring community has a moral code and it is the responsibility and the

concern of its adults to instill this code in the hearts and minds of its young. Since the advent of schooling, adults have expected the schools to contribute positively to the moral education of children. Schools cannot ignore moral education because it is one of their responsibilities.Hing-Keung Ma (2009) stated thatmoral education include the following: humanity, intelligence, courage, conscience, autonomy, respect, responsibility, naturalness, loyalty and humility. The behaviour of the individual tends to be modified and accepted by the society to which he/she belongs.Many nations have looked up to their education to helpthem overcome growth and developmental challenges at one time or the other. One of the beliefs of Nigeria's philosophy of education is that education is an instrument for national development and social change (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Concept of Corruption

Since the return of the country to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian government has taken a number of measures to address the problem of corruption and bad governance in the country.Corruption is a common phenomenon that is found in developing countries and societies, also in the developed societies such as Europe, America and Japan (Iyanda, 2012). Corruption is a common word used by both adults and children because it is found in every aspect of Nigeria. Corruption has been nicknamed among the three major languages in Nigeria; the Yorubas call it Egunje, the Hausas call it cuwa-cuwa while the Igbos call it Igbuozu. People no longer frown or feel ashamed to engage in corrupt practices. Corruption is a social problem that is found in various degrees or forms.

Corruption in Nigeria is endemic with cultural phenomena. The Nigerian society is bedeviled with corrupt practices such that once a person is appointed into any political office the expectations from his people will be so high in terms of what the office will offer. Therefore, the people he/she represents are ready to teach him/her how to steal (Usman, 2013). Hence, corruption in Nigeria knows no bound irrespective of tribes or cultural affiliations.Corruption is seen as a social, legal, economic and political concept. The definitions focus on one of the several aspects of the phenomenon. Khan (2004) proposes that the various approaches of corruption can be placed into five groups namely; Public interest centered, Market centered, Public office centered, public opinion centered and legalistic. Despite this proposition, corruption is defined in the context of a state–society relationship, where distinctions are made between political and bureaucratic corruption, redistributive and extractive corruption.Ekiyor(2005) in the broad view of corruption defined it as the unlawful

use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course and/or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force.Akinseye (2000)attempts at describing it as 'mother of all crimes' and identifies four forms of corruption as bribery, prebendalism, graft and nepotism.

Theories of Moral Development

Moral education refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them to live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities. In this view, moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion of a community. The word *moral* comes from a Latin root (*mos, moris*) and meaning code or customs of a people, the social glue that defines how individuals should live together(Education Encyclopedia, 2014).There are some theories that offer explanation to moral development.

According to Piaget (1932), children develop the morality of cooperation at Concrete Operational Stage. As children develop morality of cooperation, they realize that in order to create a cooperative society people must work together to decide what is acceptable and what is not. Piaget believed that children at this stage begin to understand that morals represent social agreements between people and intended to promote the common goal. Furthermore, they recognize people may differ in the way they understand and approach a moral situation or problem and also begin to understand the difference between rights and wrong is not absolute but instead must take into account changing variables such as motivation, abilities, and intentions. Hence, Piaget believed that adolescents at formal operational stage begin to understand the morality of a decision does not rest solely on the outcome of that decision.

Furthermore, adolescents begin to understand the reciprocal benefit of moral decision-making; moral decision creates the optimal solution for everyone involved, even when only two people are affected and begin to realize that when situations are handled in a manner that seems fair, reasonable, and/or beneficial to all parties, it becomes easier for people to accept and honour the decision. This concept of fairness is called reciprocity. By middle adolescence, they expand their understanding of fairness to include ideal reciprocity. Ideal reciprocity refers to a type of fairness beyond simple reciprocity and includes a consideration of another person's best interests. It is best described by the familiar adage, "Do unto others

as you would have them do unto you" which many people know as the Golden Rule. Teens who have reached ideal reciprocity will imagine a problem from another person's perspective and try to place themselves in another person's "shoes," before making a moral decision.

Kohlberg Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg (1984) categorized moral development into three levels, they are;

Level I: Pre-conventional (Egocentric orientation focusing on moral consequences for the self; reasoning found until about 10 years of age)

Stages	Description
1: Punishment – Obedience	Moral reasoning based on immediate consequences for the individual. An actis moral if a person isn't punished for it.It is immoral if the person is punished.
2: Market Exchange	Moral reasoning based on reciprocity. An act is moral if a similar act occurs in return (i.e. satisfies own needs)

Level II: Conventional:(Moral reasoning linked to perspectives of, and concerns for, others (i.e. loyalty, obeying the law, family obligation); typical of 10 to 20 years old).

Stages	Description
3: Interpersonal Harmony Good boy-nice girl	Moral reasoning based on concern or for others or opinions of others. An act is moral if others demonstrate similar acts, or it helps others (i.e. behavior likely to please others).
4: Law and Order	Moral reasoning based on rules, laws, and orderly society. An act is moral if it follows 'rules or promotes an orderly society.

Level III: Post-conventional (Reasoning transcends society's rules; reflects and understanding that rules sometimes need to be changed/ignored).

Stages	Description
5: Social Contract is moral principled	Moral reasoning based on principled agreements among people. An act if it is consistent with a agreement.
6: Universal Ethical consistent that transcends an	Moral reasoning based on abstract principles. An act is moral if it is with an abstract principle individual's society.

Moral Education in Nigerian Schools

In Nigeria according to Ukoma and UkaEgwu (2016), the level of morality before the Nigerian/Biafra civil war was notably high. This was consequent upon the effort of the Missionaries and missionary schools which inculcated as well as demanded high and visible display of high moral standard from both teachers and pupils/students. Pupils and students received corporal Punishment for not attending church services and for unaccepted societal immoral display. The mission schools were not only educational in nature but highly reformatory as the mention of the nearness of a teacher was like the mention of the police in a scene of crime.At the takeover of schools by Government it was like the teacher and particularly those who pretended to memoryfollow the missionaries now realized that the missionaries were white over lords.Consciously or unconsciously, the curricular or trainers put greater emphasis on cognitive and psychomotor development and abjectly neglect the affective domain that should be responsible for character development. This is the domain that is responsiblefor the development of societal acceptable moral values. And any community that its people are not taught consciously to consider the needs and rights of others will be a society with little social cohesiveness and much conflict (Jacob & Andrew, 2015).

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, Education Encyclopedia (2014) noted that three things happened to many schools that attemptedto ignore the moral dimension of schooling: achievement scores began to decline, discipline and behavior problems increased, and voices were raised accusing the schools of teaching secular humanism. These outcomes were noticed in United States of America. Nigeria is notexempted from these consequences of advertently neglecting moral education. Following the poor disposition of the federal government towards humanities some years past, students were encouraged and motivated to

study science courses. Universities were to give 60% admission to those in sciences and 40% to those in humanities. The outcome of this policy is that, unlike what was obtained before, the number ofstudents in science related courses is higher than those in humanities. In Nigeria, there are public criesabout decline in the performance of children in schools at all levels of the educational system and cases of indiscipline are rampart. Examination malpractice, certificate racketeering and "god- fatherism" are the character exhibits by students and this was attributed to lack of good moral and value education. Moral virtues such as honesty, responsibility and respect for others that are the domains of moral education are neglected. Many people, including priests and imams, and other leaders of organizations andinstitutions (public and private) live lives of dishonesty. Teachers cheat on their students, students on their parents and parents on the government, and so on.

Strategies for Teaching Morality in Schools

The pupils and students need to be taken through the procedure of taking good moral decisions and by abiding by such decisions.Gary, Richard and Matthew (2009), suggested two strategiesto the teaching of morality in the school.This include;

a. The first is by some form of example which could also be regarded as manner. The teachers serve as role models to learner because most pupils/students emulate the behaviour of their teachers.
b. Thesecondis by addressing the topics of morality in the course of instruction.This implies that all teachers, irrespective of their subject combination should include the teaching of morality. For instance, stories drawn from history and literature are seen to be effective ways for teaching virtues.

A good teaching should begin with the teacher having a clear picture of the exact changes he/she has to bring in the learners.According to Akinsemoyin (2015), the role of the school in moral and character reformation of learnersshould include; organizingprogrammes that can facilitate teaching and learning of morals such as presenting moral dilemma to students as this will arouse their interest and think critically, teaching the students how to be good and loyal citizens and provide a stimulating environment for learners. Skinner (1971) opined that, the child learns morality through social reinforcement (rewards and punishments) in response to his or her actions.SchuitemaDam and Veugelers(2008) opined that moral education shouldbe aimed at developing the individual's ability to deal autonomously with moral dilemmas and ethical issues.

Kohlberg (1984) who introduced the stages of moral development stated that every individual proceed from stage 1 of level 1 to stage 6 of level 3. The method of teaching moral values should focus on use of direct instruction and discussion of moral issues. The teaching of morality at different levels of education should transit smoothly.

a. The teaching of morality at the primary school level should aimed at developing the ability of the child to obey rules so as to avoid punishment and the spirit of reciprocity that one good turn deserves another.
b. The teaching of morality at the secondary school level should aimed at developing the ability of the individual to do what will positively affect his/her relationship with others (doing the right thing so that everybody in the group will see the individual has been good and also expect everybody to be nice) and also, maintaining social order (i.e. in taking moral action, the entire society is put into consideration).
c. The teaching of morality at the tertiary level should aimed at developing the ability of the individual to understand the rule of law as important for maintaining a stable society and doing what is right regardless of who you are, where you come from and what position you belong to.

Schuitema et al. (2008), in their review on teaching methods for moral education asserted that a problem-based approach to instruction, co-operative learning, and dialogic learning (i.e. discussion) are the most commonly suggested teaching strategies. Hence, many studies are in favor of co-operative learning as it stimulates students' critical-thinking skills and enhances perspective-taking. Through moral discussion, the interaction between students helps them to resolve differences of opinion and to tolerate disagreement.

Conclusion

In the Nigeria current situation on corruption, moral education should be viewed as an essential component of the educational curriculum. However, it should be noted that the school is a reflection of the society. Hence, if the society is morally upright, the school would also be morally upright.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the following recommendations were made;

a. To win the war of corruption in Nigeria, moral education should be infused in the curriculum of social studies and civic education at basic and senior secondary education level and all existing programmes of study at the tertiary level of education.
b. Teachers are to be models of good moral values and their lifestyles should support the virtuesthey teach the learners for the lesson to go down well.
c. Moral education in schools should focus on community service, building good habits, rewarding positive behaviour and helping students to develop moral reasoning that would be free from all forms of corrupt practices.
d. In order to kick against corruption, the citizens should be enlightened through the media about morality and the consequences of been immoral.
e. In order to sustain the teaching of morals at all levels of education, teachers' morals and characters should be examined when being interviewed for the teaching profession.

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